PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

(HANSARD)

SIXTH SERIES—VOLUME 136

HOUSE OF COMMONS

OFFICIAL REPORT

FIRST SESSION OF THE FIFTIETH PARLIAMENT
OF THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN
AND NORTHERN IRELAND
THIRTY-SEVENTH YEAR OF THE REIGN OF
HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II

SESSION 1987-88

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27 June 1988

THE
PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
OFFICIAL REPORT

IN THE FIRST SESSION OF THE FIFTIETH PARLIAMENT OF THE
UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND
[WHICH OPENED 25 JUNE 1987]

THIRTY-SEVENTH YEAR OF THE REIGN OF
HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II

SIXTH SERIES VOLUME 136

NINETEENTH VOLUME OF SESSION 1987-88

House of Commons

Monday 27 June 1988

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

EASTBOURNE HARBOUR BILL *[Lords]*
Order for Third Reading read.
To be read the Third time on Thursday.

Oral Answers to Questions

WALES

Private Schools

2. **Mr. Morgan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he has any proposals to increase his powers of supervision over the standards of academic work and pastoral care at private schools in the Principality.

The Minister of State, Welsh Office (Mr. Wyn Roberts): No, Sir. Her Majesty's inspectors of schools have a programme of regular visits to independent schools in Wales. Parents, too, will exercise their own controls in checking on standards at such schools.

Mr. Morgan: Does the Minister agree that he does not appear to have any powers to determine the fitness for the teaching profession of headmasters who are also the proprietors of their own schools? I cite as an example Mr. William Hoole of New College school, Cardiff, who was sacked as headmaster of the school last October for three offences. The first offence was a liaison with a sixth former under his charge. The second was a physical assault of an 11-year-old pupil under his charge, for which that pupil is still receiving medical treatment nine months later. The third offence was diverting a five-figure sum of school fees to the purchase of a flat for that sixth-form pupil, who is now a university student.

Mr. Hoole was subsequently reinstated by the device of an extraordinary general meeting. Does the Minister agree that in these circumstances the list 99 procedure does not appear to apply and that he should take more powers to cover these circumstances?

Mr. Roberts: I have noted the contents of the hon. Gentleman's early day motion. The HMI visited New College school in June of last year and saw no ground for concern then. It will be visiting the school again this year. Should any concerns be identified, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will consider whether he needs to take action. Should my right hon. Friend be dissatisfied with standards of education or accommodation at an independent school, or with the fitness of its proprietor, he can issue a notice of complaint requiring remedial action to be taken.

Inward Investment

3. **Mr. Nicholas Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his latest estimate of net inward investment in Wales in 1987; and if he will make a statement on present trends.

The Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. Peter Walker): The latest estimate of inward investment into Wales in 1987 is 113 projects, involving investment of £244 million.

Present trends suggest that there is every prospect of this high level of activity being maintained. In the first five months of this year projects involving investment of £248 million have taken place.

Mr. Bennett: I thank my right hon. Friend for that excellent reply. Does he agree that the remarks of the right hon. Member for Swansea, West (Mr. Williams) last Thursday about a coolie economy and the attack by the

Trades Union Congress on single-union agreements in Wales do nothing to help this excellent trend and may damage the Welsh economy?

Mr. Walker: Quite a number of single union agreements in Wales have been reached by a whole range of unions, including the Transport and General Workers Union, which has recently negotiated a very successful one. As for the remarks concerning a coolie economy, I do not think that any of the many fine Japanese and German firms that we are delighted have come into Wales will take those remarks seriously.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: The Secretary of State will recall that recently published figures show that inward investment has had relatively little impact in Powys, Gwynedd and Dyfed. When does he expect that to change?

Mr. Walker: It is more difficult to attract inward investment from overseas to the geographically more remote parts of Wales and other parts of the United Kingdom. We endeavour to compensate for that by the activities of the Welsh Development Agency in encouraging new business. Furthermore, we point to the success stories in mid-Wales and elsewhere when some of the bigger British firms have gone into those localities.

Mr. Raffan: Is my right hon. Friend able to say what the full-time male Welsh coolie is now being paid, compared with 1979 when the shadow Secretary of State last held Government office?

Mr. Walker: In 1979 the full-time male employee in Wales received £97·60 a week. Now he is likely to receive about £220 a week.

Mr. Gareth Wardell: The Secretary of State said that one element in his Valleys initiative will be the help that he will give to Welsh component suppliers. Can he say specifically what kind of help that will be?

Mr. Walker: We have already had a series of meetings with component suppliers to the motor industry. In the Valleys initiative I said that the WDA was carrying out a major market research programme to see what we can identify about the potential for component part manufacturers. Having identified that, we can take appropriate decisions.

Elderly People

5. **Mrs. Clwyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the funding of research programmes on the elderly in Wales.

20. **Mr. Ron Davies:** To ask the Secretary of state for Wales what representations he has received concerning the withdrawal of funding for the University of Wales's research team for the care of the eldery; and if he will make a statement.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. Ian Grist): Several representations have been received about the withdrawl of funding for the University of Wales' research team for care of the elderly.

It is standard practice for the work of such units to be reviewed regularly, and a recent exercise was carried out by a team of independent experts led by the DHSS chief scientist. As the present contract for the unit was due to end in January 1989, it was decided that the time would be opportune to reorientate the clinical and Health Service-related research effort in this field of study by making other more beneficial and cost-effective arrangements. Current spending on research into care of the elderly in England and Wales is about £400,000, of which about half is spent in Wales.

Mrs. Clwyd: Does the Minister agree that by the year 2000 there will be over double the number of 85-year-olds in the community, and that they are by far the greatest users of health and social services? Is this not a case of cutting off of one's nose to spite one's face, since the unit in Cardiff was especially expert in looking at ways of keeping elderly people in the community rather than paying a great deal of public money to keep them in private residential homes? Is this not yet another penny-pinching and mean exercise by the Welsh Office?

Mr. Grist: I think that the hon. Lady is confusing research in this field with the sort of action that we are taking under the elderly initiative. I remind her that the research is not finished, because the Welsh Office is funding the esearch unit at the University College of North Wales in Bangor, which is excellently directed by Dr. Gordon Grant.

Mr. Davies: Does not this matter graphically illustrate the differences between the Secretary of State's promises and the actions of his Department? Less than a fortnight ago he promised new initiatives to help tackle the problems of the elderly in the valleys, but now we have a decision which effectively means withdrawing support from the body that is charged with identifying those needs. How can the needs be met if the means to identify them are not available?

Mr. Grist: I think that the hon. Gentleman misunderstood my answer. The money involved remains in Wales and it is for the Welsh Office to find a more beneficial and efficient use for it. I should have thought that the more efficient use of money for the elderly would be welcomed by all hon. Members.

Roads

6. **Mr. Knox:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what has been the total spending by central Government on roads in Wales since 1979; and how many miles of motorway and trunk roads have been laid since that year.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Since 1979-80 just over £1 billion has been spent on motorways and trunk roads in Wales and over £270 million has been provided to Welsh local authorities as transport supplementary grant for improvement of their roads. Twenty-two miles of motorway and 110 miles of trunk road have been constructed.

Mr. Knox: Can my hon. Friend say what further schemes he has in mind for the current year and what the cost of these is likely to be?

Mr. Roberts: Before the end of the financial year we expect to let contracts for four schemes, costing over £53 million. Those are subject to completion of outstanding procedures and the availability of resources. They are on the A48 the Nantycaws-Coed Hirion bypass, on the A55, the Travellers' Inn improvement and the Pen y clip tunnels and on the A483, the Chirk bypass.

Mr. Foot: Does the hon. Gentleman not think that it is high time the Welsh Office looked at all the requests that have been put to it for the enlargement of the heads of the valley road and its establishment as a proper dual carriageway, instead of the virtual death trap that was built some years ago? Will the Welsh Office look afresh at the whole project? If developments in other parts of Wales are to go ahead, surely the Welsh Office will look afresh at the problem.

Mr. Roberts: The right hon. Gentleman will know that we shall shortly be publishing "Roads in Wales" and our plans for the future. I note what he says, but the heads of the valleys road is extremely good and following my right hon. Friend's Valleys initiative, there will be further improvements in the roads in the valleys.

Sir Anthony Meyer: Is my hon. Friend satisfied that county councils have the same sense of urgent priority for the construction of roads for tourism and other industries as the Welsh Office has so commendably shown in its construction programme?

Mr. Roberts: Local authorities have some £19·5 million available to them this year. I understand my hon. Friend's feelings, and I hope that local authorities will look to their roads, as he has so kindly said that the Welsh Office is doing.

Mr. Livsey: When will the Secretary of State publish proposals in "Roads in Wales", which is due this year? Will he pay particular attention to the importance of north-south communications in Wales and the fact that British Coal is holding up an important section of the A470 from Pentrebach to Cefn-coed-y-cymmer in the constituency of the hon. Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands)? Will he ensure that that scheme goes ahead at the earliest possible moment?

Mr. Roberts: I am sure that it will interest the hon. Gentleman to know that since 1979 over £87 million has been spent on the A470, and it is our policy to undertake selective improvements on that road. We are expecting to start on the A4060 at Merthyr, subject to completion of preparatory work and the availability of resources.

Tourism

7. **Mr. Gregory:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what are his current estimates for the number of tourists and the value of tourism to Wales and the number of overseas visitors to the Principality; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The Wales tourist board estimates that in 1987 approximately 12 million tourists visited the Principality and that, within this figure, some 570,000 were from overseas. Expenditure data for 1987 are not all yet available, but are likely to show a significant increase on the £600 million estimated to have been spent by staying visitors in 1986.

Mr. Gregory: I thank my hon. Friend for that reply. Is he satisfied with the reliability of the tourism statistics for the Principality? Will he comment on the resources available to the efficient Wales tourist board?

Mr. Roberts: My hon. Friend is right to say that there is some concern about the quality of data on tourism statistics, so the Government have commissioned Panell, Kerr and Forster to review the statistics, and its report is expected shortly. Since 1983 overall net resources for the Wales tourist board have risen by 90 per cent., and this year it has some £9·21 million at its disposal, of which £3·32 million is for section 4 assistance.

Mr. Wigley: Will the Minister accept that of the tourists coming to Wales those from overseas represent only half the proportion that they constitute in the United Kingdom in general? If anything is to be done about that, there needs to be a massive assault on this market. Can he confirm that the WDA will be allowed to work in conjunction with the Wales tourist board on projects of importance to tourism in Wales, including helping to fund the opening of offices outside Wales in places like Stratford, Oxford and Bath, which could be of relevance in attracting overseas visitors to Wales?

Mr. Roberts: I can confirm the latter point. The hon. Gentleman will know that we are concerned about having effective arrangements for overseas visitors, and these have been achieved by my right hon. Friend, in conjunction with the British Tourist Authority. As a result, people with specialist knowledge of Wales are in key overseas locations such as Frankfurt, Dublin and New York.

Mr. Alan Williams: The Minister will accept that we all welcome extra tourists to our country, but does he recognise that, nationally, four of the 10 lowest-paid occupations for women are within the tourist industry? Is he aware that, of all the regions, Wales has the lowest paid employees in hotels and catering, the sort of coolie economy-type of wages about which the Secretary of State was talking? As he is thinking of expanding that industry, which is dominated by part-time and seasonal work, what action does he intend to take to protect the conditions of work and the pay of those people in the industry, or does he expect them to continue to work for a pittance?

Mr. Roberts: Tourism is one of the most important industries and is, of course, a substantial employer. Some 90,000 people are employed in tourism and my impression is that the employers pay what the industry can afford. That, of course, will continue under whichever form of Government we have.

Schools (Visits)

8. **Mr. Barry Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many schools in Wales he has visited from his appointment up to 13 June.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: My right hon. Friend has visited two schools and I have visited five schools in the past 12 months.

Mr. Jones: Can I persuade the Minister to expand fund provision for nursery schooling in Wales, bearing in mind the recent cuts throughout Wales, particularly in Clwyd? May I remind him of the Prime Minister's famous commitment in the 1970s to nursery schooling for all?

Does he know that tomorrow the local education authority in Clwyd will consider the closure of Bistre nursery school in Buckley? Hundreds of parents are deeply disappointed at the level of nursery provision in Clwyd and parents of children at that school are very upset. How will the Minister help?

Mr. Roberts: I understand that the proposals by Clwyd education authority to reduce nursery provision was rejected at a meeting of the county council on 7 June and that was why I told the right hon. Gentleman in the Welsh Grand Committee that it was a matter for local education authorities, as is the provision of nursery education throughout Wales. About 70 per cent. of our children under five are in nursery schools or classes. That is a high average compared with England and other parts of the world.

Mr. Geraint Howells: I am sure that when the Minister visited various schools in Wales he met many children who spoke Welsh and that he is aware that many parents in Wales are afraid that the Government will not introduce a new Welsh Language Act. Will he give an assurance today to the people of Wales that the new Welsh Language Act will be introduced in 1988?

Mr. Roberts: Surely the hon. Gentleman knows the contents of the Education Reform Bill and the Welsh provisions in that Bill, under which Welsh will be a core curriculum subject along with English, mathematics and science in Welsh-speaking schools and a foundation subject in other schools. For the first time in history Welsh has a statutory place in the school curriculum. If I am not mistaken, surely that kind of advance was among the proposals being pressed for in the Bill introduced by the hon. Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley).

Mr. Michael: Does the Minister accept that, although education authorities have a responsibility, as he suggested in his earlier reply, he has a responsibility to encourage local authorities to provide a standard of excellence? In view of the legal decisions now being taken, will he assure the House that he will speed up the process to enable South Glamorgan local authority to provide a sixth-form college, which it is seeking to do, but which has been held up by the Welsh Office in recent months?

Mr. Roberts: It is possible that the hon. Gentleman has misunderstood the purpose of the legal proceedings to which he referred. The court case revolved around concern by the Department, which was shared by the objectors, that South Glamorgan county council's procedures might be invalid. The High Court has now determined that the procedures were valid and, accordingly, my right hon. Friend will make his decision as soon as possible.

Single European Market

9. **Mr. Win Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will commission research on the impact on jobs in Wales of the European Community's proposals for the creation of a single market.

Mr. Peter Walker: We shall be conducting a considerable campaign to ensure that Welsh businesses take full advantage of the opportunities of the single European market, so as to improve job opportunities.

Mr. Griffiths: Does the Minister agree that on the whole the Government and the Commission have taken a rather complacent attitude to the possibility of job creation in the regions? A Minister at the Department of Employment answered a similar question and said that his Department was not prepared to predict whether there would be job increases in the regions. Only today the Henley Centre for Forecasting was prepared to show some enterprise and initiative in predicting that the investment opportunities of the single market will increase the divide between north and south. Should not the Welsh Office be playing a far more dynamic role in trying to ensure that jobs are brought to Wales as a result of the creation of the market?

Mr. Walker: The figures that I gave earlier about inward investment are connected with the desire of overseas firms to have a place in the European market, and they have chosen Wales as that place. It is due to the activities of the Welsh Office and the Welsh Development Agency that over recent times Wales has had a much larger proportion of inward investment than any other part of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: May I put it to my right hon. Friend —I do so on the information that the members of the Select Committee on Welsh affairs gleaned during their recent visit to Japan and Korea—that it would not be inappropriate to review the efforts that are being made abroad to promote awareness of all the changes that will come after 1992? That information is as important abroad as at home to the many investors who are contemplating setting up in Wales on the basis that it will be the best place for selling into the European market.

Mr. Walker: There is a great deal to be obtained from the two countries mentioned by my hon. Friend. There is also considerable inward investment to be obtained from the United States and from parts of Europe other than Great Britain. We are organising a considerable worldwide campaign to ensure that the advantages of Wales—for example, the regional development policy, the activities of the Welsh Development Agency and the willingness of the unions to collaborate—are brought to the attention of those who can take advantage of Wales as their location for European business.

Mrs. Clwyd: Is the Secretary of State aware that the Equal Opportunities Commission and the EEC have today produced a joint document on policies for under five-year-olds? I am sure he will agree that an important plank of opportunity under the Single European Act will be equal opportunities for men and women. Is he aware that the report criticises the United Kingdom Government, in particular, for their policies on equal opportunities, the lack of provision for the under-fives and the lack of implementation of the directive on parental leave? Will he study this further?

Mr. Walker: I shall study it further.

Steel Industry (Productivity)

10. **Mr. Jack:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on productivity gains made over the last five years in the steel industry in Wales.

Mr. Peter Walker: I am delighted to say that productivity in the steel industry has massively improved in recent years due to high investment and the collaboration of those involved. The British Steel Corporation's production of liquid steel and coil was higher in 1987 than it was in 1979 in spite of the industry employing nearly 30,000 fewer people in the Principality.

As for the private sector, the successful flotation of Allied Steel and Wire is, I think, clear evidence of an energetic, growing and forward-looking industry whose employees have full confidence in the future.

Mr. Jack: I thank my right hon. Friend for that splendid answer. Does he agree that it is a tribute to the £400 million investment programme in the Port Talbot steel works, for example, and provides an excellent springboard for further productivity gains as the steel industry is privatised?

Mr. Walker: Yes, Sir. I think that the steel industry in Wales is in a strong position. It is one of the finest steel industries throughout Europe and it is confident about the future.

Mr. Foot: If the Secretary of State is so enthusiastic about the achievements of steel workers in Wales, as he and everyone else has every right to be, why does he not listen to what they say about keeping the industry in public hands?

Mr. Walker: I think the right hon. Gentleman will find that those employed in the steel industry will be eager and pleased to participate in privatisation.

Sir John Stradling Thomas: Does my right hon. Friend agree—I am sure that he will, but not because of any discussions beforehand—that the steel industry in Wales can welcome wholeheartedly something that I have wanted to see for a long time, the abolition of the quota system, because we are now competitive and can compete with the world?

Mr. Walker: Yes. As I have said, there are few steel industries in Europe more confident about the future than the Welsh steel industry.

Mr. Morgan: Does the Secretary of State agree that the answer to the question is that the productivity gains made by the steel industry in Wales have come about because the steel workers in Wales refused to listen to Operation Slimline introduced by the Government in 1979, which halved the work force in the steel industry in Wales and halved output as well? That means that there are no productivity gains at all. The extraordinarily good performance of the steel industry in Wales since 1979 has taken place, if the Secretary of State looks at the facts, simply because the workers refused to abide by Operation Slimline.

Mr. Walker: The labour force has not been halved. It has been cut by almost two thirds.

Welsh National Opera

11. **Sir Anthony Meyer:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has received about funding for a suitable venue for performances by the Welsh National Opera in north Wales.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Representations have been received from Aberconwy borough council, the Wales tourist board, and members of the public for funding the development of an arts, leisure and convention centre at Llandudno, which would provide a venue for performances by the Welsh National Opera. There have also been representations by Rhuddlan borough council for a project at Rhyl, which might include provision for a theatre.

Sir Anthony Meyer: I do not need to tell my hon. Friend that the Welsh National Opera company is the finest in Britain and one of the finest in Europe. In view of that, will he give what support and help he can to either or both schemes to provide a regular place for the opera to perform in north Wales?

Mr. Roberts: I regret as much as anyone the absence of a suitable venue in north Wales with the facilities required for companies like the Welsh National Opera company. Having said "like the Welsh National Opera company", I believe that that company is incomparable and of considerable excellence. Yes, we certainly hope that a centre will be established in the north for the Welsh National Opera company, but I cannot prejudge whether that will be in Llandudno or Rhuddlan, except perhaps to tell my hon. Friend that Rhuddlan borough council's approach for urban development grant for its project has been discussed with my Department. The council has been informed that it is not considered to be eligible. Discussions are still going on with Aberconwy.

Homelessness

12. **Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many people are at present homeless in *(a)* Ynys Môn, *(b)* Gwynedd and *(c)* Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: During the period 1 October 1987 to 31 December 1987, the latest quarter for which figures are available, six homelessness cases were accepted by the local authority in Ynys Môn, 69 cases were accepted in Gwynedd as a whole and 1,239 cases were accepted throughout the Principality.

Mr. Jones: If local authorities are obliged to dispose of their housing stock when the Housing Bill is enacted, will the Minister tell us who will assume statutory responsibility for the homeless?

Mr. Grist: Statutory responsibility will remain with the local authorities and it will be up to them to carry out those duties. They will use their powers in a way similar to the way they use them now.

Mr. Alan Williams: Does the Minister accept that homelessness is still about 25 per cent. higher than it was when the Government came to office, on the basis of the official figures, which are lower than those of Shelter? Will he accept Opposition warnings that the recent decision in relation to the social security changes to pay bed and breakfast for youngsters a week in arrears will mean that, as landlords refuse to accept the arrangement, more, not fewer, of our young people will be made homeless?

Mr. Grist: I do not accept the first part of the right hon. Gentleman's assertion, as the numbers have risen by about 600, which is about 12 per cent., since 1979. The 1987 figures in comparison to those for 1986 fell by another 700. With regard to his second point, he will have to table a question to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services.

Single European Market

13. **Mr. Raffan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the action being taken by his Department to ensure that the Principality will fully benefit from the creation of the single European market and the construction of the Channel tunnel.

Mr. Peter Walker: My Department will be active in bringing home to the business community in Wales the significance of the single European market and the opportunities that will be created by the Channel tunnel. I have already written to over 3,000 companies, drawing their attention to the single European market, and I have sent them a check list of action. I shall personally take part in two major seminars in the business community in Wales, in Cardiff in December and in Mold in November.

Mr. Raffan: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for that statement. Does he agree that the optimism over 1992 must not be allowed to cloud the fact that gains from freer trade will occur only if there are losers as well as gainers? Will he get the blunt message across to Welsh firms that if they are not to be losers they must become more competitive, improve management and remove inefficient work practices? Will he do his utmost to ensure that Welsh companies can benefit from the contracts placed for the construction of the Channel tunnel?

Mr. Walker: As to my hon. Friend's latter point concerning the contract phase of the Channel tunnel, which is of course a very big project, to assist Welsh companies to benefit during the construction phase I have established a liaison section in my industry department with responsibility for informing appropriate Welsh companies of opportunities and potential contracts. To date, in excess of 100 potential contracts have been notified to more than 100 companies in Wales. As to the importance of competitiveness, those who will succeed most in the total European market will be those companies that are the most effective, competitive and efficient. I hope that those in Welsh industry will achieve those objectives.

Mr. Barry Jones: Does the right hon. Gentleman know what prospects there are of European money for the Data Magnetics company in my constituency, where 168 jobs are involved, and where the receiver has moved in? Can he say whether there is any prospect of that company receiving a boost? Does he agree that if that company is given the funding that it needs it will be a world beater?

Mr. Walker: It is difficult for me to comment when matters are in the hands of the official receiver. I can only express the view that I hope very much that ways will be found by the official receiver of handling the situation so that work may continue and prospects are created. The Welsh Development Agency and others are certainly in close contact with the company.

Hospital Development

14. **Mr. Rogers:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what moneys he is making available for hospital development *(a)* in the Rhondda and *(b)* elsewhere in Mid Glamorgan over the next five years.

Mr. Grist: Mid Glamorgan health authority's discretionary capital allocation for the current year is £5·7 million—an increase of nearly 21 per cent. over last year's allocation. It is for the authority to determine its priorities for the use of those funds. Future years' allocations will depend on the outcome of annual public expenditure discussions.

Mr. Rogers: I am absolutely appalled by the Minister's answer, in that the needs of the Rhondda and Taff-Ely area have recently been assessed at more than £50 million worth of necessary capital building. If Mid Glamorgan is to have only £5·7 million in the next year and an indeterminate amount over the next five years, it means that one of the most economically and socially deprived areas of the United Kingdom will have to wait an inordinate time for basic hospital facilities.

Mr. Grist: The hon. Gentleman knows that representations concerning the proposed development of hospital services in Rhondda and Taff-Ely closed on 11 May. Consultations on those representations are taking place at this very minute. The hon. Gentleman will also know that, as I pointed out, the increase this year is 21 per cent. on capital funding and 28·5 per cent. on revenue funding in real terms since this Government came to office. That does not show an ignorance of the conditions in the valleys.

Mr. Rowlands: Can the Minister give us reason for any hope over the reopening of St. Tydfil's? Is he aware that, based on current performance, there is no way that the Mid Glamorgan health authority will be able to re-finance the reopening of that unit? Is there any hope that he will give any assistance in the current financial year to help achieve that?

Mr. Grist: As I said in my original reply, it lies with the district health authority to decide how to manage its finances. The fact is that it has over the years failed to implement the cost improvement programmes, which have been undertaken in other parts of the country, with sufficient urgency and efficiency. We look for that increased urgency and efficiency, and then the hon. Gentleman may find that his unit will be reopened.

Mr. Ron Davies: Does the Minister recognise the problems that exist in the eastern part of the county bordering Gwent, in the valleys of Rhymney and Islwyn, having a population of 150,000 people without a district general hospital of their own? What priority is given to a district general hospital for that area in the Department's long-term planning, and will the Minister give an assurance that funds will not be available for development in south Glamorgan on the basis that it will meet the needs of the valleys?

Mr. Grist: The hon. Gentleman raises an interesting point. The question of hospitals within his own health authority's area lies with that authority. He is right in saying that services in south Glamorgan, as in Newport, serve certain patients in the valleys. That is an accepted fact of life. However, the whole question of social deprivation in Mid Glamorgan is understood, and it is worth pointing out that the formula for social deprivation is kept constantly under review. A working party chaired by the general manager of Mid Glamorgan health authority is considering whether any changes should be made in respect of the allowance for social deprivation and sparsity.

Mr. Rogers: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. May I give you notice that in view of that absolutely appalling answer from the Minister I wish to raise in an Adjournment debate the matter of hospitals in Mid Glamorgan?

Revenue Grant System

15. **Mr. Murphy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he has received any representations from Welsh local authorities regarding the operation of the proposed revenue grant system in Wales.

Mr. Grist: We are engaged in regular discussions with the local authority associations about the operation of the new grant system.

Mr. Murphy: First, now that the Welsh districts have come up with the precise figure for the implementation of the poll tax in Wales, and since the Minister has recently told the House that the Government will make provision in the revenue suport grant for such implementation, will he tell us when his right hon. Friends will announce to the Welsh districts the revenue support grant to help those districts? Secondly, precisely what percentage of the £16 million that it will cost to implement the tax will be given by the Government in that grant to help the Welsh district councils?

Mr. Grist: The hon. Gentleman will find the answer to his first question in the second, and the answer to the first question is, at present, as soon as may be.

CHURCH COMMISSIONERS

Bishops (Stipend)

24. **Mr. John Marshall:** To ask the right hon. Member for Selby, as representing the Church Commissioners, what representations the Church Commissioners have received about the stipends of bishops.

Mr. Michael Alison (Second Church Estates Commissioner, Representing Church Commissioners): The commissioners have received no representations about the stipends of bishops.

Mr. Marshall: I thank my right hon. Friend for that answer. Does he agree that lack of representations can scarcely be a reflection of the level of stipends, which is not excessive, and does he further agree that it is much more likely to be a reflection of public concern about the nature of the leadership offered by certain bishops and the widespread public concern about the present system of the appointment of bishops, which often places the Prime Minister in an invidious position?

Mr. Alison: I am sure that my hon. Friend would not expect me to agree with literally every pronouncement that any bishop makes, whether about matters relating to the Church or the state. However, he knows that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has final responsibility in the rather intricate process of the choice of bishops. I will draw my hon. Friend's comments to her notice.

Mr. Frank Field: Does the right hon. Gentleman accept that, while baiting bishops is a popular pastime in this place, it would be proper behaviour to take a raincheck on such activities, at least until after the Lambeth conference?

Mr. Alison: The hon. Gentleman's mention of the word raincheck has drawn my attention to the activities of Crow Dog in the state of Ohio. Our bishops are a great deal more reliable than that. I agree with the hon. Gentleman that bishops are often baited and that a great many of their entirely constructive and helpful spiritual ministries go largely unreported.

Arson Damage

25. **Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the right hon. Member for Selby, as representing the Church Commissioners, how many buildings within the control of the Church Commissioners have been damaged by arson over any recent convenient period; and what is the security policy in relation to ecclesiastical buildings within their control.

Mr. Alison: Isolated incidents of arson have been recorded over recent years on the commissioners' farms, which are in the direct care of their tenants. The commissioners are not directly responsible for the care of churches, the security of which is normally under the charge of the incumbent churchwardens and parochial church councils. I am sure that, like me, the hon. Gentleman deeply deplores the arson attack on St. Peter's, Eaton square, last October, and a recent church fire in the City of London, which was also attributed to arson.

Mr. Dalyell: Against the background of the example of St. Peter's, Eaton square, of which I gave warning to the right hon. Gentleman, what is the advice of the commissioners to incumbents and other ecclesiastical authorities? Is it to keep the churches open for worship or, from fear of arson, to lock doors which hitherto have not been locked?

Mr. Alison: Broadly, that advice is not strictly advice that should be tendered by the Commissioners, although we clearly have an indirect interest in terms of the financial help that we give to the dioceses and parishes. However, the advice and information that we receive is that parochial church councils all strive to keep churches as open as possible. Although incidents of theft and vandalism have occurred in 45 per cent. of all parish churches in every part of the country in the past five to 10 years, nevertheless, the policy of keeping churches open is one that we wish to continue.

Lambeth Conference

26. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the right hon. Member for Selby, as representing the Church Commissioners, how much the Church Commissioners will be contributing in cash and in kind towards the Lambeth conference; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alison: The Church Commissioners will be providing around £160,000, including the cost of seconded staff.

Mr. Greenway: Is my right hon. Friend aware of how much this House wishes success to the Lambeth conference? Is he further aware that I welcome the appointment of the Archdeacon of York and hope that more people like him are appointed as bishops? Can my right hon. Friend assure me that the Church Commissioners will pay neither in cash nor in kind any contribution to the Methodist conference, which appears to have become merely a political politburo rather than an ecclesiastical gathering?

Mr. Alison: I, too, applaud the appointment of Canon Austin as the Archdeacon of York. I am not answerable for the findings of the Methodist conference, although as a Conservative I am bound to say that the sweeping criticisms of the Government that derived from that source filled me with some dismay. I look forward to studying carefully the factual basis of those criticisms.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Serjeant at Arms Department

27. **Mr. Allen:** To ask the hon. Member for Berwick upon Tweed, as representing the House of Commons Commission, if he will take steps to initiate a review by the Staff Inspector of the work of the Serjeant at Arms Department in respect of the efficient provision of facilities for right hon. and hon. Members.

Mr. Alan Beith *(on behalf of the House of Commons Commission):* There are no plans for such a review at present.

Mr. Allen: Is the hon. Gentleman aware that an increasing number of Members work full-time in this place, so that there are greater needs in the constituencies, often met from the secretarial allowance? Do not individual Members now rely even more upon the services provided by the Serjeant at Arms Department? Will the hon. Gentleman ask the Staff Inspector to consider two matters? First, should not one Officer of the House be made responsible for Gallery tickets, guides and tours, so that hon. Members can arrange such matters conveniently? Secondly, should there not be a review of facilities for basic shopping for those hon. Members who have to travel a long way?

Mr. Beith: There is generally wide appreciation of much of the work done by the Serjeant at Arms Department. The arrangements for tickets and guides fall beyond the remit of the Staff Inspector. It is something that the Services Committee might wish to consider, and I shall invite it to do so if the hon. Gentleman would care to put further proposals to the Serjeant at Arms. The possibility of a supermarket on the premises goes rather wide and might give rise to some rather interesting discussion in the House.

Mr. Latham: How much longer will the Serjeant at Arms and Black Rod allow large numbers of our fellow citizens who want to see their Parliament to stand in the rain in a queue?

Mr. Beith: That is an interesting point, and one that the Services Committee might consider and keep under review. The hon. Gentleman's comments will be drawn to its notice.

Refreshment Department

28. **Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the hon. Member for Berwick upon Tweed, as representing the House of Commons Commission, what provisions are made for the welfare of staff in the Refreshment Department during the summer months.

Mr. Beith: In order to alleviate the worst effects on staff of the hot and humid weather experienced during the summer months considerable improvements have been made in recent years to the ventilation and air-flow arrangements in almost all the Refreshment Department's kitchens and public rooms. As a result only one trading point—Annie's Bar—has no form of mechanical ventilation or air conditioning. Further improvements are planned.

Mr. Banks: I should have thought that there was sufficient hot air circulating in Annie's Bar, such that any special provision would not be warranted. In view of some of the conversations that emanate from that Bar, would it not be appropriate for the hon. Gentleman to consider closing it?

Is the hon. Gentleman aware that this place is one of the smelliest and sweatiest that I have ever worked in, and that it is especially so for the staff? Are not the provisions for staff in this "Upstairs Downstairs" world of the Palace wholly inappropriate? Quite frankly, they should not be tolerated. I ask the hon. Gentleman to make further recommendations to make the working conditions for staff much better.

Mr. Beith: There are, indeed, further proposals to improve working conditions for Refreshment Department staff. More that £750,000 was spent on a scheme to improve the ventilation and air conditioning of the main kitchens. Half that sum came from the Refreshment Department's trading surplus, to which Members themselves contributed. Nevertheless, more work is required to improve conditions for our staff. It was, after all, to politicians and not to people working in kitchens that the advice was given, "If you can't stand the heat, get out of the kitchen".

Cash Limits

29. **Mr. Alton:** To ask the hon. Member for Berwick upon Tweed, as representing the House of Commons Commission, what is the policy of the House of Commons Commission as to the application of cash limits to expenditure undertaken on behalf of the House.

Mr. Beith: Cash limits do not apply to the Vote for House of Commons: Administration, which is the only Vote for which the Commission is directly responsible. The Commission decided in 1982 not to impose a formal cash limit system of its own, but over the years it has approved a series of measures designed to tighten the control of expenditure by Departments of the House without pre-empting the right of the House to take major decisions on its own facilities and services.

Mr. Alton: I thank my hon. Friend for that reply. Has the Commission been under pressure from the Government to impose strict cash limits? Does he agree that such limits would have the effect of gagging potential critics, which would be undesirable for the conduct of the affairs of the House?

Mr. Beith: The Commission, throughout its history—I have served on it since it was created nine years ago—has resisted any attempt that would have inhibited the House's ability to carry out its duties by reducing its ability to undertake legitimate expenditure. The Commission has, however, sought to give the Government reasonable notice of public expenditure requirements, wherever possible, while always insisting that the House should decide on the services it requires, and the Commission makes provision accordingly.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Bill of Rights (Tercentenary)

31. **Mr. Allen:** To ask the Lord President of the Council if he will make a statement on the progress of arrangements to mark the tercentenary of the Bill of Rights.

The Leader President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Wakeham): Arrangements for Parliament's celebration of this tercentenary have been approved by the Lord Chancellor and Mr. Speaker on the advice of a Committee of Members of both Houses. I understand that the main components of the celebrations will be the presentation of Addresses to Her Majesty the Queen in Westminster Hall on the morning of Wednesday 20 July, and an exhibition in the Banqueting house in Whitehall, to be opened on Wednesday 29 June by Lord Hailsham. Her Majesty will also visit the exhibition on 20 July. There will be associated publications, including material for schools. It is hoped that many Members and their spouses will be able to attend the ceremony in Westminster Hall and the exhibition.

Mr. Allen: As the Bill of Rights was designed to protect the individual against the oppressive power of the state, would not the best form of celebration be to have another one?

Mr. Wakeham: We believe that such a radical constitutional change could proceed only on the basis of agreement between the parties. There is no evidence of substantial support for the idea on either side of the House and I think that a review would be premature and unnecessary. A written constitution would have to be entrenched, which would weaken the principle of parliamentary sovereignty. If legislation conflicted with it, the constitution would have to be interpreted by some kind of supreme or constitutional court, which would push judges into the political arena and might endanger their justified reputation for impartiality.

Research Assistants

32. **Mr. Heathcoat-Amory:** To ask the Lord President of the Council how many research assistants are currently registered as working for right hon. and hon. Members.

Mr. Wakeham: A total of 592 passes have been issued to all categories of research assistants. The Register of Members' Secretaries and Research Assistants records only those in possession of a photo-identity pass and who pursue any relevant gainful occupation other than that for which the pass is issued. It does not differentiate between secretaries and research assistants.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Does my right hon. Friend agree that there are too many research assistants cluttering up the place? Is he aware that some of them are simply parliamentary lobbyists getting their telephone calls on the cheap, while others are doing party political work which should be funded from outside the House? Now that the opposition parties have had a 70 per cent. pay rise, will my right hon. Friend conduct a cull of research assistants and ensure that their activities are restricted to genuine parliamentary work?

Mr. Wakeham: My hon. Friend will be aware of the resolution of the House on 10 November 1987 which charged the Services Committee to consider the control of access to the precincts of the House, and in particular whether the numbers of Members' personal staff with access to the House should be reduced. The Accommodation and Administration Sub-Committee has now completed its inquiry and hopes to publish a report before the summer recess. We had better wait for that.

Mr. Tony Banks: May I tell the Lord President that the money that goes to Opposition parties does not work its way through to hard-working Back Benchers? Many of us rely very much on the excellent efforts and work that we get from our research assistants. I hope that the Lord President will disown those grossly insulting remarks made by the hon. Member for Wells (Mr. Heathcoat-Amory) and welcome the contribution to the efficient working of this place that research assistants provide.

Mr. Wakeham: I am delighted to hear the first part of the question. It would be grossly improper if the Short money did work its way through to Back Benchers, because the Opposition Front Bench and the leaders of all parties have to sign a certificate to say that it is not paid to Back Benchers, so we are in agreement on the first part of the question. I certainly recognise the contribution that secretaries and research assistants make to Parliament, but my hon. Friend the Member for Wells (Mr. Heathcoat-Amory) has a considerable point. Parliament will have to consider the numbers and whether access perhaps should be limited.

Mr. Fallon: How many research assistants are employed by the Leader of the Opposition? However many there are, should there not be more?

Mr. Wakeham: Perhaps one can have enough of a good thing.

Prime Minister's Press Secretary (Briefings)

33. **Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Lord President of the Council if he has any plans to make further facilities available to the Prime Minister's press secretary for briefings in the Palace of Westminster.

Mr. Wakeham: I have no such plans.

Mr. Dalyell: Since the revealing book by the hon. Member for Aldershot (Mr. Critchley) called "Heseltine" tells us that he knows a great deal from his incarnation as a Chief Whip, will the Leader of the House tell us whether it was shortage of accommodation that made it difficult for Mr. Bernard Ingham to communicate to the Prime Minister throughout 14 days what the Select Committee report in paragraphs 187 and 188 said Mr. Ingham knew about the Westland affair? Has he seen that in today's paper, yet again, the Government are described as playing fast and loose with the truth?

Mr. Wakeham: I had nothing further to say on the matter before I read the book by my hon. Friend the Member for Aldershot (Mr. Critchley), which I read last September while I was waiting for my son to be born in hospital. Having read the book, I have nothing further to add.

Mr. Hayward: Is my right hon. Friend considering the provision of extra facilities for the Leader of the Opposition, so that the members of the Shadow Cabinet can communicate with him rather than ringing the Press Association?

Mr. Wakeham: The extra Short money that has been allocated should enable them to conduct their business in a proper and efficient manner, if that is what they plan to do.

Mr. Winnick: Since the Prime Minister's press secretary is recognised as being virtually the deputy Prime Minister, and certainly carries far more authority than the Leader of the House, does the right hon. Gentleman believe that the facilities available to him here are sufficient, bearing in mind his authority in the realms of government?

Mr. Wakeham: Cutting all the trimmings out, the Prime Minister's press secretary comes here from time to time to give briefings to the Lobby, when invited by the Lobby.

Mr. Dobson: Will the Lord President tell us how many passes to the House of Commons are possessed by people in the No. 10 Downing street press office? Do they count as part of the 140 passes to the Press Gallery held by departmental press officers? Will he further tell us whether the Government intend to conduct any inquiry into the activity of Government press officers in this building, who seem to devote a great deal of their time not so much to putting over the Government's story, but in attempting to rubbish the Opposition?

Mr. Wakeham: I thought that the hon. Gentleman would have something to say on that subject, but most of what he said is pretty misleading. I do not believe that it is at all the case that Government information officers do anything other than conduct themselves in the highest traditions of the Government and the Civil Service, under this Government and the Labour Government. I do not believe that such an inquiry is required.

Palace of Westminster (Refurbishment)

34. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Lord President of the Council when he expects the uncleaned parts of the exterior of the parliamentary building to be refurbished; and what cost; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wakeham: Work on the remaining unrestored exterior stonework will take approximately five years to complete at an estimated cost of £6 million to £8 million.

Mr. Greenway: Does my right hon. Friend agree that there must be some continuing damage to the uncleaned stonework in view of the crumbling nature of the cleaned stonework, discovered by the cleaners? Does he agree that it is aesthetically offensive for the Victoria Tower to remain uncleaned, as against the beautiful and cleaned exterior of the remainder of the Palace?

Mr. Wakeham: I agree that we need to get on with the work as efficiently and effectively as we can. I agree also that the money being spent is not only to clean the fabric of the stonework but to restore it to a safe condition because some stones have fallen.

Balance of Payments

3.31 pm

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): I beg to ask leave to move the Adjournment of the House under Standing Order No. 20 for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration, namely,

> "The worst ever balance of payment crisis, which has just been announced for the month of May."

You will know, Mr. Speaker, that some of us have been cautioning for some time about the way in which the balance of payments has been worsening since the 1987 election boom. The deficit of £1·2 billion represents the worst figures in Britain's history. While the Prime Minister spends her time gallivanting around the world preaching prosperity and telling other countries that Britain is going through a boom, the truth is that the figures show, as have others during 1988, that the country is bleeding to death.

In this year's Budget, the Chancellor of the Exchequer told us that there would be a balance of payments deficit this year of £4 billion. In the five months to May, we have already had a deficit of £5·2 billion and we are heading for a deficit of between £10 billion and £12 billion. While the Prime Minister is constantly preaching prudence to others, she is presiding over a pawnshop economy. A balance of payments deficit of £12 billion is only the first instalment of having to pay for the so-called free-for-all, entrepreneurial, market force philosophy of the Prime Minister and her Cabinet. Some of our chief competitors, such as West Germany and Japan, have surpluses between them of $120 billion, while Britain's deficit gets even worse. It will get increasingly worse as North sea oil runs out.

The debate is important because interest rates will rise as a result of the deficit and that will bring about further inflation and the spiral of unemployment will continue once again. The figures show that the Government have been fiddling the invisible payments so much so that during 1987 they gave a figure of £600 million to £700 million, and that has now been scaled down to £400 million.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is coming to the end of his time. He must now bring his remarks to a close.

Mr. Skinner: We want the debate so that the Prime Minister can come to the Dispatch Box and answer for the mess. That is why it is important.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) asks leave to move the Adjournment of the House under Standing Order No. 20 for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that he believes should have urgent consideration, namely,

> "The announcement of a deficit of £1·2 billion in last month's balance of payments."

I have listened with care to what the hon. Gentleman has said. As he knows, the decision I have to make in relation to an application under Standing Order No. 20 is whether the matter should have precedence over the business set down for today or tomorrow. I regret that I do not consider the matter that he has raised is appropriate for discussion under Standing Order No. 20 and I therefore cannot submit his application to the House.

Orders of the Day

Housing Bill

[4TH DAY]

As amended (in the Standing Committee), again considered.

Clause 66

POWER TO GIVE FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

Amendment No. 313 proposed [14 June]: In page 47, line 45, leave out 'person' and insert

'statutory authority or registered charity'.—*[Mr. Spearing.]*

Question again proposed, That the amendment be made.

3.35pm

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): With the leave of the House, I recall that on 14 June the House was discussing amendment No. 313, which I had moved some time before. We now revert to that important topic, which relates to housing action trusts.

When we hear about housing action, we all think that the Government are about to make some great improvements, but, as the House knows, HATs are statutory pawns in the Bill that will enable large areas of municipal estate to be transferred to a so-called housing action trust nominated directly by the Secretary of State. HATs will not only take over properties on favourable terms—probably about half price—but will have planning powers.

I am fortunate in having been selected by you, Mr. Speaker, to move further amendments. We shall proceed to those at a fairly rapid rate. It was a pity that the Leader of the House interrupted proceedings as early as 7 pm on 14 June, which prevented us from making progress. If he had not, I would have been making this speech at about the time that he was speaking to the House. Why the Government moved the closure is a mystery. Had we continued, we could have made more progress, and I am sure that the House, including Ministers, would have been happy to do so.

Amendment No. 313 relates to HATs' powers to make grants. HATs will be able to acquire large areas of municipal property at half price without proper consultation with those whose tenancies are to be transferred. Early in the morning during the debate last week, the Secretary of State said that he would be sending letters to people in HAT areas and that they would have a chance to reply. Moreover, the Bill states that whatever action we took would be legalised by the House as consultation. We had a dispute about whether that was retrospective legislation; Opposition Members said that it was, but he said that it was not because there was fair warning. We said that would not be fair warning because we did not know what he would say in his letters to prospective tenants of the HATs, nor did we know the information that he would give or the offers that he would make.

HATs not only take over property, have planning powers and powers of a public health authority, but are empowered by the Bill to do almost anything they like. Clause 58 defines the primary objects of a housing trust as the effective management of housing and

[Mr. Nigel Spearing]

"to encourage diversity [illegible] the interests by virtue of which housing accommodation in the area is occupied"—

in other words, to increase the range of ownership and management. Under clause 58(3)(d), a HAT can

"carry on any business or undertaking".

HATs can acquire land compulsorily or by agreement. The HAT is acting only under the authority of central Government and replacing not only the local authority but local authority councillors' accountability to the local authority and their constituents. Because HATs can carry on any business or undertaking, they can make grants to any business or undertaking under the terms of clause 66, subsection (1) of which states:

"For the purpose of achieving its objects a housing action trust may, with the consent of the Secretary of State, give financial assistance to any person."

My amendment deletes "person" and substitutes

"statutory authority or registered charity".

The enormous powers wielded by a housing action trust can be used as patronage. It is clear that a trust, the members of which do not necessarily have to reside in the area and which will, in a way, be a central Government-appointed oligarchy, will have tremendous powers. It will have the powers of planning and compulsory acquisition of land and will be able to hand out money for virtually any purpose that it believes will improve the environment. A housing trust will have the power, under clause 58(1)(d),

"generally to secure or facilitate the improvement of living conditions in the area and the social conditions and general environment of the area."

These bodies have considerable scope to display patronage.

I hope that, even if the Secretary of State cannot agree to the amendment, which he may consider too restricting, he will give some thought to amendment No. 399, which has not been selected. It requires a housing action trust to keep publicly available a register detailing grants and moneys made available. Some days ago, I dealt with the way in which the London Docklands development corporation had handed out money left, right and centre to ease its task. We feel that much of that money has not been properly distributed. This approach displaces the local authority, which is strapped for money, and introduces an undemocratic, unaccountable body which is wholly dependent on the Secretary of State and wholly under his control. The purpose of amendment No. 313 is to ensure that wide-scale handouts are confined to statutory authorities or registered charities. I hope that a register of such assistance will be made available for public inspection.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): This continuation of the Housing Bill debate will be of particular interest to a number of people because tonight "World in Action" will reveal the activities of one of the most notorious private landlords, Mr. Nicholas van Hoogstraten, who has been charged a number of times with violent offences against tenants. This obnoxious landlord—one of the worst—has been quoted in the press as saying, and it will probably be repeated tonight on television;

"I am probably ruthless and I am probably violent."

That is the type of landlord who will undoubtedly come to the fore because of the Bill.

The amendment's aim is to tighten the moneys and grants made by a housing action trust. The formation of HATs is undoubtedly a blow to democratic local government. Their members will be appointed by the Secretary of State and will not be subject to any form of election. Tenants will be transferred to HATs from local authority ownership without the need for them to vote or give their approval. There will be no system of voting, as is provided for in other parts of the Bill. Local authorities will simply be told by the Secretary of State that a certain number of their properties are to be transferred to housing action trusts. Tenants will have no say whatsoever. If such bodies are to be established, they should be under some control and the money should be made available to statutory bodies and registered charities.

I may be asked why I referred to Mr. van Hoogstraten. Although such people will not be involved in housing action trusts, they will be very much involved in all aspects of the privately rented sector.

3.45 pm

Mr. Rhodri Morgan (Cardiff, West): Does my hon. Friend intend to ask the Secretary of State whether Mr. van Hoogstraten has signed the anti-social landlords' charter that the Secretary of State and his departmental officials have been so anxiously trying to draw up during the last 12 weeks?

Mr. Winnick: That will be an interesting question to put to the Minister who is to reply to the debate. Our warnings about the type of private landlords who are likely to come to the fore—the type of gangsters and ruthless people who did not die when Rachman died in the early 1960s—are highlighted once again by the case of this notorious thug and gangster—I repeat, thug and gangster—who has probably become a millionaire by exploiting tenants. He uses violence now. He will have even more of an incentive to use violence when the Bill becomes law.

If hon. Members doubt my words and believe that I am exaggerating, they ought to watch "World in Action" this evening. It reveals the type of ruthless, gangster landlord who will be willing to exploit every possible measure in the Bill when it becomes law to harass and intimidate his tenants and use thuggery and violence against them.

Mr. George Howarth (Knowsley, North): There is one way in which private landlords could become involved in housing action trusts. It may not be deliberate; it could almost be by accident. If owner-occupation, which is to be promoted by housing action trusts, fails—it will certainly fail in some of our urban areas—that will provide an opportunity for private landlords to become involved. There is a serious case in my area, involving the Stockbridge village trust. A private landlord is trying to move in, precisely because owner-occupation has failed.

Mr. Winnick: My hon. Friend has dealt with the very essence, in many respects, of housing action trusts. Housing action trusts will not be permanent. Properties will not be kept under their permanent management and control. Within two or three years, or even less, such properties will be transferred, but they will not be returned to local authorities, as they ought to be. They will be sold off for owner-occupation or they will be sold to various organisations or private landlords.

The Minister ought to give guarantees about the grants that are to be made by housing action trusts. They have to ensure that the type of abuses to which I have referred will not occur. However, I do not believe that any Minister can give such a guarantee, bearing in mind the incentives for the type of thuggery and violence that landlords such as Mr. van Hoogstraten are only too pleased to use. The Minister has a great deal to reply to on this amendment. That applies to other amendments that are to be debated later.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mrs. Marion Roe): I have to admit that I find it hard to imagine what more can be added to the extremely wide-ranging debate that we had a few days ago when we discussed this amendment. When I replied to the points raised by hon. Members then, I explained that housing action trusts will be able to use their power to give financial assistance only with the consent of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment.

My Department will issue a financial memorandum to the housing action trusts setting out in detail the principles and circumstances in which assistance will be given. There are many worthy purposes for which I envisage the housing action trusts offering financial assistance. These are, for example, the grant-aiding of environmental works to help to set up workshops or training schemes and improvements by householders to their homes. I cannot believe that Opposition Members do not want to see useful activities such as those being actively promoted and encouraged by the housing action trusts. As provided in schedule 6, which the House recently agreed to amend, full details of all financial assistance given by each housing action trust will be set out in the annual report submitted to Parliament.

Mr. Winnick: Will the Minister give way?

Mrs. Roe: No. I have already replied in detail to these points and think that we should get on.

I hope that the House will agree that the attempt by the amendment to restrict the housing action trusts' financial assistance to statutory authorities and registered charities is pointless. As I have explained, statutory authorities and registered charities are covered in general terms in clause 66. I invite the House to reject the amendment.

Amendment negatived.

Clause 67

DIRECTIONS AS TO EXERCISE OF FUNCTIONS

Mr. Spearing: I beg to move amendment No. 314, in page 48, line 29, at end insert

'which shall be published by him in the *London Gazette*'.

Mr. Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take Government amendment No. 333.

Mr. Spearing: An absence of cries from the Opposition when the Minister finished speaking to the last amendment should not be taken as acquiescence. The Minister's reply was quite unacceptable and has a bearing on this amendment. Clause 67 says:

> "(1) In the exercise of its functions, a housing action trust shall comply with any directions given by the Secretary of State.
>
> (2) Directions given by the Secretary of State may be of a general or particular character and may be varied or revoked by subsequent directions."

The Minister spoke about the sort of directions or codes that may be issued. I am not sure whether grants of money would come under that heading, but I hope that they will and that they will be published.

The Minister said that housing action trusts could offer financial assistance for training. She seemed to be saying that a housing action trust shall have scope for some form of educational activity or technical training. We know that these housing action trusts are vehicles to replace local government. They will become not only planning authorities, but local health authorities. It is quite clear from what the Minister said that in some respects the Government expect them to become training and education authorities as well. That is all the more reason for any directions made by the Secretary of State to be published.

Publication can take all sorts of forms. The House has known of cases in which we get a retrospective statement by a Minister that has been in the Library for months. We may get publication in an obscure circular, which goes only to town halls. I am suggesting publication in the *London Gazette*, because it can be perused. It is a regular publication and all will be above board.

Mr. Winnick: Does my hon. Friend consider it odd that these bodies should have power to take away without any voting or agreement by the local authorities properties owned by local authorities? No power is being given to local authorities to take over properties owned by the person that I mentioned, who admits to violence and worse against his tenants, Mr. van Hoogstraten. Why are the Government so determined to carry out this vendetta against local authorities?

I note that the Minister is mumbling. Since we cannot get an explanation from the Minister, I am asking whether my hon. Friend can supply one. Why are the Government so willing to punish local authorities by the setting up of HATs but not willing to take any firm and effective action against gangster landlords such as the one that I mentioned?

Mr. Spearing: I hesitate to disagree with my hon. Friend, but I think that he will agree with what I am about to say. There is not much punishment for local authorities, although there is in the global sense. However, there is punishment for the people who live in the areas where HATs are to be designated—we do not even know where they are—because, as I said last week, the housing that is owned collectively by the community will, in effect, be confiscated. HATs are, or can be, a vehicle for confiscation from the people of the area. For example, in Canning Town in my constituency, the Custom house area is almost purpose-built for a HAT because of the conditions there. I urge every hon. Member to think of the provisions of the Bill in terms of his own constituency.

My hon. Friend asks what is to prevent rogue landlords such as the one that he mentioned being involved. As far as I can see, there is nothing, other than the directions that the Secretary of State ought to issue in respect of what the HAT can do in disposing of its property. To be sure, some of it will go to the people who can afford to buy. The Secretary of State, who has just left the Chamber, may in his initial letters tell the local tenants that they can have their property at knockdown prices, or even no price under a Walker arrangement, about which we read in the press not long ago. None of the Ministers has said anything about the Walker scheme, but the HAT can operate it by the direction of the Secretary of State.

It may be that the Under-Secretary, or still more the Minister for Housing and Planning, will not wish to direct

[Mr. Spearing]

the implementation of the Walker scheme, but any future Secretary of State of any future Government, perhaps a Government even more set on having their own way, could do so, once authorised by the House. My modest request is that any such directions of restraint against the Rachman-type landlords to which my hon. referred, or encouragement for the wrong sort of land development, should be published.

I see that, following my amendment No. 314, the Government have tabled amendment No. 333, which you, Mr. Speaker, have selected with mine. That provides:

"The Secretary of State shall publish any direction given under this section."

We are thankful for small mercies, and I suppose that I can claim a constitutional footnote in that, although this is a Government amendment, it may have been stimulated by mine. It is not always recognised that Government amendments do not necessarily originate from the Government. They may result from undertakings or be stimulated by other amendments.

However, as my hon. Friend the Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) said, even if this information is published, that does nothing to ameliorate our concern that HATs will be not about housing but about the transfer of property, and in particular the transfer of land, under the powers of compulsory acquisition which, together with the powers of planning, have a Midas touch on land value. We have seen it in east London in the docklands, and it has spread throughout the country. It can happen in any area if the House has so decided by a majority of one vote after an hour-and-a-half debate. That is why the directions should be published, and published consistently, and that is why I have tabled my amendment.

Mrs. Roe: I wish first of all to answer the question put by the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) about housing action trust disposals. He should read the Bill more carefully, because clauses 74 and 77 set out our proposals and the Government amendments, which are to be discussed shortly, further strengthen the proposed arrangements.

I agreed in Committee, in response to an amendment tabled by the hon. Member for Halifax (Mrs. Mahon) that we would bring forward an amendment to require any direction made by the Secretary of State to be published. Amendment No. 333 fulfils that commitment.

4 pm

Amendment No. 314 requires directions by the Secretary of State to be published in the *London Gazette*. We are happy to agree that those directions should be published in the *London Gazette*, but we do not think that that needs to be made a statutory requirement. It would not be sensible to limit publication to the *London Gazette*, as, depending upon the content of the direction, it may be appropriate to publish it, in, for example, a local newspaper. I hope, therefore, that hon. Members will agree to Government amendment No. 333, which requires the Secretary of State's directions to HATs to be published, and will reject amendment No. 314 as unnecessary.

Mr. Spearing: I am grateful for the Minister's information that Government amendment No. 333 was put down as a consequence of an undertaking in Committee, although it has taken about two months for that to be done. That is an illustration of the way in which the Government are paying their respect, not just to the House, but to its procedures. In view of the undertaking, the amendment should have been tabled much earlier. I hope not only that local newspapers will publish the information, but that offices of the housing action trusts will complete their duties by having such instructions at least available in a register, if not displayed and perhaps widely circulated in the area.

We have many other matters to discuss today. In view of the Minister's undertaking, which does not go as far as my amendment, but goes some way in its spirit, I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Amendment made: No. 333, in page 48, line 29, at end insert—

'( ) The Secretary of State shall publish any direction given under this section.'.—*[Mr. Waldegrave.]*

Clause 69

TRANSFER OF LAND AND OTHER PROPERTY TO HOUSING ACTION TRUSTS

Mr. Spearing: I beg to move amendment No. 316, in page 49, line 38, at end insert

'which shall be specified in the statutory instrument specified in subsection (6) below'.

Mr. Speaker: With this, it will be convenient to take amendment No. 318, in clause 80, page 56, line 15, at end insert—

'(6) No such agreement shall take effect until after a draft statutory instrument incorporating the text of an agreement referred to in subsection (1) above has been approved by resolution of both Houses of Parliament'.

Mr. Spearing: This is a rather more important amendment because it deals with the transfer of land and other property to a housing action trust—or, as I would call it, confiscation. I note that no one has yet challenged the use of that word. The term "confiscation" is usually used when a public body takes over some form of private property without proper compensation. All hon. Members believe that that is wrong, although one can always argue whether it is unfair compensation or confiscation. However, that is a matter of balance.

Ms. Dawn Primarolo (Bristol, South): I wish to reinforce my hon. Friend's point about confiscation. Bristol city council contacted the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy, accountants working for local authorities and another reputable accountant in the city to ask them, given the current Government criteria, what amount of money a housing action trust would have to pay for a council house unit. The answer was £3,000 or thereabouts. Tenants, even under the right-to-buy scheme with maximum discounts, cannot buy the property for £3,000. That makes my hon. Friend's point very strongly. Bristol city's housing stock will be confiscated, at the rate of £3,000 a unit, if the city is unfortunate enough to have a housing action trust.

Mr. Spearing: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that information, because it underlines my point. Even if the Walker scheme is instituted and a sitting tenant is given a free gift of the property in which he or she lives, that is confiscation from future generations because those people, who are at present living in low-cost rented social accommodation, which the Minister apparently wishes to maintain in the capital, will not find the same municipal vacancies available, and therefore the community will not be so well served.

At present, in London, there are only about 10,000 allocations by local authorities each year, and that figure has been going down. It will be greatly reduced if HATs come into effect because, although there may be allocations through housing associations, if a property is sold off, either to a sitting tenant or to a landlord, the number of social housing voids will go right down. The number of people obtaining social accommodation which, in a recent press release, the Minister said was very important, will therefore be greatly reduced.

Clause 69 gives the Secretary of State power to transfer local housing from the local council to the HAT. Subsection (2) states:

> "Without prejudice to the powers under subsection (1) above, if in the opinion of the Secretary of State a housing action trust requires for the purposes of its functions any land which, though not falling within that subsection, is situated in the designated area and held (for whatever purpose) by a local authority, the Secretary of State may by order provide for the transfer of that land to the trust."

We are talking, therefore, not about existing housing land, but about land owned by a local authority, for whatever purpose. It might be a playing field, and we know what happens to so-called surplus playing fields. Recent housing and planning legislation contained a formula to determine which playing fields were surplus, and we know how they have been compulsorily sold throughout the country. The amendment cannot stop that, but it ensures that the terms

> "shall be specified in the statutory instrument specified in subsection (6)".

Subsection (6) states that a statutory instrument

> "shall be subject to annulment in pursuance of a resolution of either House of Parliament."

That is an insufficient safeguard. It should be an affirmative resolution because, under the Bill, the Secretary of State can lay a statutory instrument and, in the case of an existing HAT, the land or property will be transferred. It will not be subject to debate following a resolution of the House.

I simply ask that the terms under which the land is transferred are included in the order. My hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, South (Ms. Primarolo) has given a good example of the need for that provision. It is a tiny bit of glasnost which, if a fiddle is going on, shows the extent to which it is affecting local people. That is the reason behind amendment No. 316.

Amendment No. 318 deals with a rather more substantial matter. Surprisingly enough, a housing action trust does not necessarily have to do the work itself. There is an engine of centralised Government within the local authority, taking away its planning powers, its land and its housing. clause 80 states:

> "With the approval of the Secretary of State, a housing action trust may enter into an agreement with another person whereby, in relation to any housing accommodation or other land held by the trust which is specified in the agreement, that other person shall exercise, as agent of the trust, such of the functions of the trust as are so specified."

Amendment No. 318 also applies to that.

> "No such agreement shall take effect until after a draft statutory instrument incorporating the text of an agreement referred to in subsection (1) above has been approved by resolution of both Houses of Parliament."

Constitutionally, that is an important amendment.

The Secretary of State, who is present today, asks for those massive centralised powers. In the past, he has been a great critic of centralised Government power. He has criticised it consistently, as he has every right to do. The Secretary of State is introducing legislation that provides that, as I put it, a local authority's lands and housing can be confiscated from the local community. On approval, he can say that any part of the HAT and any part of its functions can be operated by any other person. The Bill does not even limit this transfer of power to other statutory authorities. It can be handed out as a piece of patronage, or as easy money, to any person. Presumably any local estate agent or local management of housing will be able to discharge any part of the management of HAT, which we know will be as wide as anyone cares to make it. An enormous power will be given to the Secretary of State.

In addition, any of the functions of a trust, or all its work, can be handed over to another body or association. Clause 80(3) states:

> "Where the agent is a body or association, an agreement under subsection (1) above may provide that the functions of the agent under the agreement may be performed by a committee or sub-committee, of by an officer, of the body or assocation."

Having said that no person can take over the job of a HAT, the Bill provides that a body, association, committee, sub-committee or officer of such a body or association can discharge all the functions of the HAT as an agent. It is not even stipulated that that person or officer has to be an officer of a public body. Presumably an association of landowners could undertake the work of a HAT.

We have a legal piece of circuitry whereby the HAT, or its chairman or members, can hand on to any of its friends any of the powers which it or they have by virtue of the Bill, provided they obtain the agreement of the Secretary of State. This is an almost unimaginable piece of power distribution. Such distribution may sometimes be a good thing where it is accountable and responsible, but the Bill is taking us further and further from democratic accountability. I shall not use the rude word which many have uttered during our debates on Report, but here is the centralised state coming to a state of semi-dictatorship.

The Secretary of State, or his officials, will have to monitor the work of an unlimited number of HATs. He or they will have to appoint their members and chairmen, and they in turn, with the Secretary of State's approval, can hand on all their work to any body, association or officer concerned.

Our work on Report is at least to bring some public light to what the Secretary of State is about. It would seem that the public, including even those who support the Government, do not understand the extent of the near-dictatorial powers that are being given by the Secretary of State by the small print in the Bill. That is why I am proposing in amendment No. 318 that any agreement of the sort to which I have referred should not take effect until after the draft statutory instrument incorporating the agreement has been passed and approved by resolution of the House.

4.15 pm

The Minister for Housing and Planning (Mr. William Waldegrave): I am full of admiration for the way in which the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) draws the widest implications from amendments, which I

[Mr. William Waldegrave]

think must have been rather smaller in scope originally. The power that will be given to the HATs will be nothing more or less than the power that is available to local authorities under the Housing Act 1985. They will be subject also——

Mr. Paul Boateng (Brent, South): Does not the Minister realise that the difference between local authorities and HATs—it is one that my hon. Friends and I have stressed time and time again—is that local authorities are elected bodies and HATs will not be? That makes all the difference in the world. We cannot accept the imposition of an unelected body that will be unaccountable to the people whom purportedly it will serve.

Mr. Waldegrave: As the hon. Gentleman rightly says, he has drawn attention time and time again to his party's objections to HATs. The House has had the opportunity time and time again to decide by vote whether it agrees with his views or those of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State. That is how the House proceeds. I realise that there is a difference between a HAT and a local authority. A HAT will be a temporary body that will bring with it central Government resources that will revitalise housing in certain areas.

In the context of amendment No. 316, I understand the concern of the hon. Member for Newham, South. We shall proceed in a precedented way. The hon. Gentleman is an expert on London government, and I have no doubt that he is aware of the provisions of section 23 of the London Government Act 1963. A previous Conservative Government—this was done also by various Labour Governments—set out in orders the methods by which valuation would be arrived at. I can give the clear commitment that that will be done in future. I can assure the House that orders transferring properties will set out as clearly as possible the principles of valuation that the district valuer will use to formulate his advice on the value of the properties that the HAT is to take over. There will be no question of confiscation. Proper valuations will be reached by the district valuer in the normal way.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): I found the Minister's comments interesting. He said when responding to amendment No. 316 that the process by which housing or other property will be transferred to HATs is well precedented and that the terms of the valuation will be set out. Why not include the necessary provisions in legislation? I am all for including detail in primary legislation.

The Secretary of State will employ the negative procedure, and it is a fact that over the past 50 years or more the House has handed over increasing power to Secretaries of State without any adequate means of scrutinising delegated legislation. The Minister knows that, when the negative procedure is followed, there is no requirement that there should be debates in this place. A prayer has to be tabled, and if my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing), for example, tables one, there is no guarantee that it will be allocated time by the Government.

We know that the Government retain supremacy in allocating time in this place. No Standing Order requires that, if a prayer is tabled, time shall be provided for debate. Discretion rests entirely with the Government. If further details are sought and if hon. Members want the Minister to be accountable to the House, they must try to obtain Front-Bench support for the prayer to ensure that it is debated, and so require the Minister to provide details.

As it is so difficult to ensure that there is ministerial accountability, and as the House is failing, in my view, to provide adequate debate, I suggest that the Minister should give an assurance that goes beyond a statement that precedent will be followed. The Minister probably knows that precedents are sometimes forgotten by the Joint Committee on Statutory Instruments and the Select Committee on the Environment. It is a hit-or-miss affair, and sometimes Departments make a mess of statutory instruments. I accept, of course, that they issue long memoranda in which they apologise for having overlooked or omitted precedent, but the fact remains that precedents are sometimes overlooked.

Why not incorporate precedent in primary legislation? If that is done, the civil servants who draft statutory instruments for signature by the Minister will have to do what is set out in legislation. Amendment No. 316 is very useful and specifies that. In effect, the Minister has said that, by virtue of precedent, the terms are put down because terms of valuation are included on the face of the order. There is no problem. The terms of amendment No. 316 are applied in some way, not entirely as my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, South has set out, but there will be some kind of application. Therefore, I cannot imagine that the Minister has many objections to dotting i's and crossing a few t's in primary legislation. I am always in favour of that.

The Minister said that previous Labour and Conservative Governments have operated the system. While that is absolutely true, the system of delegated legislation and its scrutiny in this place is less than satisfactory. We should always try to get the primary legislation as clear as possible. That is why I support amendment No. 316.

Amendment No. 318 relates to transferring powers from a local authority to a quango. As the Minister has said, those powers are not exceptional. In amendment No. 318, my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, South wants to modify the Secretary of State's powers in that respect. That is always a useful thing to do. I remind the Minister that, when the Conservative party was in opposition, it mounted a considerable campaign against quangos. It said that it did not like them, that it wanted to get rid of them. When the Conservative party came to office in 1979, the Government produced statements that they had got rid of two or three quangos here and there and that that was a great step forward because they did not like quangos. However, the Government are now establishing quangos.

Some of us do not like quangos. We did not like them then and we do not like them now. Sometimes they are necessary, so we cannot rule them absolutely out of court. However, we do not like to give them enormous powers, because they are not like local authorities, which are subject to democratic elections. That is an important concept, although it is removed from the Government, who are not too bothered about democratic procedures. Therefore, amendment No. 318 is very well worth while.

In effect, the quangos may almost have powers of sub-delegation granted to them by the House in primary legislation. That is outrageous. One task of the Joint Committee on Statutory Instruments and the Select

Committee on Statutory Instruments, which are charged by the House to examine these matters, is to look out for sub-delegation. The House may pass a resolution to grant powers of scrutiny to a Select Committee on certain areas that it believes are suspect. Sub-delegation is one of those suspect areas.

You will not be surprised, Mr. Speaker, if I raise these matters. They are matters of concern and we shall have to continue to raise them to ensure that something is done to make better provision for scrutiny. No matter how well intentioned the Minister is, when he gets into his office in Whitehall and says, "Well, I don't much like this order," the civil servants will tell him, "Well, that is as may be, Mr. Minister of State or Mr. Parliamentary Under-Secretary, but actually the legal responsibility is not yours. You can advise the Secretary of State. The primary legislation puts the responsibility on the Secretary of State."

Parliamentary Under-Secretaries of State in various Departments and Ministers of State can make as much noise as they want, the Parliamentary Under-Secretaries of State can expostulate as much as they like, but if the Secretary of State is determined to go down a particular road, there is nothing that they can do about it, as the civil servants used to explain to me when Eric Varley was Secretary of state and went down various roads that I did not much like. That led to the boardroom of Coalite, which gives some idea of the character of the former Secretary of State.

The Bill grants powers to the Secretary of State. I do not like that, and I entirely support amendments Nos. 316 and 318.

Mr. Spearing: I am very grateful for the support of my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) and for his enlightenment, direct—albeit some time ago—from a desk in Whitehall. My hon. Friend has made my case stronger.

When the Minister replied, he did not deny any of the possible consequences that I envisaged from this part of the Bill, particularly relating to amendment No. 318 which we are discussing with amendment No. 316. the Minister said that I had given the widest interpretation, as if that was somehow unfair. That was not unfair. I believe that there is a great risk of centralised domination direct from the Secretary of State, telling the quangos to whom they must delegate. We must ensure that none of the persons given those agencies has any political interests which might conflict or be in accordance with the Government's objectives. That would not do, would it?

The Minister said, "What's this? It is only giving power to do what local authorities can do at the moment." That is just not correct. While local authorities may have planning powers and powers of compulsory purchase which the quangos will have, they cannot exercise those powers with the ease with which the quango will be able to act. Quangos can act with the approval of the Secretary of State or with a negative instrument, as my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South has said. They do not necessarily have to go through the same planning hoops as local authorities. I suppose that they might deem themselves planning consent. That makes nonsense of the point about the value of land.

The biggest point is that, according to clause 58(3)(d), the quangos can

"carry on any business or undertaking."

I did not think that local authorities could do that. Perhaps the Secretary of State has not read the Bill that he is taking through the Bill. I did not know that local authorities could

"carry on any business or undertaking."

Amendment No. 316 refers to valuation. We know that the HATs will have to draw up some kind of plan. Will the land be valued, or will the terms of transfer be valued, before or after the plan has been drawn up? Part of my constituency is very close to the royal docks, which are to be developed as a highly expensive area. What will happen to the value of the surrounding land? On what basis will compensation be granted?

When the other place reaches these matters, it may look into some of the questions that I have raised, which I believe that the Minister has answered unwisely and, in one respect at least, inaccurately.

Amendment negatived.

Mr. Spearing: I beg to move amendment No. 402, in page 49, line 39, leave out subsection (5).

Mr. Speaker: With this it will be convenient to discuss the following amendments: No. 403, in page 49, line 43, leave out from 'property' to end of line 45.

No. 410, in clause 81, page 56, line 40, leave out sub-paragraph (a).

Mr. Spearing: Clause 69 authorises the

"transfer of land and other property to housing action trusts".

That precedes the authority that we discussed in amendment No. 316. The extraordinary subsection (5) of clause 69 states:

> "Without prejudice to the generality of subsection (4) above, the financial terms referred to in that subsection may include provision for payments by a local authority as well as or instead of payments to a local authority."

That makes it clear that the Secretary of State may say that the land or housing he is to take over has a negative value.

We know all about negative values in the London docklands, which the LDDC now claims it has made positive to the extent of £1 million or £2 million per acre. Subsection (5) will give the Secretary of State authority to ask the local authority to pay the Government money for the land or property that is taken off its hands. That is my understanding of the subsection, and I believe that that is what was read into it in Committee.

4.30 pm

The Government can say to a local authority, "If you keep this property, you will have to lay out a lot of money. It represents a liability for you. We shall take it off your hands and spend money refurbishing it. If we believe it to be a liability you will pay the money for it." That aspect is of particular importance in my own constituency, where there are eight tower blocks, including Ault Point, Hume Point and Gannon Point. If they are made available for refurbishment, and that is a big question mark, the Secretary of State may say to the local authority, "Pay us to take those tower blocks off your hands". That would be an extraordinary use of his power, because the local authority would lost the possibility of rehousing people and would also have to pay the Secretary of State.

The Secretary of State may argue that if the local authority hangs on to that property, it will be a liability. However, the real liability will be on the community, so

[Mr. Spearing]

such a provision is immoral. It will take money from the local authority, and will take away facilities at the same time.

Amendment No. 410 deals with the same point and concerns what happens when a housing action trust is wound up. We know that such is in the Secretary of State's mind and that trusts are only meant as transitional bodies, to get land and property out of public hands and into private hands.

Clause 81(4)*(a)* reads:

> "where it provides for any such disposal or transfer as is mentioned in subsection (2)*(b)* above, may be on such terms, including financial terms, as the Secretary of State thinks fit and may create or impose such new rights or liabilities in respect of what is transferred as appear to him to be necessary or expedient."

In other words, when the trust is wound up, the Secretary of State can stipulate what liabilities and important rights go with it. That may absolve from liability the housing action trusts, and it makes the value of what they are providing rather more than what the valuation may indicate.

When the Minister winds up, I ask him to tell the House how the Secretary of State will use his powers. He may not be able to legislate for the future because the subsection says that the Secretary of State may act as he "thinks fit". A future Secretary of State may think very differently from the Minister who holds that office at the moment.

It must also be borne in mind that a housing action trust has powers of planning and acquisition, so the legal flexibility given by the subsection is very great.

Mr. Cryer: I am grateful for this opportunity to ask the Minister a few questions and to suggest that he might think differently if clause 69(5) were included in a Bill to take into public ownership various aspects of manufacturing. Supposing that there was legislation stipulating that

> "the transfer from a weaving company or other manufacturing interest of any property or any other land or factories by virtue of this section shall not be taken to give rise to any right to compensation."

What would the Minister think about that? We are getting some useful legislative hints and tips from the Government, ready for the time when we return to office.

The Labour party does not take the view that confiscation is a policy that it should support, and that is my view as well. I take the view that, if people suffer hardship when something is taken into public ownership, they can go to the supplementary benefits office and plead their case for hardship the same as anybody else. However, confiscation is apparently permissible in the case of local authorities. My guess is that, if the Labour party argued that in order to rescue a tottering industry, it should take it into public ownership and not pay compensation, or would not be obliged to pay compensation, the Minister would describe that as theft.

In this instance, the local authority is to have property taken from it, but subsection (5) states:

> "and the transfer from a local housing authority or other local authority of any local authority housing or other land or property by virtue of this section shall not be taken to give rise to any right to compensation."

The local authority will not have any right to say, "Just a minute—we are enjoying some rental income from that housing estate. After examining the figures, we find that we have a positive revenue"—as I suppose it would say, using current jargon—"so we ought to be compensated." No compensation will be available by virtue of the Minister's right under clause 69 to authorise an order transferring land, housing or other property to the quango we are setting up, which will no doubt be stuffed to the gills with the Minister's Conservative cronies, judging by the examples of the past few years.

I hope that the Minister will explain why a local authority will not be able to claim compensation. He knows full well that local authorities are very hard pressed for money. If they are to have obligations removed from them by housing action trusts in order to produce the regeneration that the Minister keeps mentioning, it would surely help them to have an injection of money themselves, to regenerate other areas of activity that are short of money, including facilities for the handicapped and for education. In constituencies such as mine, local authorities are short of money for building permanent schools, and there may be as many as 500 temporary classrooms, which cannot be replaced because no money is to be had from this mean-minded Government.

In those circumstances, it would be reasonable for a local authority to say to the Minister, "Hang on a minute. Let's have some compensation. We have put in a certain amount of money over the past five years. We do not like you taking over this property, and we have spent several hundred thousand or even several million pounds over the past five years. What sort of compensation will we get?"

It is important that the House should debate those issues rather than let them go by in some mechanistic way, whereby everything is pushed to one side because of timetabling needs. If the House does not debate those issues, where can they be debated? *[Interruption.]* I shall conclude my remarks, because my hon. Friends are making various helpful suggestions to me, even though they apparently do not wish to intervene in this important debate about considerations which I am raising on behalf of local authorities that will be affected by the legislation.

Mr. Waldegrave: Opposition Members are under some misapprehension, because we are dealing here with valuations for transfers within the public sector. The procedure we propose, by which the valuation should be at tenanted market value, could often produce higher values for the local authority concerned than would the normal, precedented procedure relating to outstanding loan debt, which is not a valuation procedure. If a local authority has housing with very low debt attached to it but of high value, it will receive more under the procedure we propose. It is not aimed at preventing local authorities from getting anything. It establishes the only logical way of proceeding. The valuation should be at tenanted market values.

I know that the hon. Member for Knowsley, North (Mr. Howarth) will recognise that point, because I believe that in his borough housing, which was valued for some purpose by the local authority, had a negative value. That highlights the problem that that local authority faces in terms of repairs. In those circumstances, it is surely right for the subsidy system to take account of any transfer that leaves the local authority worse off. If there was dowry or negative transfer value, the subsidy system should take that into account, and we are looking at the subsidy system to ensure that it can. Therefore, the argument is not about confiscation or trying to do down the local authorities. It is about trying to value property rationally and sensibly.

The hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) commented on flexibility and the winding up of the housing action trusts. I think that I can genuinely help him on that point—*[Interruption.]* We had a long debate in Committee with the hon. Member for Knowsley, North. Perhaps we can discuss his point later, because I am not sure that all of us would want to go over that debate again. I beg the hon. Member for Knowsley, North not to intervene, but if he insists, I will, of course, give way to him.

As I was saying, the hon. Member for Newham, South made a point about flexibility. At the moment, propriety would encourage the Secretary of State always to seek the highest value. I think that the hon. Member will agree that there may well be circumstances in which that would not be right when a housing action trust is wound up. The Secretary of State might want, for example, to lay certain obligations on a landlord who was about to take property from the housing action trust. He might want to say that that landlord should give nomination rights to the local authority or the housing association.

At that point, the Secretary of State would be laying an obligation on the landlord and the value would be less than it would otherwise have been. That is why we need to retain that kind of flexibility. Hon. Members need have no worry the other way. Propriety would normally provide the pressure for ensuring that the value was the highest possible. That gives flexibility which might allow the Secretary of State to load obligations on successor landlords which would diminish the value.

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): I should like to push the Minister a little further on that point. I expect that the Minister has seen a feature article in today's *Daily Telegraph*—in any case, he will be aware of its content from parliamentary answers and exchanges of the past couple of weeks—by John Grigsby, which is headed "Borough's rent arrears soar £4 million in a year". It refers to my borough of Southwark and gives the appalling figure that Southwark's tenants now owe £32 million in rent arrears. By anybody's standards that is unacceptable management and I am sure that there will be no dissent from that view. The article also makes the point that that figure contrasts with £28 million a year ago and with £30 million at the beginning of this year. In the past 20 months, that figure has increased from £24·5 million.

One paragraph of the article, which the Minister may have seen, states:

> "The council is one of the largest municipal landlords with 62,000 homes—many of them erected during the 1960s system building boom and now suffering maintenance problems—and the size of the arrears makes the borough a favourite candidate to host one of the Government's Housing Action Trusts to be announced later this year."

As I have told the Secretary of State and the Minister before, I am not one of those who have encouraged the Minister to announce where the HATs will go earlier—[HON. MEMBERS: "Why not?"] Because one should debate the principle rather than be distracted by thinking about where they might go.

However, if the housing action trust is to be a mechanism for rescuing some of the worst housing, and if Knowsley borough council, which is the example that the Minister cited, or Southwark borough council, has a negative value for its housing stock as a whole—in some ways those local authorities have the sort of housing stock that will make them the most obvious candidates for housing action trusts, because they are the most derelict and the most in need of additional investment—is there not an enormous contradiction? If the Government choose them because generally their accommodation is of such poor quality and because overall they have a negative value, such councils may be liable to pay the housing action trust for, in effect, being taken over. The result could be that pumping in the money and transferring across still leaves no residual debt.

4.45 pm

I remember the debate on that, and I am not seeking to open a general debate about the way in which one values such property, but if the Government are coming to the rescue of the most rundown housing stock in England and Wales, one should ask them to leave the local authority without a negative figure and without a liability to the housing action trust. That would at least mean that, if local authorities do not have any appalling huge housing estates, neither will they have any massive debts for housing that they no longer own.

Will the Minister comment on what appears to be an inconsistency in the policies of housing action trusts if, as we have understood it, that policy is to rescue, in the original phrase, "large chunks" of the worst municipal housing, because boroughs will be unable to afford to pay off their debts in the years to come if they no longer have the properties under their control?

Amendment negatived.

Clause 70

SUPPLEMENTARY PROVISIONS AS TO TRANSFER ORDERS

Mr. Spearing: I beg to move amendment No. 317, in page 50, leave out lines 28 to 32.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): With this, it will be convenient to consider amendment No. 319, in clause 81, page 56, line 46, leave out from beginning to end of line 3 on page 57.

Mr. Spearing: I shall be brief, but the amendments are important because clause 70 gives considerable powers to the Secretary of State in respect of transfer orders. Subsection (4) states:

> "(4) In connection with any transfer made by it, a transfer order may contain such incidental, consequential, transitional or supplementary provisions as appear to the Secretary of State to be necessary or expedient and, in particular, may—
> (a) apply, with or without modification, any provision made by or under any enactment; and
> (b) modify the operation of any provision made by or under any enactment."

As I read it, that means that modifications to the transfer can be made, altering and modifying any Act, as it goes along. Will the Minister explain why that provision is included and why it appears to give enormous powers to the Secretary of State to undermine and change any existing enactments?

Mr. Waldegrave: I hope that I can deal with the amendments in a way that will satisfy the hon. Gentleman. I agree that the powers look pretty broad, but I will try to explain why we have used them. The provisions are precedented in the London Government Act 1963 and the Local Government Act 1985. The orders will be subject to negative resolution procedures.

[Mr. Waldegrave]

I shall give the hon. Gentleman some examples of the kind of matters with which we might want to deal. Obviously, they are important to the people concerned, but they may not sound important when mentioned at this level in the House. For example, we may want a HAT to be able to treat notices by the local housing authority as if they had been given by the HAT. We might also want to give HATs some flexibility about whether new rent books need to be issued. It might be pointless to change all that. In order to achieve this, the Secretary of State might use his power under clause 70 to treat notification by a HAT to a tenant that a transfer is taking place as compliance with section 5(1) of the Landlord and Tenant Act 1985.

Moving on to clause 81, in addition to the similar general provision applying to dissolution orders, the hon. Member also expressed concern about the Secretary of State's power to set up new corporate bodies to take on some of the HATs' functions. There were some good examples of that which the hon. Member will remember during the abolition of the metropolitan counties. In, for example, South Yorkshire, a special pensions body was set up to deal with pension matters there. I refer to powers to deal with the odd and sometimes unpredictable situations which may arise and which need to be dealt with. As I have said, although they are important to the people concerned, I do not believe that they will worry the House, and they are well precedented.

Mr. Spearing: I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Clause 72

ACQUISITION BY HOUSING ACTION TRUST

Mr. Spearing: I beg to move amendment No. 405, in page 51, line 15, leave out 'by agreement or'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to discuss Government amendments Nos. 342 to 344.

Mr. Spearing: My amendment relates to further acquisitions by HATs. Not only can they acquire property by virtue of the statutory instruments that have already been discussed, but under this clause they can take land designated "by agreement". Although that might appear to be reasonable, "by agreement" does not necessarily mean a willing buyer or a willing seller in the usual sense. The Secretary of State might, for example, say to a local authority, "If you behave yourself and co-operate with the HAT and let it have your land by agreement rather than by compulsory purchase order, we might favourably consider some other issue."

In addition, as the HAT will have planning permission, it can offer a considerable inducement. An area of rundown shops in Tarling road, Custom house, in my constituency is owned by the local authority. Perhaps it will be taken over by a HAT or, at some time in the future, there may be planning permission for the use of those shops in the nearby docklands redevelopment, and that could be held out as an inducement. The Minister must say how such agreement is envisaged, how it will work and what inducements might be offered to gain an agreement that might not otherwise be gained.

Mr. Waldegrave: I genuinely find it difficult to understand precisely to what the hon. Gentleman is objecting in a HAT acquiring land by agreement. The hon. Gentleman, even more than I, will know that there have been one or two cases of the London Docklands development corporation and the local authority getting together to take reasonable steps to improve the neighbourhood. That might have involved the LDDC buying a little land as part of a sensible piece of land assembly. I do not understand how the hon. Gentleman could object to that.

As the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) will acknowledge, the Government amendments are a response to a commitment given in Committee that the acquisition powers given to HATs would be limited in the way that the urban district council powers were limited in the Local Government, Planning and Land Act 1980.

Mr. Spearing: I understand why the Government have introduced their amendments. However, the Minister appears not to realise that what he referred to as an agreement between the local authority and the LDDC is not necessarily viewed as such in the area. A block of flats in my constituency known as Barnwood court was the subject of discussions about possible agreement on alternative accommodation—but it was certainly not an agreement in the view of the local population.

The amendment highlights the fact that the clause puts the HAT in a position of considerable leverage and power, which is not compatible with the usual democratic local government. Having made my point, I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Amendments made: No. 342, in page 51, leave out lines 17 to 21 and insert—

'(2) A housing action trust may acquire (by agreement or, on being authorised to do so by the Secretary of State, compulsorily)—

(a) land adjacent to the designated area which the trust requires for purposes connected with the discharge of its functions in the area; and

(b) land outside the designated area (whether or not adjacent to it) which the trust requires for the provision of services in connection with the discharge of its functions in the area.'.

No. 343, in page 51, line 30, leave out

'For the purposes of its functions'.

No. 344, in page 51, line 33, leave out from 'order' to end of line 34 and insert—

'(a) being rights over land in the designated area and which the trust requires for the purposes of its functions;

(b) being rights over land adjacent to the designated area and which the trust requires for purposes connected with the discharge of its functions in the area; and

(c) being rights over land outside the designated area (whether or not adjacent to it) and which the trust requires for the provision of services in connection with the discharge of its functions in the area.'.—*[Mr. Waldegrave.]*

Clause 74

DISPOSAL OF LAND BY HOUSING ACTION TRUSTS

The Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Nicholas Ridley): I beg to move amendment No. 345, in page 52, line 28, after 'to', insert 'subsection (1A) below and'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): With this it will be convenient to discuss Government amendments Nos. 346, 347, 334 to 341 and amendment No. 90, in clause 77, page 54, line 48, at end insert—

'(6) In any case where the provisions of this section apply, a disposal may only be made to a person or body approved by the Housing Corporation under section 87 of this Act.

(7) Any secure tenant in receipt of a notice under subsection (2) above shall have the right, on request, to become a secure tenant of the local authority from which the accommodation of which he is the tenant was transferred under section 69 of this Act and any such notice shall inform him of the said right.

(8) Where a secure tenant exercises the right conferred by this section the Secretary of State shall adjust the amount of expenditure prescribed under Part VIII of the Local Government, Planning and Land Act 1980 (Capital Expenditure of Local Authorities etc) for the local authority to which it applies by an amount equal to the price for which the accommodation to which this section relates is transferred to the local authority.'

Mr. Ridley: This important group of amendments has been tabled to meet commitments given in Committee that tenants be reassured about their future once HATs have completed their work. It is a matter of real choice for tenants. When improvements have been made, I hope that many tenants will want to buy their homes. However, others will wish to stay in the social rented sector and they need to be reassured about what that will mean for them. The amendments provide just that assurance.

First, housing action trusts can transfer secure tenants and their properties only to landlords approved by the Housing Corporation. Those might include housing associations, tenants' co-operatives or other landlords, if approved. In all cases, the basis of approval will be the same as for our tenants' choice proposals. The Housing Corporation's criteria will be concerned with prospective landlords' stability, viability, competence and long-term commitment to provide decent rented houses for those who need it at a price they can afford. Those criteria, together with the undertakings that approved landlords will be required to give, will provide real guarantees for HAT tenants, and my power of consent over all proposed HAT disposals will help to make that stick.

Secondly, some tenants might prefer to return to the care of the local authority. The Bill will now require HATs to consult local authorities about their willingness to take on such tenants. If they are happy to do so, that option will be put fairly and squarely to the tenants. Thirdly, because we recognise the importance of ensuring that all HAT tenants have adequate information about the disposal options available, and enough time to digest those options, we are strengthening the Bill to improve the precedures governing tenant consultation. Taken together, the amendments offer tenants the prospect of improved homes, a choice of landlord and guarantees about their future.

While accepting the basic elements, the Opposition amendment seeks to go two steps further by, first, giving HAT tenants an absolute right of return to the local authority. That was debated at length in Committee. I cannot accept that it is reasonable to compel a local authority, many years ahead of a potential HAT disposal, to take back any tenant who so asks. The authority may no longer be in the rented housing business or it may have a different perception of its priorities. Comparisons made by the Opposition with tenants' right to buy or right to choose a new landlord are misconceived. It is one thing to give tenants a right to leave an authority; it is quite another to enable them to return whether or not that authority wishes it. However, if local authorities want to commit themselves in advance, that is a choice that they can make.

The second proposal, also discussed in Committee, is that an authority's prescribed expenditure should be automatically adjusted to reflect the cost of acquiring stock from a HAT. It will already have received the benefit of a capital receipt at the time of the original transfer, which will add to its spending power over time. There is, therefore, no case for a further adjustment to prescribed expenditure at the later stage. I regret that I cannot advise the House to accept the Opposition amendment.

Mr. Simon Hughes: I welcome the fact that the Government have moved some way towards meeting the objections made in Committee, although I regret that they have not gone the whole way. There is a certain inconsistency in the argument that tenants can choose when, in reality, they will not have that right. Initially, a decision on the new landlord will be made without the consent either of the tenants or of the local authority. At the end of the life of a HAT— the Secretary of State has confirmed this—even if the tenants explicitly show that they want to return to being local authority tenants, that may not be possible. That is regrettable and inconsistent with the supposed philosophy of the Bill. Of course, the ultimate philosophy is not a right to choose; it is to de-municipalise housing. Therefore, it is consistent with that to make it difficult, if not impossible, for tenants to return to the local authority.

Although it is agreed that there should be more guarantees that tenants will have secure accommodation after the life of a HAT, and having provided that the landlords will be approved, it is regrettable that the Secretary of State has not gone the further mile and accepted that tenants who wish to return to local authorities should be allowed to do so. If that was a mutual agreement—if local authorities were willing to have tenants back and the tenants wished to go back—the principle of tenants' choice should require that the Opposition amendment be accepted.

5 pm

Mr. Morgan: The chilling words uttered by the Secretary of State—that the local authority may no longer be in the municipal housing sector by the time the HAT winds up—go to the heart of the problems involved in this group of amendments in terms of what the Government really intend should be the future of the municipal housing sector. According to the Minister of State, when he introduced the Bill, the great purpose was to diversify the municipal sector, but it is clear that the Secretary of State intends to strangle it and the Secretary of State for Wales, according to press leaks, intends to give it away. Council houses in Wales are now known as "two-up and £1 down".

The Government must sort out the confusion—preferably, for the purposes of constitutional propriety, through orthodox legislation rather than by a mixture of press leaks and last-minute amendments. The Department of the Environment seems to have stopped at 183 amendments. I think that the Secretary of State for Wales was under the impression that if his right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment reached 200, the Secretary of State for Wales could take the new ball and

[Mr. Morgan]

table a new set of amendments, causing local authorities to give away municipal houses on a £1 deposit and allowing tenants to pay the rest out of housing benefit if they could not afford the normal obligations of ownership such as insurance, repairs, and so on.

At some stage in the constitutional process, the Government must tell us exactly what they intend. It is clear from their amendments that they intend the HATs to be a one-way street out of the municipal sector, with no option for tenants to return. That proposal must be combined with the premonitions from Wales. I understand that the heads of the Welsh Office housing division have been seconded to work in London with the Treasury, the Cabinet Office and occasionally, the Department of the Environment, with a view to getting £1-down de-municipalisation on to the statute book, either in conjunction with this Bill or even somehow overtaking the Bill along the fast lane of the M4.

The Government should play fair with local government and with the 80 per cent. of council tenants who have not taken advantage of discount purchase. The Government must say exactly what they intend. The Secretary of State has made it clear that the HAT is a one-way street out of council control and that there is no way back, even if the local authority wishes it, but there is a three-way confusion of strangulation, diversification and abdication. That illustrates the appalling muddle in Minister's minds in relation to this Bill, which has so many last-minute lean-to additions as to disqualify Ministers from house building of any kind. They cannot build legislation without changing their minds just as the roof is about to go on and the drains and services are being completed, so how can we possibly judge their intention? It is clear that there will be no way back into a council tenancy, even if the tenant so wishes.

Our amendment No. 90 would implement the original intention that the Government sold to the British public —that the aim of the Bill was diversification and a healthy climate of competition, including municipal housing, housing associations and approved private landlords. It seems, however, that that is no longer the intention. The Secretary of State made that chillingly clear with the suggestion that some or even all councils might not be in the municipal housing business by the time the HATs wind up their work.

It is essential that the Government make a clear statement of their real intention in the light of the schemes floated in the press by the Secretary of State for Wales, the statements about diversification made in Committee by the Minister of State, and the clear statement from the Secretary of State today that the proposal is a one-way street designed to strangle the life out of the municipal sector altogether.

Mr. Ridley: The hon. Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan) has misinterpreted what I said. I repeat, for the benefit of the hon. Gentleman and of the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes), that if tenants wish to return to the local authority and the authority wishes to have them back, they may go back. Indeed, if the local authority commits itself in advance, that can be made clear at the beginning, so the hon. Member for Cardiff, West is far wide of the mark.

Amendment agreed to.

Amendments made: No. 346, in page 52, line 32, at end insert—

'(1A) A housing action trust may not dispose of a house which is for the time being subject to a secure tenancy except—

(a) to a person who is for the time being approved by the Corporation either under this section or under section 87 below, or

(b) to a local housing authority or other local authority in accordance with section 77 below;

but this subsection does not apply to a disposal under Part V of the Housing Act 1985 (the right to buy).'.

No. 347, in page 53, line 3, at end insert—

'(4A) The Corporation shall not under this section approve—

(a) a public sector landlord; or

(b) the council of a county; or

(c) any other body which the Corporation have reason to believe might not be independent of such a landlord or council;

and, for the purposes of paragraph (c) above, a body shall not be regarded as independent of a public sector landlord or the council of a county if the body is or appears likely to be under the control of, or subject to influence from, such a landlord or council or particular members or officers of such a landlord or council.

(4B) In subsection (4A) above "public sector landlord" means—

(a) a local housing authority;

(b) a new town corporation within the meaning of section 4(b) of the Housing Act 1985; and

(c) the Development Board for Rural Wales.

(4C) The Corporation shall establish (and may from time to time vary) criteria to be satisfied by a person seeking approval under this section and, in deciding whether to give such approval, the Corporation shall have regard to whether the person satisfies the criteria.

(4D) Subject to any directions under section 76 of the Housing Associations Act 1985, (directions by the Secretary of State),—

(a) an approval under this section may be made conditional upon the person or persons concerned entering into such undertakings as may be specified by the Corporation; and

(b) if it appears to the Corporation appropriate to do so (whether by reason of a failure to honour an undertaking or to meet any criteria or for any other reason) the Corporation may revoke an approval given under this section by notice in writing served on the approved person, but such a revocation shall not affect any transaction completed before the service of the notice.'.—*[Mr. Ridley.]*

Clause 77

PROVISIONS APPLICABLE TO DISPOSALS OF DWELLING-HOUSES SUBJECT TO SECURE TENANCIES

Amendments made: No. 334, in page 54, line 18, leave out 'which will' and insert

'of one or more houses let on secure tenancies which would'.

No. 335, in page 54, line 20, at end insert—

'(1A) Before applying to the Secretary of State for consent to the proposed disposal or serving notice under subsection (2) below, the housing action trust shall serve notice in writing—

(a) on any local housing authority in whose area any houses falling within subsection (1) above are situated, and

(b) if any such houses were transferred to the trust from another local housing authority or other local authority under section 69 above, on that authority,

informing the authority of the proposed disposal, specifying the houses concerned, and requiring the authority within such period, not being less than 28 days, as may be specified in the notice, to serve on the trust a notice under subsection (1B) below.

(1B) A notice by a local housing authority or other local authority under this subsection shall inform the housing action trust, with respect to each of the houses specified in the notice under subsection (1A) above which is in the authority's area or, as the case may be, which was transferred from the authority as mentioned in paragraph (b) or that subsection,—

(a) that the authority wishes to acquire the house or is considering its acquisition; or

(b) that the authority does not wish to acquire the house;

and where the authority serves notice as mentioned in paragraph (a) above with respect to any house, the notice shall give information as to the likely consequences for the tenant if the house were to be acquired by the authority.'

No. 336, in page 54, line 22, after 'disposal',

'and after the expiry of the period specified in the notice under subsection (1A) above'.

No. 337, in page 54, line 31, leave out 'and'.

No. 338, in page 54, line 31, at end insert—

'(ca) informing him, with respect to the house of which he is tenant, of the wishes of the local housing authority and of any other authority which has served a notice under subsection (1B) above;

(cb) if an authority has served notice under paragraph (a) of subsection (1B) above with respect to that house, informing him (in accordance with the information given in the notice) of the likely consequences for him if the house were to be acquired by that authority and also, if he wishes to become a tenant of that authority, of his right to make representations to that effect under paragraph (d) below.'.

No. 339, in page 54, line 33, leave out 'reasonable period' and insert

'period, being not less than 28 days'.

No 340, in page 54, line 35, leave out from beginning to 'representations' in line 42 and insert—

'(3) The housing action trust shall consider any representations made to it in accordance with subsection (2)(d) above and, if it considers it appropriate having regard to—

(a) any representations so made, and

(b) any further information which may be provided by an authority which served a notice under subsection (1B)(a) above that it was considering the acquisition of a house,

the trust may amend its proposals with respect to the disposal and, in such a case, shall serve a further notice under subsection (2) above (in relation to which this subsection will again apply).

(4) When applying to the Secretary of State for consent to the proposed disposal (as amended, where appropriate by virtue of subsection (3) above) the housing action trust shall furnish to him—

(a) a copy of any notice served on it under subsection (1B) above or served by it under subsection (2) above;

(aa) a copy of any'.

No. 341, in page 54, line 44, at end insert—

'( ) Without prejudice to the generality of section 67 above, where an application is made to the Secretary of State for consent to a disposal to which this section applies, the Secretary of State may, by a direction under that section, require the housing action trust—

(a) to carry out such further consultation with respect to the proposed disposal as may be specified in the direction; and

(b) to furnish to him such information as may be so specified with respect to the results of that consultation.'.—*[Mr. Ridley.]*

Clause 81

DISSOLUTION OF HOUSING ACTION TRUST

Mr. Spearing: I beg to move amendment No. 408, in page 56, line 26, leave out 'person' and insert

'local authority or public body'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to discuss amendment No. 409, in page 56, line 31, leave out 'person' and insert

'local authority or public body'.

Mr. Spearing: We draw near to the conclusion of our consideration of amendments on housing action trusts with provisions relating to dissolution. Clause 81 states:

"Where it appears to a trust that its objects have been substantially achieved, it shall"—

and the things that it shall do include:

"the disposal to any person of any remaining property, rights or liabilities".

The amendment seeks to delete the word "person" and to insert

"local authority or public body".

The property in the hands of a HAT at the time of its dissolution will substantially consist of public property acquired from the public and from other persons by means of public money. It is only right, therefore, that when the HAT is dissolved it should bestow on the local community via a public body any property of which it has not already disposed. That is not merely just, but proper.

The amendment will also prevent the transfer from one gauleiter to another of property already in the hands of one person. Under clause 80, a HAT may devolve responsibility to "another person". Under the Bill as drafted, therefore, a person acting under an agency agreement can presumably, on dissolution of the HAT, devolve property or benefit on any other person, so that it would pass from one individual to another under the devolved power. That seems an extraordinary power and I hope that the Secretary of State will explain it.

I believe that the amendment is right and proper and should be made.

Mrs. Roe: Clause 58 sets out clearly the objects of a HAT, which include:

"to encourage diversity in the interests by virtue of which housing accommodation in the area is occupied and, in the case of accommodation which is occupied under tenancies, diversity in the identity of the landlords".

If hon. Members study that clause more carefully, they will appreciate why we cannot accept the amendments and why we reject them in spirit as well as in letter. We want HATs to increase choice and to give tenants an opportunity to transfer to new landlords. We do not believe that any property for which a HAT has not found a new destination when the HAT reaches the end of its life should automatically return to a local authority or other public owner. We believe that the great expanses of monotonous local authority estates must be broken up for the benefit of those who live there. It follows that, so far as possible, we hope to see HATs offering an alternative to a return to the local authority.

In the amendments that have just been made, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has made it clear that HATs will offer all secure tenants the opportunity to return to the local authority, if the local authority is willing to take them back. But I shall nevertheless continue to oppose the notion that disposal of a HAT's residual property at the end of its life should be restricted to return to the local authority or other public body. Similarly, I see no reason why the transfer of functions—if that needs to happen at all—can be only to local authorities or public bodies.

It is quite possible that, for the few remaining pieces of property with which we should expect to see a HAT left

[Mrs. Roe]

when it is ready to put forward dissolution proposals, a housing association or a tenants' co-operative may be the right recipient. If a housing association were to take on all remaining housing of a HAT, it might very well take on HAT staff—and it might need some of a HAT's functions in relation to those staff, such as making arrangements for pensions.

I have to emphasise that these are fail-safe provisions, necessary because we need to enable a HAT to be wound up when it has substantially completed its task. The provisions in the Bill do not rule out property, rights and liabilities, and indeed functions, being disposed of or transferred to local authorities and public bodies, but it would be foolish to impose the unnecessary restriction on disposals and transfers proposed in the amendments. I therefore invite hon. Members to reject both amendments.

Mr. Spearing: The hon. Lady gave herself away by talking about greater choice. The establishment of a HAT and the force of putting people under the landlordship of a HAT will be by order of the House; it will not be through the choice of the tenant, as it may well be in other parts of the Bill.

The hon. Lady may be right about some of the worthwhile ways in which the power can be used if a HAT has to be wound up, but I remind her and the House that when HATs transfer property before or after dissolution, they will be able to do so with the Midas touch of planning permission. Therefore they are machines not only for making public property private property, but, by virtue of their planning powers, they are giving enhanced value to the private sector, having acquired property from the public sector at rock bottom prices and to local public disadvantage. That is a fitting note on which to end this group of Opposition amendments. HATs should never need to be wound up, because they should not have been started in the first place.

Mr. Ian McCartney (Makerfield): As the Minister said, under clause 58 the responsibilities of HATs are not confined to general powers of acquiring housing and developing housing stock to benefit the community. In addition, clause 58 provides that a HAT can

"facilitate the provision of shops, advice centres and other facilities for the benefit of the community or communities"

to which the HAT is designated.

At present, many local authorities which will have their assets transferred will include within the designated HAT areas precisely those facilities. My own authority, Wigan metropolitan borough council, has substantial holdings in shops, youth centres, neighbourhood centres, the development of derelict land and previously privately owned land for community and leisure facilities. Those developments have taken place, and will continue to take place, directly through subsidies from local ratepayers and local taxpayers and through inner-area programme money designated by the Department of the Environment.

At the end of the HAT, there should be some facility for the return of those assets to the community, given that community resources, directly through the local authority or in joint projects between the local authority and the Department of the Environment, provided the facilities in the first place. It is unreasonable of the Minister to suggest that a HAT can be set up in an area where provision is being made for the local community through the local authority's investment policies. It is invidious that at the end of the HAT, those resources are not returned to the local authority or to those designated to run the area.

We discussed this matter last week, and the Minister still has not resolved it. I can envisage the asset-stripping of public resources while the HAT is in existence and at the end of the HAT previously public resources may be handed over not to the directly elected local authorities which provided them in the first place, but to other private sector bodies which were not involved in the initial investment.

Finally, what will happen to local authorities such as my own, which has the Leeds-Liverpool canal corridor project? Along the length of the Leeds-Liverpool canal, there is a whole series of local authority housing projects. Linked to that is a whole series of land investment policies involving derelict land and reconditioned land.

5.15 pm

Given the Secretary of State's intentions in clause 58, the creation of a HAT would not only take public authority housing into the HAT, but would include those areas of land which are coming to fruition or being prepared for fruition in terms of planning permission and the identification of resources for the development of leisure and other facilities. From what the Minister said, it appears that the HAT would have the objective of taking over and disposing of the assets next to the housing stock. In places such as Wigan, in the development and refurbishment of our housing estates, it is essential that those areas which are important for leisure and for community use are retained for public use by local residents.

Wigan local authority, and I am sure other local authorities, having invested in such projects, would not allow them to be transferred to the HAT and, at the end of the HAT, transferred to the private sector, to an individual or a company who had not been involved at any stage in the initial idea of creating the projects, and had not invested any capital resources, but would simply benefit from the work of the local authority and the local community.

Amendment negatived.

Amendment proposed No. 348, in page 59, line 27, at end insert—

'( ) In this Part of this Act "the Corporation" means the Housing Corporation or Housing for Wales but—

(a) an approval given by the Housing Corporation shall not have effect in relation to buildings or other property in Wales; and

(b) an approval given by Housing for Wales shall not have effect in relation to buildings or other property in England.'.—*[Mr. Waldegrave.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take Government amendments Nos. 368 to 370 and 376.

Mr. Morgan: I wish to raise one point about amendment No. 348, which appears to be the subject of a certain amount of confusion, or interdepartmental cross-sterilisation, between the Secretary of State for the Environment and the Secretary of State for Wales. It purports to describe the qualification system of the powers of the Housing Corporation, and the degree to which they will apply in Wales. It requires a different name for the separate housing corporation for Wales, Housing for

Wales, which will apply simply to Wales, while the Housing Corporation will apply only in England. It attempts to describe the powers of Housing in Wales.

The amendment was tabled in the name of only the Secretary of State for the Environment, and not in the name of the Secretary of State for Wales as well, which has been applied to all the other amendments involving Wales. I am well aware that the Secretary of State for the Environment is one of the Cabinet Ministers who is alleged not to speak to the Secretary of State for Wales, but this seems to be taking the process rather too far.

If one represents a Welsh constituency, it leads one to ask whether the Secretary of State for the Environment is now legislating for Wales, or whether the Secretary of State for Wales is involved as well. I wonder exactly what are the qualifications of the Secretary of State for the Environment to legislate for Wales. I am told that he considers his qualifications to legislate for Wales are that from his dude ranch in the Cotswolds, on a clear day, and with a telescope, he cannot quite see Wales. I am told that from the Cotswolds, on a clear day, with a telescope, he cannot see to the end of the mental green belt that he has put around his great ranch.

Wales is being treated as a last-minute legislative doormat by the Secretary of State for the Environment and he is not consulting his Cabinet colleagues as he properly should; there is either a technical error or a state of non-communication between Government Departments.

That leaves us with a major question. Does the appearance of the Secretary of State's name above amendment No. 348 mean that we may have housing action trusts in Wales? We have assumed that housing action trusts are not likely to be set up in Wales because we do not have multi-storey, deck access balcony contraptions, rather like 20th-century versions of the Secretary of State's property in the Cotswolds. Perhaps that is another reason why he believes he is qualified to legislate in this way.

As I have said, we are left with the thought that there may be housing action trusts in Wales. We should have the answer to that. Amendment No. 348 implies that we could have HATs, whereas all the indications given to people involved in housing in Wales are that the Secretary of State and his colleagues in Wales do not think that HATs are needed in Wales because we do not have 1960s system-built, multi-storey deck access housing. That should be cleared up now. We need to know what the Government's intentions are for HATs in Wales—or is this simply another example of the sloppy drafting of the Bill?

Mr. Waldegrave: The hon. Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan) has not understood. It is perfectly clear that the HAT clauses apply to Wales, although the Secretary of State for Wales has said that he does not envisage any HATs being established in Wales. The amendments, about which there is no mistake or lack of clarity, have been approved by the two Departments concerned. They provide for the references to "The Corporation" in parts III and IV to mean "Housing for Wales" as well as the "Housing Corporation". They are purely technical.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 86

RIGHT CONFERRED BY PART IV

Mr. Morgan: I beg to move amendment No. 100, in page 59, line 35, leave out

'buildings each of which comprises or contains one or more'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to consider the following amendments: No. 147, in page 59, line 37, leave out from 'tenants;' to end of line 39.

No. 101, in page 59, line 38, after 'property', insert

'not including any dwelling-house or flat'.

No. 148, in clause 89, page 61, line 36, leave out from 'above' to end of line 38.

Mr. Morgan: Through the device of the previous amendments, we have come to part IV of the Bill, on which I shall detain the House briefly. After all, it is the key to the way in which the Government intend to rig the ballot on the change-of-landlord, pick-a-landlord or pick-a-tenant scheme, or whatever one chooses to call it.

As far as we can tell, the purpose of the Government amendments to part IV is to exclude certain properties so that they can become more certain of obtaining a positive vote. That is why the amendments are reprehensible. However, they are not quite as reprehensible as the provisions by which those who have passed on may still be counted as being in favour of the Government. The Minister is in serious danger of entering "The Guinness Book of Records" as the first necrophiliac to become a Minister. I am speaking psephologically.

Mr. Waldegrave: It may help the House if I say that I believe that the hon. Gentleman is speaking to amendment No. 100, which is not a Government amendment.

Mr. Morgan: The Minister is right. Our amendments attempt to ameliorate the position so that we may have the power to exclude some of the buildings with which the Government are attempting to rig the ballot system. The Government are attempting to ensure that as few people as possible will be able to vote and that as many occupants as possible will be recorded as being in favour of a change of landlord.

We are attempting to incorporate our four minor amendments into the Bill. They do little to remedy the fundamental inequalities of the Bill as drafted, but they attempt to put some equality and elements of democracy back into this part of the Bill, so that people will have a chance to record their vote knowing that other people's vote will not be given greater power and that other people's votes, if not recorded, will not count double so as to push the pick-a-landord scheme through when that is not what the majority of tenants want.

One reason why the Secretary of State for Wales has come with a late rush on the outside in favour of the disposal of the municipal sector through further massive discounting down to £1 a time is that the Government realise that the pick-a-landlord scheme is unpopular among council tenants and that it will not get off the ground. The Government hope that by sowing confusion in everybody's mind they might have a chance of pushing some of the schemes through.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): This part of the Bill sets out a right for private landlords, housing associations, building societies and other companies to acquire council estates. The Minister and the Government

[Mr. Tony Banks]

generally have referred to this part of the Bill as the "tenants' choice". That is not how the tenants see it. Those of us who have held meetings, which must include some Conservative Members, will realise that in the long run.

We have described this as "pick a tenant" or, in certain circumstances, "trick a tenant". The tenant cannot choose the council, and that restricts a significant area of choice for which we know most council tenants would opt. It does not matter how good or effective the council is as a manager. The council is the one body that cannot acquire dwelling houses under this part of the Bill.

As a result of amendments in Committee, the other category who cannot exercise the right to buy an estate under this part of the Bill is anyone who appears to be under the control of the council. In other words, this is not a tenants' choice. It is a manifestation of the Government's vindictive hostility towards local authorities and their determination to destroy them no matter whether the tenants suffer. *[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Gillingham (Mr. Couchman) seems to be finding this vaguely amusing. If he were to talk to council tenants up and down the country, he would find out that that is not how they see it. I hope that that will be noted to the cost of the Conservative party at the next election.

From the pathetic "Tenants' Choice" document issued on 8 June, which purports to be the landlords' charter, for which we have been waiting for so long, it is clear that tenants will suffer a great deal. This is an invidious part of a vicious Bill, and I support the amendments.

Mr. Waldegrave: I have seldom had to answer a debate in which the Opposition spokesman began by attacking the amendments on the grounds that they were Government amendments and then found out that they were Opposition amendments. I stand by the early part of his speech, which was admirably put.

The hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) is a little out of date. Long ago, on Second Reading, I said that I had no doubt that in due course the Opposition would come round to some of the ideas in the Bill, just as they came round to the right to buy. It has happened more quickly than we predicted. The leader of the Labour party has already made some helpful interventions saying that the principles underlying this—with some changes that he would no doubt want to make——

Mr. Tony Banks: Wait until the Minister reads my right hon. Friend's next speech.

Mr. Waldegrave: I will look forward to his next speech. It may well be different. That is part of the delight involved in reading the speeches of the Leader of the Opposition. All human life is there, as it was in the old *News of the World.*

Clause 86 sets out this part of the Bill. It has been debated extensively in the House and in Committee. The core of the commitment is a tenant's home, whether a flat or house. Clause 86(1)(a) applies the right under part IV to freehold tenanted dwelling houses. Amendment No. 100 would narrow that provision to apply only to houses. That would be an unfair and acceptable retreat from the basic commitment in our manifesto.

The way in which we have set out the tenants' choice procedure is sensible. We will debate some aspects of it later. I have no doubt that, once the procedures are fully set up, they will be welcomed by people who are dissatisfied with their existing council landlords.

It is sensible for a right relating to a house or flat to relate equally to the land that goes with the buildings, whether it is land or buildings with or without tenants. That was generally accepted in Committee. There is nothing unusual involved. We are talking about separate garages let with flats and open-plan gardens surrounding houses or flats in the unsatisfactory Radburn-style layouts. As we have put it in clause 86(1)(b), we are talking about land

"reasonably required for occupation with"

the homes defined in 86(1)(a).

Amendment Nos. 147 and 148, and to a lesser but still substantial extent amendment No. 101, would strike out the clause's provisions and leave a nonsense. I should have little difficulty in persuading Opposition Members not to press the amendment to a Division. I know that we have argued about other matters, but I do not think that the amendments would lead to anything that the right hon. Member for Islwyn (Mr. Kinnock) or the hon. Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) would want to support.

Amendment negatived.

5.30 pm

Mr. George Howarth: I beg to move amendment No. 105, in page 60, line 7, leave out

'or will be so obliged at a date specified in such an order'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take the following amendments: No. 104, in page 60, line 8, at end insert—

'a notice of seeking possession has been served in accordance with section 83 of the Housing Act 1985, on any of the grounds specified in Schedule 2 to that Act; or'.

No. 103, in page 60, line 10, at end insert—

'; or (c) he is in arrears of more than twice the weekly rent on the relevent date.'.

Mr. Howarth: The amendments are an attempt to clarify clause 86(3), which says:

"A secure tenant is a qualifying tenant for the purposes of this Part unless"—

and then lists the exceptions.

The amendments try to add further to the understanding of what constitutes a secure tenant, to protect the interests of a legitimate tenant who might need his position clarifying. Our concern is that an arbitrary view might be taken of at what point the level of arrears would affect a tenant's rights under schedule 2 to the Housing Act 1985. The amendments also try to clarify the legal position when an order to give up possession is made.

These are genuine amendments that are trying not to make a great point of principle but to amend the wording of the Bill to make it more understandable to those who might need to have it defined.

Mr. Waldegrave: These are serious amendments. Amendment No. 105 is designed to avoid an unnecessary restriction. It would allow rights to consultation under clause 95—and the ability to transfer under tenants' choice—to anyone with a possession order against them, providing it did not have immediate effect. I think that the amendment is concerned with those who have suspended possession orders against them.

The Government share the views that have been expressed by the hon. Member for Knowsley North (Mr.

Howarth) on amendment No. 105. Those who have suspended possession orders against them would include many people who would normally pay off their arrears. I am advised that the amendment is unnecessary because, although suspended orders may contain a date, it is not a date on which, according to the legal interpretation that I have been given, the tenant will be obliged to give up possession. On the contrary, it is often the date when he will become free from the threat of possession if he has paid off the arrears and if the other conditions attached to the suspended order are met.

The words that the amendment seeks to delete achieve the effect that the hon. Gentleman is seeking. I am glad to be able to reassure the hon. Gentleman about that, and I hope that I have made the point perfectly clear to those outside.

Amendments Nos. 104 and 103 go in a completely different direction and I should not want to accept them. They would prevent a tenant from qualifying where a landlord had begun formal proceedings for possession, even when no court order had been made. Amendment No. 103 is stricter still and would rule out tenants in more than two weeks' rent arrears—which on this scale might be technical only—on the relevant date. I am strongly against those amendments.

I assure the hon. Member for Knowsley, North that, according to the legal advice that I have been given, the important point in amendment No. 105 is met by the present wording of the Bill.

Mr. Howarth: I am grateful to the Minister for clarifying the position. There is widespread concern that arrears and the way in which they are being treated is likely to cause serious problems.

The Minister conceded that many people get into arrears for legitimate reasons—often because of difficulties with processing housing benefit. Many people will have notional arrears until the housing benefit process sorts itself out, and they might fall foul of this part of the Bill. We are not satisfied that the clause will protect the interests of people who, for a variety of reasons—many of which are legitimate—find themselves in rent arrears.

I thank the Minister for clarifying amendment No. 105, but I am less than happy with his wholehearted refusal to take on board the points made about the other two amendments.

Amendment negatived.

Clause 87

PERSONS BY WHOM RIGHT MAY BE EXERCISED

Amendments made: No. 368, in page 60, line 16 leave out

'has been approved by the Housing Corporation'

and insert

'is for the time being approved by the Corporation'.

No. 369, in page 60, line 18, leave out 'Housing'.

No. 370, in page 60, line 20, leave out 'so approved' and insert 'approved under this section'.—*[Mr. Waldegrave.]*

Mr. Simon Hughes: I beg to move amendment No. 388, in page 60, line 20, at end insert—

'(1A) The right conferred by this Part shall not be exercisable by a person approved under this section until after tenants of any dwelling-houses which such a person wishes to acquire have held a ballot on whether they wish their dwelling houses to be owned or managed by them co-operatively'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take the following amendments: No. 398, in page 60, line 20, at end insert—

'(1A) A parish or community council may be approved by the Housing Corporation under this section.'.

No. 178, in page 60, line 35, at end insert—

'(5) The Housing Corporation shall have a duty to provide reasonable funding and training to tenants' co-operatives applying for approval under this Part;'.

No. 120, in clause 88, page 61, line 18, at end insert—

'This subsection shall not apply to an application made by a representative co-operative of tenants of those dwellings which are subject to the application'.

No. 397, in clause 89, page 61, line 38, at end add—

'; and

(c) in respect of property covered by a management agreement of the type referred to in section 27 of the Housing Act 1985 where the agent is a tenant management co-operative—
  (i) shall only include property covered by that management agreement; and,
  (ii) shall include all property covered by that management agreement.'.

Mr. Hughes: Most of these amendments are concerned with the opportunity to form tenants' co-operatives. Amendment No. 388 is tabled in my name and that of my hon. Friend the Member for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Livsey), but amendment No. 397 has received all-party support. It emanates from the newly formed all-party group that has been set up to propagate the interests of co-operatives. The Minister for Housing and Planning was good enough to speak at its inaugural meeting. I hope that we shall receive from him a sympathetic response to the purport of the amendments.

The intention of amendment No. 398 is slightly different—to allow parish or community councils to become approved landlords.

It is interesting to look at the Conservative party manifesto of the last election. Its proposals for council housing say:

"We will give groups of tenants the right to form tenant co-operatives, owning and running their management and budget for themselves. They will also have the right to ask other institutions to takeover their housing. Tenants who wish to remain with the local authority will be able to do so."

It was interesting—I applaud this—that tenant co-operatives—the opportunity for tenants to own and run their management and budget for themselves—was the first of those three options. The commitment in the manifesto that gives tenants rights to ask other institutions to take over their housing has slightly changed with the passage of time.

I think that hon. Members will agree that last week I had an interesting exchange with the Prime Minister at Prime Minister's Question Time. No doubt Ministers have had an opportunity to read our exchanges. I asked the Prime Minister to explain the change in policy in part IV of the Bill, and the Prime Minister said:

"I thought that we had arranged that it was a majority of those voting—either for tenants' co-operatives or for a possible transfer to housing associations."—[*Official Report*, 23 June 1988; Vol. 172, c. 1257.]

The point that must be underlined is that tenants' co-operatives were listed as the first option.

Amendment No. 388 argues that tenants should have the opportunity to consider whether they wish to go down the co-operative road before any new landlord can start campaigning to take over their housing. There is a widespread belief in the House that, if part IV is to give tenants opportunities, they must have the chance first to

[Mr. Hughes]

consider managing or owning their houses co-operatively and be given a specific time in which to do so. If that does not happen, there will be no realistic prospect of a tenants' co-operative. It will have been overtaken by alternatives from the private sector, which are already resourced and financed, and other approved landlords.

In Committee, the Minister did not make it clear exactly why he was not prepared to concede that tenants should have such an opportunity. I press him to be more explicit. As I said in Committee, his words about and support for co-operatives were encouraging. The Minister for Housing and Planning and the Under-Secretary of State for the Environment—the hon. Member for Broxbourne (Mrs. Roe)—often give examples of co-operatives that they have visited.

Paragraph 7 of "Tenants' Choice", which was published last week, states that the criteria for approval by landlords

> "and the way in which they are applied, will need to take account of the special position of tenant co-ops or other community-based applicants which it might be proposed to set up, with help and guidance from the Housing Corporation, to take over property under Tenants' Choice."

That is all well and good, but it begs the question: in practice, how will the Government, through the approval criteria mentioned in paragraph 7 and clause 87, take account of the special position of co-operatives? I hope that the Minister can answer that question in a detailed and explicit way.

I hope that the Minister can say something more than that he has just set up a review of co-operatives. Although I welcome the review, I am slightly surprised that the reporting date will be after the Bill becomes law. The Bill may become law in November, with the review date being in December, so there may be some difficulty about establishing the new regime for co-operatives. I hope that the Minister will tell us that tenants' co-operatives will have a special place, especially in the pre-selection procedure. There is no argument in law as to why tenants should not have a chance to choose the management or ownership of a co-operative before any new landlord can come forward.

There is another matter on which I have not yet heard a public comment or seen a written response. Discussions are taking place on the future of the Hayles estate in my constituency, a private estate taken over by the council. Hearings have been held at which a variety of prospective landlords can put their case. The first was Quality Street and the second was the Keniston housing association, and the local authority is soon to put its case.

A week ago, at the meeting with the Keniston housing association, when the council's leader was present, the proposal was to have an ownership co-operative that would employ a housing association for a limited period —say, five years—under a management agreement to manage the estate for the tenants. Having spoken to my colleague who speaks for my party on housing in Southwark and who lives in Kennington near the estate, I believe that the proposal provides for a lot of tenants' choice. They can choose initially who is to manage. That is consistent with the Government's arguments about tendering for the best service. Also, tenants have a continuing choice because, after five years, they can review who managed their property and decide whether to manage it themselves. Have the Government considered that idea, and does it find favour?

5.45 pm

An opportunity must be provided within the time sequence allowed in the Bill for tenants to consider this co-operative option before any other bid can be made. This is an exemplary opportunity to have real tenants' choice, rather than the con, the misleading system, described in part IV. It does not mean a once-and-for-all, one-way tenants' choice. This choice will allow tenants to move into and out of different forms of management. I hope that, if Ministers share the Opposition's motivation —that we should extend freedom for tenants rather than de-municipalise, which seems to be the Government's primary motivation—the Government will support a move in this direction.

I shall leave it to other hon. Members to speak to the amendment that emanates from the co-operative movement and the National Federation of Housing Co-operatives, and I await the Minister's response. The amendment deals also with the proposal that parish and community councils be landlords. There is a good argument of principle that there should be devolution of housing management to the level nearest the people. It will mean less bureaucratic and more responsive management.

I am not just talking about devolution with an authority, although some authorities have pioneered this approach. It is one of the good things, I am proud to say, that has come about in Tower Hamlets. It has been tried by Walsall and Islington. Surely a parish or community council should be allowed to take over a small amount of housing, whether in a rural village with two council properties or in a town with a large number of council properties. I hope that there is no objection in principle to that proposal.

I have argued for co-operatives to be given a real choice; otherwise they will be pre-empted by financing arrangements and practical organisational matters, which are a little more difficult than in a straightforward transfer into the private sector or an existing housing association. I have argued that people should be given an opportunity to decide the type of tenants' co-operative they want. This should be the first option before other landlords make bids for their property. I have made a specific request that co-operatives should be treated helpfully and differently by the Government. I hope that the Government consider the opportunity for town and community councils to be landlords.

Mr. George Howarth: Amendment No. 397 is supported by hon. Members on both sides of the House. Its purpose is to protect the interests of tenant management co-operatives. I should like the Minister to bear in mind the fact that tenant management co-operatives, unlike other forms of co-operatives, are not the owners of a property. They manage the property in a co-operative way on the basis of an agreement with the owners, which is almost always the local authority, and that puts them in an odd position.

The Government want to give tenants choice. The Minister has said repeatedly that tenants' choice involves the growth of the tenant management co-operative sector.

The difficulty is that, unless this amendment or a similar one is accepted, that sector may diminish as fast as it grows.

Could I explain that apparent anomaly? Under the "Tenants' Choice" provisions, a tenant management co-operative could find that it was lumped in with adjoining property, but such a co-operative, consisting of 100 properties, could be part of a wider estate of 300 or 400 properties. If a landlord were to make a bid for the property, the tenant management co-operative of 100 properties could be outvoted by the 300 or 400 adjacent properties. Apart from being outvoted, it could lead to the signing of the death warrant for properties in the co-operative. No further tenancies of the properties would be allowed. When properties became vacant, they would be transferred immediately to a new landlord. That would increase the number of vacant properties and it would also prevent internal transfers. Furthermore, the co-operative would be undermined by these provisions.

If there were a bid and the co-operative had to be treated as part of a wider group of properties, including those adjacent to it, it would undermine the co-operative principle: that a co-operative should be accepted as a corporate body that speaks collectively on behalf of its individual members. If co-operatives are to be treated as part of a wider group, the co-operative concept will be undermined.

If what I have predicted is to be prevented, the Government ought to accept the amendment. Alternatively, they could direct the Housing Corporation to take similar action. If the Minister can assure me that the latter course will be adopted, I shall be happy to withdraw my amendment. I hope that, after the Minister's reply, we shall be able to reassure existing tenant management co-operatives that such a problem will not arise.

Mrs. Roe: Before I deal with the individual amendments, I should like to make it clear that the Government are strongly in favour of the opportunities that housing co-operatives can give enterprising people to take a leading part in the management of their homes. I cannot advise the House to accept any of this group of amendments, but I hope that hon. Members will not be displeased with much of what I have to say, particularly in relation to amendment No. 397.

Amendment No. 388 provides that no application under part IV can be made until tenants have been balloted on whether they want an ownership or a management co-operative. The amendment is unnecessary. If a co-operative is what most interested tenants want, that will become clear during the preliminary, competitive phase of consultation that the Housing Corporation will run. Housing Corporation help and advice will be available to follow that up. There is no need for a separate formal ballot at the outset, confined to co-operatives.

An arrangement under which tenants in an ownership co-operative might employ an agent—for example, a housing association—to provide management services for a shorter or a longer period would not be prevented by the Bill. We would often welcome such a move.

Mr. Simon Hughes: I am grateful for what the Minister has said. However, will she make it clear that when it is first brought into the discussion, the Housing Corporation will have a duty to alert all tenants to the possibility of a co-operative being formed and to make sure that tenants fully understand what that might mean? Will that possibility be put on the agenda by the Housing Corporation in all cases?

Mrs. Roe: The Housing Corporation will ensure that tenants know what alternatives are available to them. The ability to set up co-operatives will be spelt out to tenants, and they will be able to consider such a possibility.

Amendment No. 398 provides that a parish or community council may be approved by the Housing Corporation under clause 87. As parish and community councils do not currently have statutory powers to acquire and run rented housing, that would newly confer on them, in a limited way, the status of statutory housing authorities. Useful though the job that these councils do on other matters often is, they do not represent a pool of housing management know-how and experience of the kind that the Housing Corporation will be looking for when using its power to approve applicants under clause 87.

There is nothing, however, to stop individual parish or community councils with the right motivation and experience helping tenants to set up their transfer, even to the extent of helping them to set up a new tenant-led landlord, such as a community-based housing association. I hope that the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) will accept that that is the best way forward.

I am broadly sympathetic to amendments Nos. 178 and 120. They share the Government's aim of helping tenants to have a fuller say in running their own lives. I agree without reservation with the principle that underlies amendment No. 178, but I cannot advise the House to accept the amendment. 'Tenants' choice' transactions are designed to be self-financing, without subsidy from public sources. That is the point of basing prices on tenant market value. However, for the reasons that I have given, the Government accept that tenants' co-operatives are special and that when they are being set up they may require non-capital support to make an application under tenants' choice.

In Committee, my hon. Friend the Minister for Housing and Planning said that adequate support of this non-capital kind for training and for similar setting-up costs would be made available. I repeat that undertaking now. Possible means of support that already exist include the ability of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment to give financial assistance for housing management under section 16 of the Housing and Planning Act 1986. There is power for the Housing Corporation, under section 87 of the Housing Associations Act 1985, to give grants for the promotion of housing associations, including co-operatives. I expect the Housing Corporation to give information, advice and assistance—which in some cases might include training for would-be co-operatives—to tenants under the new powers that we have proposed for them in new clause 46.

The review of housing co-operatives that was recently announced by my hon. Friend the Minister for Housing and Planning and that is to report by the end of the year will consider, among other things, whether the existing institutional and financial arrangements for supporting co-operatives are right. I share the aim of the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey of helping co-operatives

[Mrs. Roe]

with initial training costs, but I hope that he will accept that to achieve that aim will require more, in practice, than a declaratory amendment such as amendment No. 178.

I share, too, the underlying aim of amendment No. 120, which also promotes the formation of co-operatives, but I believe that a trumping power over existing applications would be unnecessary. I cannot imagine that the Housing Corporation would approve an application by a third party to include an area where there was clear evidence of tenant preference for a co-operative solution. Tenants' views on such points would emerge clearly by means of the initial beauty contests. I hope, therefore, that the hon. Member for Knowsley, North (Mr. Howarth) will accept that the amendment is unnecessary.

I am sure that the hon. Member for Knowsley, North will be pleased to hear that I sympathise with the principle that underlies amendment No. 397. It is reasonable that people who have been interested in and active enough in the management of their own homes to vote together for a tenant management co-operative should be able to decide among themselves whether they wish to see further change. To make applications that included property that was subject to such a co-operative agreement conterminous with that agreement would also make a good deal of administrative sense.

If the transfer proceeded, the agreement would obviously cease to be relevant, while if the vote went against the transfer it would be unaffected. We wish to insist that, subject to this refinement, tenants of management co-operatives have in all respects the same right to consultation and choice under part IV as other public sector tenants. I am advised that the amendment is not technically accurate, but if the hon. Gentleman cares to withdraw it I shall undertake that a Government amendment to achieve the underlying intention will be prepared and brought forward in another place.

Mr. George Howarth: I am grateful to the Minister for her reply on amendment No. 397. Clearly, there is no disagreement between us on the principle that I tried to establish, and I am happy about that.

6 pm

Mr. Simon Hughes: My comment is similar to that of the hon. Member for Knowsley, North (Mr. Howarth). I look forward to an amendment on similar lines to ours being introduced in another place. That would give great encouragement to the co-operative movement, to members of the all-party group in the House of Commons and to their supporters in the other place. I noted what the Minister said about parish and community councils. I am not clearly persuaded that there is no opportunity to look at that again, but I am certainly willing, along with the Minister, to look at the matter again, and I shall reflect on what she said.

The Minister appears to have given certain undertakings that, if there is a clear expression of support for co-operatives, it will not be prejudiced in any way. The key may lie in the words about consideration of the financial support that may be forthcoming and how that will be part of the review of co-operatives. We await the decision of that review with impatience, but there may well need to be financial support other than that about which the Minister spoke and about which her hon. Friend spoke in Committee. Subject to those cautions and reservations, I should say that in general terms we appear to be making progress, and I do not wish to push my amendment to a vote.

I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Mr. Waldegrave: I beg to move amendment No. 371, in page 60, line 25, at end insert—

'(2A) The Corporation shall establish (and may from time to time vary) criteria to be satisfied by a person seeking approval under this section and, without prejudice to subsections (1) and (2) above, in deciding whether to give such approval, the Corporation shall have regard to whether the person satisfies those criteria.'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): With this it will be convenient to consider the following amendments: Government amendment No. 372.

No. 108, in page 60, line 28, after 'description', insert 'but only after consultation with that person's existing tenants, if any, and having taken account of any adverse reports as to the performance of that person in discharging landlord functions'.

Government amendments Nos. 373 and 374.

No. 109, in page 60, line 35, at end insert—

'(5) In considering an application for approval under this Part, the Housing Corporation shall have a responsibility to ensure standards of landlordism no less favourable to tenants than their existing landlords, and shall have particular regard to and shall make all reasonable enquiries to correctly ascertain:—

- (a) the applicants' housing management experience,
- (b) the applicants' housing management performance,
- (c) the site of the applicants' existing housing stock in relation to the number of dwellings to be acquired,
- (d) the applicants' arrangements for consultation with their existing tenants,
- (e) the applicants' policy with regard to—
  - (i) allocations,
  - (ii) rent levels,
  - (iii) rent review procedures,

No. 110, in page 60, line 35, at end insert—

'(5) Approvals shall be reviewed on an annual basis.

(6) Every person approved under subsection (1) above shall be required to provide the Housing Corporation with an annual report of their landlord functions; and to provide a copy of that report for the local authority concerned; and to lodge a copy with the local public library.'

No. 179, in page 60, line 35, at end insert—

'(5) An approval under this section shall not be given to any person or persons who have acted in serious breach of the regulations laid down in section 89(2)(b) below.

(6) An approval under this section shall be revoked by the Housing Corporation if in its opinion a person or persons have acted in serious breach of the regulations laid down in section 89 (b) below.'.

No. 121, in clause 89 page 61, line 38, at end insert 'and

'(c) shall be accompanied by proof of the person's approval under section 87 above'.

Government amendment No. 375.

Mr. Waldegrave: This is an important group of Government amendments and I shall put them in context. They run with new clauses 45 and 46, which we shall debate later.

First, we propose that the Housing Corporation should provide information, advice and assistance to tenants, including those who want to set up their own new landlord bodies, and to applicants and prospective applicants. This will include what might be called a marriage broking service, where necessary, between the two. New clause 46 would provide the power for this. Secondly, where there is tenant interest in transfer, the corporation will, wherever possible, arrange a preliminary test of tenant opinion involving informal consultation of tenants by more than one potential applicant in competition with one another.

Government amendment No. 373 would give the corporation power to make approval conditional on undertakings by applicants. My right hon. Friend will use his power under the Housing Associations Act 1985 to issue directions to the corporation to ensure that all the approvals that it gives are conditional on an undertaking to take part in the preliminary beauty contest and to abide by the outcome.

In terms of approval, Government amendment No. 371 provides for the corporation to establish criteria which will, as I undertook in Committee, be published. The central issues for these criteria will be stability, viability, competence and long-term commitment to providing rented housing for those who need it. The criteria will, in effect, provide guarantees for tenants of the kind that we shall be discussing in the context of Government new clause 30 for housing association tenants. I shall return to this in a moment.

After the statutory procedures begin, the corporation will keep tabs on applicants' progress for consistency with the approval criteria and undertakings. The power in Government amendment No. 373 to make approval conditional on undertakings will be relevant here. It will be used to set procedural guidelines for applicants to inform tenants when a formal application is made and tell them when various other key points of the procedures have been reached. Amendment No. 374 makes it clear that failure to meet criteria or to fulfil an undertaking could lead to revocation of approval. If approval were revoked at this stage—and Government amendment No. 374 sets out the procedures for this—the transaction would, of course, fall.

Tenants' guarantees, to which I have referred, are vital. In Committee we discussed the implications in this respect of the emergence of new types of landlord, not only under tenants' choice, but also through large-scale voluntary disposals of dwellings by the public sector and under the new basis for the operation of registered housing associations provided in part II of the Act. In particular, we must give any public sector tenant who is contemplating transfer to a new landlord assurances about the terms that will be on offer to him and the standards that he can expect. For each branch of the social housing sector, these guarantees will have to be tackled in a slightly different way, but by reference to consistent principles on which tenants can rely.

New clause 30, which we shall debate later, relates specifically to registered housing associations. It empowers the Housing Corporation, subject to consultation with the housing association movement and to the approval of the Secretary of State, to issue guidance to associations on the management of their housing stock. This will give the basis for a tenants' guarantee, and will provide a list—not an exclusive one—of matters that may be covered.

This guidance will have an important read-across to tenants' choice tenants because it will be based on the consistent principles that I have mentioned. It will comprise guidance on those for whom housing should be provided; and on those who are inadequately housed or homeless, and whose housing requirements cannot be met at prices within their means, or at all, elsewhere in the local market. Groups with special difficulties, such as ethnic minorities and the disabled, should get special attention. It will deal with the terms that tenants should be offered.

In addition to the statutory assured tenancy requirements, I would expect the corporation to insist on some contractual rights appearing in tenancy agreements. Details are for discussion and consultation, but some familiar elements from the old tenants' charter—for example the rights to exchange, to take in lodgers, to carry out improvements and so on—will certainly reappear.

The guidance must deal with how rents are to be set and reviewed. I want to ensure that the rent policies of associations and other tenants' choice landlords are compatible with the circumstances of the client groups that I have mentioned. It must deal with maintenance and repair and clear policies, procedures, targets and responsibilities will have to be set out. Above all, in terms of tenant relations, associations must communicate effectively with tenants about their rights and needs.

The full benefit of the guarantees associated with this guidance will be available automatically to all tenants transferring under tenants' choice to landlords that are registered housing associations. The arrangements that we are proposing will ensure that the formidable array of supervisory powers that the corporation enjoys are available to enforce the guarantees on such landlords.

For tenants of tenants' choice landlords other than registered housing associations, the ability of the corporation to set criteria and demand undertakings linked to approval will, as I have said, be used to provide comparable tenants' guarantees. These will cover the same ground and embody the same principles and will be enforceable through the corporation's power to revoke approval, through the applicant's contract with his transferring tenants, or both.

We envisage that, should disputes arise between tenants' choice landlords and their tenants before or after transfer, the corporation would be able to give tenants support in exceptional cases in resolving them. If necessary, that will be done through helping them to bring proceedings. Government new clause 45 will provide for this, and assistance under clause 45 will be available even if the acquiring body has ceased to have approved status.

Of the Government amendments that I have not mentioned, No. 372 empowers the corporation to charge fees for approval. Amendment No. 375 makes consequential adjustments to time limits where a notice of revocation is in force for a time but is withdrawn before it takes effect. All the powers and duties that I have mentioned would apply equally to the Housing Corporation and Housing in Wales.

Mr. John Battle (Leeds, West): The powers that the Minister suggests seem to transfer the strategic housing planning powers from the local authority to the Housing Corporation. Therefore, will the local authority powers be overridden by the Housing Corporation powers, or will local authority powers be repealed?

Mr. Waldegrave: No, the local authority power will not be overridden. We are saying that the tenants transferring, for example, under tenants' choice, must have guarantees about the nature of their landlord. That is why we are dealing with the matter in the way we are. It is essential that as much as possible will be carried through in a legally binding contract between the tenant and the new landlord. It is equally important that, where the tenant's rights rest upon the law in that way, he should have a friend, potentially in court, to enable him to make those legal

[Mr. Waldegrave]

powers work, which is why we put forward the additional authority for the Housing Corporation in that way later in the Bill.

Ms. Primarolo: I understood that the Minister said that the Housing Corporation will give support and advice to tenants who are transferred to a new landlord and then find themselves in conflict over this contractual relationship. How will the Housing Corporation set itself up as an advice-giving agency on the necessary scale, and what funding will be provided for it to do so?

Mr. Waldegrave: It will have a more powerful role than that of an advice-giving agency. It is potentially an agency that could provide legal support and it would be undertaking the same sort of role that is available to my right hon. Friend in certain circumstances where test cases and others can be undertaken.

Ms. Primarolo: Test cases.

Mr. Waldegrave: Yes, as the hon. Lady says, it applies only in test cases. I would not want to mislead her into thinking that that was the exact analogy. I can give the hon. Lady the undertaking that the Housing Corporation will be funded to undertake this.

The hon. Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) will doubtless be pressing us to go further. I hope that he will recognise that we have gone a long way to meet a number of the principal concerns that were expressed in Committee and in meetings inside and outside the House.

Mr. Tony Banks: Not as far as the Minister said he would go in Committee. As far as we are concerned, these Government amendments amount to the Minister's surrender note to the Secretary of State.

Mr. Waldegrave: The hon. Gentleman had to say that, but it is not true. Those outside the House who have analysed this know that the tenants' guarantee that we are offering to all those who are transferring under any of these powers from present public sector housing either to other forms of public sector housing or to independent rented housing meet the clear commitment that we gave in Committee. There is absolutely no doubt about it. We shall be debating other aspects of the guarantee later in the day, but I have referred to it now because the aspects all hang together.

Mr. McCartney: What is the position following the transfer of housing stock to a private sector landlord when subsequently the company is sold off and those who are then in control of the company are not the sort who would be approved by the Housing Corporation or the tenants? Will the Housing Corporation be able to call a fresh ballot so that the decision can be reconsidered after the ownership of a company has changed from that approved by the Housing Corporation? My hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) said that the Minister had surrendered to the Secretary of State, but I think that the Minister is a shark in sheep's clothing: in Committee and on Report he has smiled and given us promises but come back with nothing.

Mr. Waldegrave: The hon. Gentleman is wrong. Those are strong words, but they are not justified. The original plan that I sketched out in Committee, with the help of my hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow), I called a charter. We have come to see that it is better to carry it forward, looking at the three different positions, as a tenants' guarantee, as it is the tenants, not the landlords, whose interests need to be protected by the House. Hon. Members have nothing else to say about this because the policy was developed not as a result of pressure from them but with the help of my hon. Friends in Committee, and the intentions that I set out in Committee are clearly met by the amendments in this and subsequent groups.

Mr. Simon Hughes: I have a simple question for the Minister. Why, even now, on the last day of Report, do we not have the terms of what was originally called the social charter and then called the tenants' guarantee? Why have we not seen it, despite promises? What has been the delay?

6.15 pm

Mr. Waldegrave: The commitment I gave was that on Third Reading we should have a substantial debate on this matter. We are having a substantial debate now, and if the hon. Gentleman had been listening, he would recognise that I have set out the principles that lie behind the tenants' guarantee. It affects those transferring under tenants' choice. I have said how it relates to the permissions that the Secretary of State will give under what might be called the 'Rochford' transfers or any other transfers.

We have gone further than we said we would in Committee in one crucial respect, in that we have said that, for the first time, the Housing Corporation will be given explicit powers to take into account, in the way in which it deals with management associations, quality of management and other such matters, and not just propriety. That is a major step forward and has been welcomed by those outside the House.

Mr. McCartney: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I asked the Minister a specific question, which was: if, after a transfer to a landlord private company, it were to be sold, would the Housing Corporation enable the tenants to have another ballot?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: That is a point for debate, not a point of order.

Mr. Waldegrave: The question does not arise, for two reasons. First, the Secretary of State has control over further disposals; secondly, and more importantly, the contracts to which I have referred, which will include the tenants' guarantee, will already have been built into the leases and will carry legal force, whoever is the underlying landlord. The point is a misunderstanding, as quite a number of the hon. Gentleman's points are.

The hon. Member for Hammersmith will no doubt argue that the approval criteria that the corporation will establish should cover, among other matters, management experience and performance, and it will do so. The hon. Gentleman will see these matters referred to in paragraph 9 of the explanatory document we published last week. I confirm that the corporation will be looking at track record on these matters when considering applications for approval, so the hon. Gentleman's underlying concern is largely covered already.

I agree, too, that, during the "beauty contest", tenants affected will often want to compare notes with applicants' existing tenants. I would expect the applicants, prompted if necessary by the corporation, to arrange this as a natural part of "setting out their stall", but there is surely no need for a statutory requirement. The tenants' most substantial safeguards will lie elsewhere—in the "beauty contest" as a whole and in the range of other tenants' guarantees that we shall be making available. Amendment No. 108 would, moreover, be unacceptable in any case because it would require the corporation to take into account every adverse report. We discussed this at length in Committee, and it is obviously absurd.

The hon. Gentleman has set out in amendment No. 109 his shopping list of criteria for landlord approval. We have thought it better in amendment No. 371 to give the Housing Corporation the responsibility, drawing on its existing experience and on consultation, to establish criteria, rather than to tie it rigidly to statutory ones. Some of the factors identified in the hon. Gentleman's amendment will be relevant to all, and all of them relevant to some, approvals. In considering all applicants, the corporation will have to look at housing management, experience and performance—embracing satisfactory arrangements for tenant consultation—financial status and stability. Therefore, that point is met.

I cannot go as far as the hon. Gentleman is proposing

"to ensure standards of landlordism no less favourable to tenants than their existing landlords".

That would be a rather small consolation to some tenants who would be seeking a transfer. That is what the arrangements that I have outlined are intended to achieve, and the very broadly defined duty that he proposes to lay on the corporation to answer for the applicants' performance would add little or nothing to them.

Amendment No. 110 would require approvals to be reviewed annual. I certainly envisage that there will be annual elements in the corporation's monitoring of approved landlords; submission of annual accounts is an obvious example. On broader questions of management performance, which I suspect is what the hon. Gentleman has mainly in mind, strict annuality would be burdensome and unnecessary. Given the range of the guarantees that tenants will have, I do not see strong arguments for requiring approved landlords to produce formal annual reports for deposit with local authorities.

We achieve the intention of amendments Nos. 179 and 121 by different means. Amendment No. 179 would exclude from approved status any person in breach of the preliminary "beauty contest" procedures. For reasons that we shall discuss when we reach amendment No. 112, we see the "beauty contest" as an informal, rather than a statutorily regulated, process, but the corporation will make it a condition of any approval given under clause 87 to applicants that they undertake to agree to participate in that preliminary procedure.

On amendment No. 121, I undertook in Committee that the application form under clause 89 would be prescribed and would require the applicant to give a statement of the terms of his approved status. The power to prescribe the form is to be found in clause 102. I hope that the hon. Gentleman has accepted that this important but very detailed point can be dealt with in that way.

This is an important group of amendments. I am delighted that the Leader of the Opposition now welcomes the policy set out here, with four conditions. Those conditions—a proper voting system, a secret ballot, independent scrutiny, safeguards for tenants' future rights and appropriate landlords' and tenants' rights to veto—are all met in the Bill. I hope to see the right hon. Gentleman in the Lobby with us tonight. It would be characteristic of his relationship with his party if we did and, on that basis, we hope to carry forward this successful policy into the future.

Mr. Clive Soley (Hammersmith): I wish to put the Minister right on a number of issues, so that we can stop dealing in simple assumptions and start dealing with reality.

The failures in the Government's approach to the matter are, first, that the conditions are far too weak; secondly, that they do not go wide enough; thirdly, that they are the product of a mess where the Government's proposals have moved through a series of stages; and, fourthly, that they do nothing to assist either the good private landlord or the housing associations, or to give real power to the tenant.

If one is being offered a charter or even a guarantee, one looks at the small print to see what powers one can bring to bear if something goes wrong. One can look at this and cannot even find the small print because it is not there. In Committee, the Minister said that it would be wrong if we could not debate the substantive details on the Floor of the House on Third Reading. We do not have the charter. It does not exist. It is simply an obligation on the Housing Corporation to do certain things.

The Minister has made great play of assured tenancies, but we all remember the previous Housing Minister talking about a system of approval and how important it was. He reassured everyone that, every time one of those new assured tenancies was given, it would be given to a landlord who had been approved by the Department. Between 6,000 and 8,000 such tenancies were set up and, when the present Minister took office, he said in Committee, "We'll have to get rid of those tenancies because, frankly, it's a matter of crossing our fingers when we give that assurance." That is how weak the system is.

The test should always be whether the tenant can pick up the guarantee or the social landlords' charter, go to a lawyer and say, "Take my case before the courts. Fight the case on that basis. Here is the charter spelt out before you, signed by the landlord. We will decide it in court." The tenant does not have that power. It does not exist. The measure does nothing to help anyone—not the private landlord, the tenant or the housing association.

How did the Government get into that mess? Initially, they were prepared to consider the possibility of a housing association tenancy, but they then moved, because they did not like the idea. They did not want to give a housing association tenancy, so they began to talk about the social landlords' charter, which was then downgraded to a guarantee.

The Government have come up with the worst possible hotch-potch which affects some private landlords, housing associations and others and does not give what it should have given—a clear statement of the position for housing associations and then a clear cover to all private landlords. That was an opportunity to make a reality of the very things that the Government say they want to do, including protecting tenants from bad landlords, but the measure does not do that.

There is a need for an approval system for landlords generally, just as we have environmental health officers to check the standards of food. The provision of accommodation and the way in which people can be removed from their accommodation is so important to

[Mr. Clive Soley]

those people that we cannot just rely on the law being used in a simple way if, for example, a tenant can afford a lawyer or obtain legal aid, or if he is on the point of being evicted and can still manage to find a lawyer.

I wish to quote from a letter from a lawyer in the firm of Lloyd and Pratt in Newport, Gwent:

> "Almost by definition most tenants will or should be Legal-Aid-eligible, particularly in this area, and it is my impression that tenants which suffer at the hands of rogue landlords are very hesitant before commencing any proceedings at all—they seem to fear the landlords too much even to take them on through the Courts. In the cases that come to my mind we have almost had to lean on the tenants to keep them going in the case and not to throw their hand in."

That is the experience of just about every housing agency in this country. The problem is that tenants in such a weak position, if they are harassed or driven out, cannot fight back effectively, yet we are told that it is sufficient for the Housing Corporation to give some sort of approval, without necessarily knowing very much about the future landlord who will take over. The Government have introduced only minimal protection. I accept that the Government have made some concessions, but they have made only the weakest. The provisions do nothing to help any good landlord, whether a housing association or a private landlord.

Rochford district council is transferring properties to the Crouch Valley housing association, despite the fact that 300 out of 400 tenants said that they did not want to be transferred. The Minister was right to say that it is a difficult matter because it transgresses several amendments and new clauses. We shall deal with the issue of voting when we debate amendment No. 170. I do not want to refer to that in detail now, but it is a classic example. Tonight's "World in Action" programme, of which I and a number of hon. Members have had an advanced viewing, is a damning indictment of tenants' inability to fight back when they are taken over. That criticism is most disturbing.

I want to deal with the Secretary of State's involvement in this matter. He owned a property at 69 Warwick way. There is no doubt that he took a personal interest in that property. That is right and proper. He had a long leasehold in that property from 1968, and he applied for planning permission to erect an additional storey and convert the property into bed-sits and self-contained flats.

In April 1978, that house was taken over by the Cornerstone housing association, which put in a planning application to develop the house into four self-contained flats. I understand that, by that time, Cornerstone was the owner of the house. The tenants had objected to the planning application. Westminster city council was told later that the tenants had agreed to purchase the completed flats, or were making other arrangements. That was disputed. In 1979, the property was sold to Seniorforge Ltd. and, in December 1979, Westminster city council served statutory notices under section 45 of the Public Health Act 1936 and section 4 of the Prevention of Damage by Pests Act 1949.

6.30 pm

In 1980, a Westminster city council environmental health officer reported:

> "The house is in a state of substantial disrepair due mainly to a lack of routine maintenance."

In October 1980, the council served a notice under section 9(1) of the Housing Act 1957 because parts of the property were unfit for human habitation. In November, the council served a management order under section 15 of the Housing Act 1961. In 1981, those notices had expired without compliance by Seniorforge. In June 1982, Seniorforge obtained a High Court possession order on the ground that it needed to undertake certain works. The order required it to rehouse tenants in the house after the work had been completed.

There are then delays——

Mr. Waldegrave: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Will you explain to me the relevance of the remarks of the hon. Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) to the Bill and to tenants' choice?

Mr. Soley: My remarks have everything to do with the Bill and tenants' choice. I am talking about transfer of properties from one owner to another. No matter how good, knowledgeable, and well-intentioned a landlord may be, that which I have described will take place if the powers of the local authority or of the Housing Corporation are inadequate. The trouble is that current legislation is being weakened by the Government's amendments.

The delays to which I was referring continued for two years. In 1983, Westminster city council, which is not the world's greatest council, was found guilty of maladministration by the ombudsman. That amounted basically to delays. The council was still paying for bed-and-breakfast accommodation for some of the tenants. Despite the refusal of planning permission, Seniorforge implemented the scheme. The council told tenants to move back into the premises and said that it would stop paying their hotel bills if they failed to do so.

It is alleged that the tenants were refused keys. There were allegations by tenants of harassment, and a court case followed. A photograph was produced which showed a tenant covered in blood. An arrest took place, but it was counter-alleged that the tenant injured herself with a meat tenderiser. The case was dismissed. Further complaints of harassment continued to be made. The rent was not registered and the flat concerned is alleged to have been sold in breach of grant conditions. In other words, Westminster ratepayers were owed money.

Further planning applications by Seniorforge were refused, but were later accepted after a simple change in the plans which meant that a bedsitter was described as a store room. On that basis, planning permission was granted. Tenants were then evicted and a demand was made that Seniorforge should repay grant moneys.

The Minister has questioned the relevance of the example which I have given. The House knows that the Minister has sold the Bill throughout on the ground that, by removing rent and other controls, it will be possible to increase the amount of private rented property that comes on to the market without increasing the dangers that are posed by the van Hoogstratens and Rachmans. I have provided a classic example of what will happen following the transfer of ownership from a good landlord who has done nothing wrong under a system which does not require any approval. There is no clearer way of establishing the truth.

In the example to which I have referred, two families were in bed-and-breakfast accommodation for two and a half years. The cost of providing that accommodation for them was met by the ratepayers, not by the company. Property speculation is clearly involved. Housing associations and councils are used to rehouse tenants who were the liability of the company, in this instance Seniorforge. Local authority powers were not exercised properly or effectively. Against this background, the Minister is weakening the powers that will be available to stop the practice. Legal aid will not be available——

Mr. Waldegrave: The hon. Gentleman is talking nonsense. Will he explain how his allegations could possibly become realities?

Mr. Soley: We argued throughout our consideration of the Bill in Committee that there was a case for a housing association tenancy. We said that there was a case for going for some sort of social landlord contract. We argued that there should be approval. We contended that an approval system should ensure that a tenant could protect his rights.

The Minister appears to be becoming more and more agitated or worried. He has said repeatedly that the Bill can be enacted without recreating the dangers of Rachmanism. Our worries should not be confined to the van Hoogstratens of this world. I am troubled that a good landlord will be able to sell property without any check being made on the purchaser. Even when an assurance is given, it will not be backed up properly by law.

More importantly, we know from the Government's record that they tend to move the goalposts, so that today's assurance is not relevant tomorrow. There is nothing in the Bill to stop a future Minister making it much easier to obtain an assurance. The Secretary of State or anyone else can be a good and proper landlord and do his job properly. If he can sell his property under a system that does not require approval, I say in all seriousness, with the greatest force that I can command, that the Government should produce a Bill that offers much more protection to tenants than this one. It is so weak as to be unreasonable beyond belief.

As I have said, the Minister has questioned the relevance of my remarks. He must understand that the Cornerstone housing association does not emerge covered in glory from the example which I have presented to the House. The Minister is saying, in effect, "This does not trouble me too much," but that is the sort of organisation that could take over a property from a good and proper landlord. Indeed, that is exactly what happened. Everyone, from the Secretary of State and the Minister, must know that that is wrong, dangerous and bad.

No matter how good a landlord or individual members of a housing association may be, good intentions and knowledge will come to nothing at the end of the day unless the tenant has some guaranteed way in which he can make his powers felt in a court of law. Tenants must be given full support when it is necessary for them to take that course.

Did you notice, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the way in which the Minister slipped through his new clause, which he thought would meet our anxieties? He said that in "exceptional cases" the Housing Corporation would offer assistance. There will be so many exceptional cases that the Housing Corporation will not offer assistance. The Minister knows that legal aid is being cut and that it will not be available to many tenants.

In my example, the tenants moved to what is clearly a bad landlord. It is not a van Hoogstraten or Rachman-type organisation, but it is undesirable in the way in which it is operating. What are the tenants supposed to do? Under this legislation, the answer is, nothing. What do we seek to do? We say in amendment No. 109 that there should be approval criteria, and I argue that the criteria should be made available to all landlords. We must have some way of ensuring that tenants are not ripped off when moving from one landlord to another. The criteria include the applicant's housing management experience, his performance, the state of his existing stock, consultation with tenants, rent levels, review procedures, equal opportunities and standard terms of tenancy offers. What would be wrong if the Minister said, on behalf of the Government, "We accept that"?

If the Minister is serious about stopping those like Rachman and von Hoogstraten, surely the way forward is to ensure that greater powers are available to tenants. The Minister said, in effect, in Committee, "Hoogstratenism took place under existing legislation, so that is no good." Unfortunately, he will weaken current legislation. He seems to be saying, "As landlords can do that now, we cannot really stop them. The Housing Corporation will be able to deal with some landlords. We shall leave it at that, in the hope that there will not be other examples of bad landlordism." There will be other examples. They will come about when people who have done a perfectly good job as landlords transfer property. The Minister will turn his head and say, "I'm sorry. I can't do anything about this, because it's not covered by the law." The Minister will have to say that, because he has refused our requests to include that provision in the Bill. If we could include that provision, that would be the way forward.

I ask the Minister to accept our amendments if he is serious about stopping the gross abuses by a minority of landlords. I ask him above all to bear in mind—as the Secretary of State understands from his experience—and to take into account the crucial point at which a property is transferred. Things can begin to go wrong at that point.

Mr. Simon Hughes: We have awaited this debate for a long time. From the Committee *Hansards* I notice that the Minister made various fairly explicit commitments about what should have happened by the time that we reached this stage in our proceedings. He anticipated that it might take the civil servants a bit of time to do the work, and that was certainly true. He clearly made commitments on many occasions in Committee. I will cite only one example, from column 1177:

> "Some of what we are proposing will be in directions to the Housing Corporation, but the outline and the powers will be attached to the Bill. It would be fair to produce a discussion document or something of that nature in an outline form, on what was not in the Bill before it has left the House of Commons. Some of it will be in directions to the Housing Corporation; some of it will be on the face of the Bill. It would be fair to the Committee and to the House to give a rounded picture of what we propose."

The hon. Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) intervened to say:

> "Perhaps I can clarify the matter. I understand that the Minister will introduce an amendment, though it will not cover everything. Is that correct?"

To that, the Minister's answer, which was even timed at 7.30 pm, was:

> "There will be an amendment to the Bill from which this structure will depend."

[Mr. Simon Hughes]

Technically we have an amendment, but in terms of outline structure, this is about as outline an amendment as has ever been drafted.

The Minister continued:

> "I am going further, and I have not taken the advice of my officials on this because they will have to do more work than they expected. I think it would be fair to sketch out in descriptive terms, for the debate on Third Reading and in another place, a complete account of what we shall in due course direct the Housing Corporation to do in those parts that are subject to direction as well as those that are subject to primary legislation."—[*Official Report, Standing Committee G*, 25 February 1988, c. 1177.]

I listened to the Minister, and I accept that he complied with that part of his undertaking. For the first time, he has set out in descriptive terms an account of what in due course he and his colleagues will direct the Housing Corporation to do. If the Minister is honest, he cannot say that it is a complete account, because there is a document to come. It certainly will not be a discussion document or "something of that nature". If it is, it must be the most invisible discussion document that the Government have ever produced because "we ain't seen nothing yet."

We have asked why there has been a delay. The answer may be that the proposal has undergone a few metamorphoses from being the tenants' charter to the tenants' guarantee and then the tenants' will-o'-the-wisp by the time it reached Report stage.

It is important that we ask why the long-promised approval system is still not ready, after a much delayed and resumed Report stage. Apart from the constitutional question whether it is right to vote for something that we have not seen, we must ask other questions.

Will Ministers at the Department of the Environment state categorically on the record that those who undertake what is to be called the tenants' guarantee, those who undertake to write that guarantee into their agreements, will be organisations not from the public or private sector, but in a separate social sector? I asked that question in Committee and it is important that we have an answer, because otherwise the undertaking that they would not be in the private sector will have been breached.

Will rents in all cases be affordable for the tenants? It is no good saying that we will negotiate with individual housing associations or approved landlord, landlord by landlord, case by case, to meet their client groups unless the tenants are guaranteed an affordable rent and there is a guarantee that it remains affordable. There is no point in the rent being affordable at the beginning and then slipping out of range quickly thereafter.

6.45 pm

The Secretary of State and the Prime Minister say that if people do not want to go to the new sector they need not do so. That is all very well, but council tenants—as in some sense they will remain—will have to pay the rents charged by the private sector. At the end of the day, one of the most crucial qualities of a contract or tenancy agreement is the level of rent.

I will continue to refer to affordable rents until we get somewhere. We are talking about a social sector. We should talk about a sector which ensures that people pay rents that they can afford. The Government appear to be intervening at the beginning, but then effectively pulling out of the picture except on rare occasions. The Government will have given their blessing, via the Housing Corporation, to various approved landlords. They will be approved because they will have signed the tenants' guarantee, whatever that is; it is yet to be revealed.

Once that happens, in only the rarest cases will the Government have any role in policing the contract. It will be up to the tenant to go to court. Unless we know that the terms are continuing and cannot be broken later, that the terms cannot be negotiated for two, three or five years and then renegotiated in a way which was unhelpful for tenants, there is no guarantee. If a tenant who is secure, with a whole range of guarantees underwritten by this Government, then has those guarantees replaced by a time-expired guarantee, he has no real guarantee. We all know about guarantees. They are fine if something breaks down in the 12 months for which the guarantee applies. After that time, guarantees are not, to use the old cliché, worth the paper they are printed on.

My next question is slightly more technical, but is something that the Minister has not answered in detail. What happens if an approved landlord goes wrong after being approved? I understand that we cannot foresee everything. Some people may look good and have excellent records, but things might go wrong. They may run into financial difficulties and not perform their landlord obligations. They may suddenly realise that the only way to make ends meet is to raise the rents, and they become bad landlords because they are in trouble. The Housing Corporation may say that it will withdraw its support and approval, but that may be a bit late if things have already begun to go wrong.

Tenants need to know that they have the power to go to court to rescue a situation. The nearest parallel to that is the shareholder or debtor suing a bankrupt company. It is no consolation normally for people owed money by bankrupt companies to know that they can pursue them through the courts. People do not normally get anywhere in those circumstances. The matter is made worse if people are worried about the roof over their heads.

I do not want to prolong the debate, but this is a very important subject and we were promised a major debate on it a long time ago. We were promised the document, we were promised the deed, and we were promised the words —in writing. We have been given none of them. The Government cannot expect us to buy something blind, and we shall not do so.

Mr. David Blunkett (Sheffield, Brightside): These clauses have two clear objectives. One is to dismember and fragment local authority housing. The other is to make it easier in the long term to make the maximum amount of money out of housing need. In discussing the safeguards that tenants may expect under the Government's proposals, it might be useful to hear the words of some of their supporters and of those who are running private tenancies. Mr. Archer is the spokesperson for Sheffield Private Landlords Association, and he took part in a debate with Sheffield's housing chairman on Radio Sheffield on 10 June. He was very honest and put into clear language what many Conservative Members know in their hearts to be true. He said:

> "It is legitimate to harass private tenants in order to secure our investments."

That is no longer outrageous in terms of Government policy, because what has already happened in the private market has been heavily subsidised with the connivance of the DOE and the DHSS for a very long time.

There is the case of Elwyn Morgan in Merthyr Tydfil, who in the last financial year made out out of the DHSS —it is not disputed by him—an estimated £104,000 in respect of two houses in multiple occupation. Recently I asked the Secretary of State whether the regulations which lift that landlord out of the existing safeguards will be reviewed in the light of the Bill, and whether the DHSS and the DOE will get together, to try to eliminate the abuses that are occurring. His answer was straightforward and comprised one word: no. The Government have no intention of safeguarding tenants against those who wish to make money out of them.

In the Merthyr Tydfil case, tenants signed over—legally, but, in my view, immorally—their benefits. Eighty per cent. of the benefits paid to his tenants was collected by the landlord using a secure locker, and less than 20 per cent. was handed over to the tenants. For that, they were given just bed and breakfast. If there are no safeguards under the existing mishmash, it is unlikely, as my hon. Friends have already said, that safeguards will be included in legislation that we do not yet know will be acceptable in terms of tenants' rights.

The hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) asked what will happen if an approved landlord "goes wrong". What will happen if an approved landlord seeks disapproval? Having exchanged houses, and perhaps having exchanged tenants over a period of time, the landlord may feel that no obligation should exist. Under this year's Budget, such a landlord is entitled to tax relief under the business expansion scheme—which, as has been made clear in answers to parliamentary questions, offers no safeguards at all. Given the existing track record, we may expect a very poor deal for tenants.

In Sheffield alone over the past year, there have been 869 cases of harassment, and 60 turned out to be extremely serious. If that situation is mirrored across the country, it will produce 6,000 cases of harassment. As the legal aid system is already breaking down and people cannot get approval, it is hardly surprising that tenants are asking who will be stepping in to safeguard their interests. It will be clear from my comments that it will be neither the Department of the Environment nor the Department of Health and Social Security.

In Sheffield, market rents are at levels five times higher than existing council rents, and it has been made plain tonight that there will be no guarantees or safeguards covering affordability. Therefore, it is not surprising either that the tenants all over the country who are supposed to be the benefactors of the Government's proposals are universally rejecting them. I have never before experienced such an upsurge of feeling in my constituency as I have over this Bill, approached only by that relating to the housing benefits fiasco and the poll tax. People are, for the first time in their lives, prepared to come to the House of Commons and to speak out, and new tenants' associations are being formed. I congratulate the Minister for Housing and Planning on creating a new degree of activism that we thought could not exist, and on encouraging tenants to get together and fight for their interests, and to express their views.

One of my constituents, Mrs. Whightham, wrote to me saying that it is not the local councils which own Sheffield's assets, including its council housing, but the ratepayers and tenants. She wrote:

> "The council are our agents, elected by us to manage and to maintain our stock. We are quite happy with the way they do their job. If we weren't, they would be out at the next municipal elections. Why can't the Government let us live in peace in our retirement? We survived the war with Germany and now our Government is making life harder and more stressful for us each day."

Those are the words of someone who has never before written a letter to her Member of Parliament but who is distressed by what is happening and who knows perfectly well that with all the difficulties and problems facing local authorities in providing adequate housing, at the end of the day those elected through the ballot box are accountable. They were elected not on abstentions but on actual, determined votes. They are people who are accountable and who can be rejected. Who will reject the landlords of the future? Who will be there not simply to prevent the most outrageous abuses but to ensure that people have real choice?

There can be only three reasons why people should want to be involved in housing—not to make money, as would appear to be the case with those who used to speak on behalf of the homeless and the dispossessed and who now run some, but not all, of the housing associations and the Institute of Housing, who set themselves up in Quality Street, and who have abandoned the principles upon which they made their professional names. There are three simple tenets of housing policy. The first is to house the homeless, the second is to house the badly housed, and the third is to ensure that investment is made in adequate housing stock for the future, giving real choice, affordability and accessibility to the people of this country.

Mr. Waldegrave: I say to the hon. Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley), whom I genuinely respect, that his speech was not worthy of him, because in order to drag in the Secretary of State's name by a side wind, he distorted his speech and talked about something entirely different. When I challenged him to explain how anything in these clauses or in the Bill weakens the powers of tenants over landlords who may not have carried out their legal duties, the hon. Gentleman was unable to reply. Both parties agree that the Government have accepted a whole package of measures that will strengthen tenants' rights. The case to which the hon. Gentleman referred, quite unjustifiably, was settled in the courts, and on that occasion the tenants were shown by the court not to be in the right.

Mr. Soley: The Minister does not seem to have grasped that one of the organisations concerned was a housing association. Will he take that point on board, because he is supposed to be talking about such associations? The other point that the Minister does not seem to have grasped is the importance of extending the approval area so that not just one is covered. That was discussed in Committee, day after day. Has the Minister forgotten that?

Mr. Waldegrave: The hon. Member has failed to grasp that nothing we are doing will weaken the situation and that everything we are doing is strengthening it. Secondly, the approval mechanism to which he attaches himself is far weaker that the legally binding system we are establishing.

Mr. Paul Boateng (Brent, South): Tell that to van Hoogstraten.

Mr. Waldegrave: From a sedentary position, the hon. Gentleman says, "Tell that to van Hoogstraten." Well, I have read in the newspapers——

Mr. Boateng: I am now standing up to say, tell that to van Hoogstraten.

Mr. Waldegrave: The hon. Gentleman is keen to get his name into *Hansard* from any position. I note, because my sources about van Hoogstraten are doubtless the same as those of the hon. Gentleman, being newspaper reports—I have not yet seen the television programme—that van Hoogstraten is getting out of the rented property business. He has been able to make money under the Rent Acts because of the gap between the real value of the property and the rents. The winkling out is to do with bringing those values together. I very much hope that we have seen the back of his involvement in rented accommodation in this country. He has been a creature of the Rent Acts, of rationing and control.

7 pm

Mr. Battle: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Waldegrave: No, I will not give way.

The hon. Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett) made a powerful and authentic speech in defence of what one might call pure municipalisation. He attacked not just me, but the Institute of Housing, some of those in housing associations and—this is the difference between us—those who are attempting to bring more pluralism into the social rented sector, which my right hon. Friend defined in his recent speech in Harrogate.

Quite justifiably, in terms of his kind of Socialism, the hon. Member for Brightside says that it should be all municipal—*[Interruption.]* At any rate, he is suspicious of any greater pluralism because he attacked by name Quality street, the Institute of Housing and other organisations that are seeking greater pluralism. I am willing to accept that challenge. It is precisely because we want more pluralism in that sector that we are bringing forward the Bill with its safeguards which will guarantee those tenants rights which we, and all hon. Members, believe should be provided for so that they are secure.

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 254, Noes 168.

Division No. 380] **[7.01 pm**

AYES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amess, David
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carttiss, Michael
Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Hon Alan *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Critchley, Julian
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Durant, Tony
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Tony
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gow, Ian
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon *(Bury St E')*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Charles
Jack, Michael
Janman, Tim
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Knowles, Michael
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
McCrindle, Robert
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
Maclean, David
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Moate, Roger
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Sir Charles
Neale, Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Chris *(Bath)*
Patten, John *(Oxford W)*
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Price, Sir David
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Redwood, John
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Nicholas

Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Squire, Robin
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(Hertfordshire N)*
Stokes, Sir John
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Trippier, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Waller, Gary
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Mike
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. David Lightbown and
Mr. Alan Howarth.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Bell, Stuart
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Buchan, Norman
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Dalyell, Tam
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fearn, Ronald
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Gordon, Mildred
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Heffer, Eric S.
Henderson, Doug
Holland, Stuart
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Howells, Geraint
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Janner, Greville
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles
Kirkwood, Archy
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum A.
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
McNamara, Kevin
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliott
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Robertson, George
Robinson, Geoffrey
Rogers, Allan
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steinberg, Gerry
Stott, Roger
Straw, Jack
Turner, Dennis
Wall, Pat
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Frank Haynes and
Mrs. Llin Golding.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Amendments made: No. 372, in page 60, leave out line 26 and insert—

'(3) Subject to any directions under section 76 of the Housing Associations Act 1985 (directions by the Secretary of State), an approval under this section—

(aa) shall not be given except to a person making an application accompanied by such fee as the Corporation, with the consent to the Secretary of State, may specify; and'.

No. 373, in page 60, line 32, at end insert—

'and

(c) may be made conditional upon the person or persons concerned entering into such undertakings as may be specified by the Corporation;

and different fees may be specified under paragraph (aa) above for different descriptions of cases.'.

No. 374, in page 60, leave out lines 33 to 35 and insert—

'(4) Subject to any directions under section 76 of the Housing Associations Act 1985, if it appears to the Corporation appropriate to do so (whether by reason of a failure to honour an undertaking or to meet any criteria or for any other reason), the Corporation may revoke an approval given under this section by notice in writing served on the approved person; and where such a notice of revocation is served—

(a) the revocation shall be provisional until the expiry of such period, being not less than 14 days, as may be specified in the notice;

(b) if the Corporation withdraws the notice at any time during the specified period, the approval shall be treated as never having been revoked; and

(c) subject to paragraph (b) above, after the date of service of the notice, the person concerned may not take any steps in connection with a claim to exercise the right conferred by this Part;

but the service of a notice under this subsection shall not affect any transaction completed before the service of the notice.

(5) In the case of a body which has been approved under this section, which does not have a registered office (at which documents can be served) and which appears to the Corporation to have ceased to exist or not to operate, notice under subsection (4) above shall be deemed to be served on the body if it is served at the address last known to the Corporation to be the principal place of business of the body.

(6) The Housing Corporation and Housing for Wales shall each maintain a register of persons for the time being approved by it under this section, specifying the extent of the approval given in each case; and each register so maintained shall be open to inspection at the head office of the Corporation by which it is maintained at all reasonable times.'.—*[Mr. Waldegrave.]*

Clause 89

APPLICATION TO EXERCISE RIGHT

7.15 pm

Mr. Battle: I beg to move amendment No. 257, in page 61, line 38, at end insert—

'; and

(c) shall be copied to all tenants occupying dwellings that are included in the application by the applicant or by the landlord at the applicant's expense.'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this, it will be convenient to discuss the following amendments: No. 112, in page 61, line 38, at end insert—

'(2)(a) An application under subsection (1) above shall not be made unless the applicant has obtained the necessary support of tenant(s) during the pre-selection process,

(b) In paragraph (a) above the pre-selection process is that process to be supervised by the Housing Corporation in which potential applicants are introduced to tenants who may be interested in having a new landlord acquire their dwellings, the Secretary of State shall make regulations regarding the matters to which the Housing Corporation shall have regard in the supervision and implementation of the pre-selection process. Such regulations shall include—

(i) details of procedures to prevent prospective applicants making approaches to tenants unless a change of landlord has been sought by tenants, whether directly or through the Housing Corporation;

(ii) the criteria with which the Housing Corporation shall select prospective applicants whom it has approved to be introduced to tenants;

(iii) the requirement that each tenant affected by a prospective application is informed of the prospective application in a language and form that can be readily understood;

(iv) the categories of information which shall be given to tenants by the prospective applicants and the existing landlord;

(v) details of arrangements to enable all tenants who would be affected by a change of landlord to take part in a ballot to express their preference regarding which prospective applicant, if any, they wish to see make an application under subsection (1) above.'.

No. 114, in page 61, line 38, at end insert—

'(2) Within seven days of the receipt by the landlord of an application made in accordance with subsection (1) the landlord shall serve a notice, in accordance with such provisions as may be prescribed, on each qualifying tenant or tenant under a long tenancy who, on the date of the application, occupied a dwelling-house included in the application.

(3) For the purpose of this section, joint tenants shall be deemed to be one tenant and if one joint tenant fails to notify the landlord of his agreement to the proposed acquisition, any notifications by another joint tenant shall be deemed to be void.

(4) The applicant shall bear the landlord's reasonable costs of complying with this section.'.

No. 258, in clause 90, page 62, line 10, at end insert—

'a copy of such a notice is to be supplied to all tenants named within it; and'.

No. 157, in clause 91, page 63, line 4, leave out from 'state' to end of line 6.

No. 259, in clause 91, page 63, line 6, at end insert—

'(3A) A copy of any notice issued under subsections (1) and (2) above shall be supplied to all tenants occupying dwellings which are the subject of the application.'.

Mr. Battle: The starting point for the discussion on this group of amendments is that all tenants to which applications relate should be consulted and kept informed at all stages of the takeover of their houses. We ask the Minister, yet again, whether those tenants will be given all the information, at all stages, that is known to the Housing Corporation. The proposals are defective because of the lack of information that tenants can glean; they should have access even to such limited information.

The Bill provides that, if a dispute arises between the tenant, the local authority and the prospective landlord, the costs will be paid at the discretion of the Secretary of State. Tenants should not have to bear such costs, other than in exceptional circumstances. There should be a proper pre-selection process, supervised and implemented by the Housing Corporation, and such a provision should appear in the Bill. The prescribed process under which potential applicants can tout tenants should include details of the procedures to prevent them from approaching tenants unless they have actively sought a change of landlord.

The Minister earlier referred to the whole process as a beauty contest, which is a rather bad analogy—although it may have been the best that he could think of. I do not know how he could suggest that prospective landlords would treat it as a beauty contest. Most tenants want to prevent the Bill resulting in what could be called kerb crawling by prospective landlords, who will turn up on spec, knock on doors and tout for trade. We want the Minister to include some protection against that in the Bill.

In Committee on 25 February, the Minister agreed that a satisfactory pre-selection procedure should be developed. That has not happened yet. Surely the Housing Corporation should be given a statutory duty to set out the regulations governing the pre-selection process, which must include a prohibition on prospective new landlords making direct approaches to tenants.

The Government have claimed the slogan, "Power to the people"—so how can they justify a Bill that actively denies tenants any involvement in the decision-making process? The Bill takes no account of the local knowledge and experience of tenants or of non-qualifying tenants such as the elderly and those in sheltered housing and housing that has been specially built or adapted for the disabled. Every tenant in the community has the right to have a say in the future of the area in which they live.

Underlying the Bill is the Government's deep-seated attitude towards tenants. The Secretary of State used to be a Minister at the Foreign Office. He once remarked:

> "Grenada is in the process of establishing the kind of society of which the British government disapproves, irrespective of whether the people of Grenada want it or not."

The Secretary of State has now come home with that. Irrespective of whether tenants want it, sales will be enforced over their heads. In effect, the Government will be implementing what would be better described as the

Housing (Sales and Marketing) Bill. Getting their hands on the property involves a difficulty because there are tenants in the way. The tenants thus become a problem, and winkling them out becomes the highest priority. Unless the Minister takes real cognisance of our amendment and incorporates it on the face of the Bill, the true aim of the Bill will become clear.

In a sense, the real aim was made clear by the Minister in December in *House Builder* magazine when he said:

"In some cases the developer might want to act as landlord; in others he will want to sell the houses to another individual or institution—perhaps a local company . . . or a financial institution looking for an investment opportunity".

I believe that investment opportunities are at the heart of the Bill. It is about time that the Government put the tenants at the heart of the Bill. At present they are there as some kind of side effect—they have to be included because they are there, but the Bill has nothing to do with giving them extra rights as the Minister claims.

Mr. Waldegrave: The hon. Gentleman is right that the main dispute between us on this, and on other points in this part of the Bill, is how much should be put on the face of the Bill and how much included in the administrative procedures and regulations that we propose for the Housing Corporation. Obviously, we fully support the need to involve tenants in the decision whether the application should be made and to inform them at subsequent key stages—the point covered by amendment No. 257.

We have already agreed that it should be a condition of approval that applicants agree to participate in the pre-selection process. This was discussed in Committee with the help of the hon. Gentleman. It has now been developed and was described on the previous group of amendments. It is right that the Housing Corporation should ensure that there is genuine tenant support before a formal application is made. The disagreement arises over the amount of detail that should be written into the Bill. We believe that it should be for the Housing Corporation to decide how best to assess the level of tenant support in each case, and we cannot accept that an applicant should not approach any tenant on his own initiative.

I agree with the hon. Gentleman that tenants should be sent information at key points in the process. The argument is about the best way to handle that. We believe that they should be informed at the time of application. They must also be told whether there are any changes affecting them, following determination of the package offered by the applicant, and they must be told when the applicant has decided whether to proceed to the consultation procedure. Undertakings to give that information will be a condition of approval. We believe that that is how we should proceed. We discussed the matter in Committee, but I have not changed my mind on that, although I do not disagree about the importance of the flow of information. That is essential if the whole process is to operate properly. Detailed arrangements for consultation will be set out in regulations under clause 95.

Amendment No. 157 is a little different. The Secretary of State needs power to prescribe provisions for the adjudication process to ensure a fair and orderly procedure. Provision for costs is also required to ensure justice if either party precipitates avoidable action. As the hon. Gentleman will remember, we argued in Committee that costs should normally fall on whichever side they arise.

On the very important aspects of information, in particular, I hope that the hon. Gentleman will understand that, although he wants more to be specified in the Bill, we have moved as we promised in Committee. I repeat today the assurance that we are intent on achieving the same objectives as the hon. Gentleman, but by means of regulations.

Mr. Boateng: I listened carefully to the Minister's remarks about information and consultation and about the guidelines on good practice that we are to be shown at some later stage and which are to be implemented by the Housing Corporation and others responsible.

Will the Minister give a categorical assurance that, where appropriate, the information and the procedures for consultation will be published in languages understood by the tenants affected? In some parts of the country, many residents in affected accommodation would not have a sufficient grasp of the English language to appreciate in that language the complicated and technical matters likely to be the subject of consultation and information. What proposals are there to ensure that Bengali, Gujarati, Hindi and other languages will be used for the purposes of consultation and the provision of information to ensure that the process is genuine and achieves the purpose for which it should be intended?

Mr. Waldegrave: I will respond briefly, although I believe that the point is covered in later amendments. I am happy to give the assurance that the hon. Gentleman seeks. In areas where there are large numbers of people from different communities—I could name 20 or 30 different communities—it would perhaps be unfair to insist that every language be covered. It will, however, be clearly laid down for the Housing Corporation that the principal languages in the area must be involved. If it were subsequently discovered that there was, say, one Japanese person living in the area, it might be difficult to insist that all documentation should be in that language as well, but clearly the principal languages must be covered. The hon. Gentleman mentioned some of them. In my own constituency, Greek and Polish would be relevant. I certainly give the hon. Gentleman the assurance that he seeks.

Mr. Battle: The Minister has said that the details will be in regulations and not in the Bill, but perhaps he will tell us his view of amendment No. 114, which seeks to provide for one vote per tenant rather than one vote per tenancy. If that amendment is not covered in the regulations, the Bill could result in divided households. If the Minister is not prepared to specify that everyone in the area should have a say, the obligation on the applicant to gain the support of all tenants in the area will not be fulfilled, and the legislation will have a divisive effect.

Mr. Waldegrave: I do not seek to prolong the debate. We made it clear in Committee that there should be one vote per household. It would be impossible to manage the provisions if households were split. Each household must decide how to use its household vote.

Mr. Simon Hughes: I had not intended to intervene, but that is not what the Minister said in Committee. The hon. Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow) and I specifically put it to him that joint tenants should each have a vote. The Minister undertook to consider the matter and accepted that it was a sensible suggestion.

[Mr. Simon Hughes]

The hon. Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Battle) argued a slightly wider point, with which I also agree. There is a good case not only for joint tenants but for people with succession rights to be able to vote, as they are clearly affected parties. To my clear recollection, the Minister undertook to his hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne —a former Housing Minister—and to me that he would consider the idea of allowing every person whose name appears on the rent book to vote. There are very sensible reasons for that. One tenant might subsequently leave and the other remain, and the interests of both are likely to be affected. I hope that the Minister will deal with that.

Mr. Waldegrave: I well recollect being pressed by my hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow) and saying that I would consider the matter, but it is quite impracticable to pursue the course suggested. I believe that this issue is covered by a later amendment, but I make it clear now that we have considered the matter very carefully and that the procedure suggested is impossible.

Mr. Hughes: I hear what the Minister says, but that will often be an impossible requirement. If two people rent a flat, and are separated and in the process of divorce, one might wish that flat to be in the private sector, for all sorts of reasons, and the other might wish it to be in the council sector. There is no possibility of reconciling that, but they have one vote. If the Minister is trying to argue for a credible voting system he should think again most carefully. It is another example of the theory of the Bill being rendered increasingly illogical the more we consider it.

Amendment negatived.

Clause 90

INFORMATION ETC. FOR APPLICANT

7.30 pm

Mr. Battle: I beg to move amendment No. 133, in page 62, line 18, at end insert—

> '(4) Any information which is held in the form of data protected under the Data Protection Act 1984 and which is considered personal data for the purposes of that Act shall be exempt from the requirements of this section unless the registration for Data Protection purposes allows such disclosure and all tenants of the local authority have been made aware of that fact.'

In Committee, I asked the Minister how the proposals in the Bill can be reconciled with the Data Protection Act 1984. It has been suggested that prospective landlords will be able to get information that they would not be able to get under the provisions of the Data Protection Act, as individual information is protected under that Act. Either the Data Protection Act applies to the Bill and prospective applicants are not allowed to have it, or the Data Protection Act will have to be repealed. Will the Minister explain how he can possibly reconcile the two pieces of legislation?

Mr. Waldegrave: I hope that I can help the hon. Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Battle), although I cannot advise the House to accept his amendment.

As the hon. Gentleman's amendment recognises, the provisions of the Data Protection Act 1984 are not technically relevant to disclosure of information by landlords to applicants under clause 90. The prevention of disclosure provisions in the Act do not, by virtue of section 34(5), apply to disclosures which are required by a statutory duty such as clause 90(1) would impose. The Act, therefore, provides that it cannot be used as a technical obstruction to giving the applicant information which he validly needs to pursue his application under part IV.

Giving the applicant the information he needs is not, in our view, inconsistent with the important principle of privacy. If an applicant receiving data under clause 90 stored them in ways covered by the provisions of the Act, they would, of course, apply. Clause 90(3) also provides that the applicant is entitled to see only documents which he reasonably requires to pursue his application, and which the landlord is not under a duty not to disclose.

I accept that the reference in clause 90(3)(b) to duties of confidentiality could be confusing in relation to the Data Protection Act. The Government propose to bring forward amendments in another place to clarify the interaction between the two, but we propose at the same time to provide a duty of confidentiality on applicants, requiring them not to disclose information they receive in pursuit of an application under part IV, whether under clause 90 or otherwise, except to a person with a genuine need to know it for the purposes of the application. The district valuer and the independent teller are the obvious examples.

I hope that the new duty which we shall bring forward in another place will help the hon. Gentleman.

Amendment negatived.

Clause 91

DETERMINATION OF PROPERTY TO BE INCLUDED

Mrs. Roe: I beg to move amendment No. 349, in page 62, line 48, leave out 'two' and insert 'four'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): With this, it will be convenient to take the following amendments: No. 124, in page 62, line 48, leave out 'two' and insert 'eight'.

No. 125, in clause 92, page 64, line 1, leave out 'two' and insert 'six'.

No. 387, in clause 93, page 64, line 19, leave out

'before the end of the period mentioned in section 95 below' and insert—

'within a period of one month following service of notice by the applicant of his intention to proceed under section 96(1) below'.

No. 130, in clause 95, page 65, line 13, at end insert—

> '(3) The relevant period referred to in subsection (1) shall be a minimum of—
>
> (a) 4 weeks in the case of up to 10 dwellings;
>
> (b) 8 weeks in the case of more than 10 and up to 50 dwellings;
>
> (c) 12 weeks in the case of more than 50 dwellings'.

No. 126, in clause 96, page 65, line 35, leave out 'two' and insert 'six'.

No. 127, in clause 97, page 66, line 5, at end insert—

'and as soon as is practically possible having regard to the need to draft all legal documents required.'.

Mrs. Roe: The amendment seeks to extend from two weeks to four the period within which the applicant must state whether he accepts the landlord's notice under clause 91(1). Having listened to the arguments in Committee, I concede that two weeks may have been a little brisk and that four weeks would strike the happy medium.

Mr. Boateng: An element of the Government's approach to this part of the Bill smacks of asset-stripping on the run. At every stage there is an inducement and an encouragement to the would-be applicant, the person who will get his hands on what was public property, to move quickly and to be impeded as little as possible by considerations of the public interest or the rights and concerns of existing tenants.

The Government have made one concession this evening in the form of amendment No. 349 which the Minister has just outlined. But we are bound to say that it does not go far enough. Having conceded the principle that two weeks is too short, she, and the Government, should consider, even at this late stage, the length of time in relation to a number of other matters covered by the group of amendments and should seek to ensure that at every stage there is time for consideration, objection and consultation.

At the moment, we have not a hit-and-run situation, not a smash-and-grab situation, but a stack-and-grab situation. The odds are stacked against anybody who seeks to object to public moneys being dissipated in the transfer of properties, against anyone who seeks to say to the landlord, "Hang on, wait a bit. We want to know more. We want some time to consider the notice that you have served upon us."

A classic example can be found on examination of clause 91, which provides that the landlord should have 12 weeks to get together a notice for service on the applicant, but within two weeks the applicant must respond in writing to any matter stated in the notice that he does not accept. We seek to extend that time. If it is right that the landlord should have 12 weeks, it must be right that the applicant should have sufficient time to consider his or her response to such matters, some of which are very complex. That philosophy runs through our response to what the Minister said about the clause. We invite the Minister to consider whether she is able to justify giving only two weeks to an applicant to scrutinise a notice specifying the price and to object to it.

Let us imagine what such a notice is likely to contain. The determination of a transfer price is a complex undertaking. It would be equally complex to scrutinise it and in many cases it would be necessary for an applicant to seek professional advice. In some cases, it would be necessary for that professional advice to encompass some 100 properties. Is it right that what amounts to a snap decision should be made in two weeks, when one considers the time taken in the conveyancing of one's house? I mean no criticism of the solicitors' profession, of the local authorities concerned or of the estate agents. Heaven forbid that one should criticise those august institutions.

I am glad to see that that brings a smile to the lips of the Minister. He has not been smiling much this afternoon, and one can well understand that, given the circumstances in which he finds himself. Let us hope that the Secretary of State does not wipe the smile from his face, as some Opposition Members predict he will shortly. If it has brought a smile to the Minister's lips I am glad, but will he translate that smile into action? I must say to hon. Members who were not present in Committee that we saw the Minister smile often, but he acted very rarely. In this instance, the Government have acted, but they have acted inadequately. Our modest amendment will enable them to ensure that the public good and the rights of the individual are protected and that the clause does not run contrary to both.

Mr. Simon Hughes: I welcome the Government amendment but I wish that it had gone further. I would have preferred the similar amendment with a longer time period tabled by the Labour party. Four weeks is still an unreasonably short time for the complicated exercise about which we are talking. Amendment No. 130 is also welcome. We should have written into the Bill specific time periods for consultation as required by clause 95.

I want to address my remarks to my amendment No. 387. It is in this group although it relates to clause 93. It seeks to return to the argument for a two-stage voting procedure. It is important, and I support it not just for the sake of it but to try to persuade Ministers of the logic of accepting the amendment, even if they tell me that there may be another way of drafting it.

There are circumstances in which tenants who have voted yes or who have not voted at all may want to be able to decide whether to stay with their local authority after they know definitely whether a transfer is to take place. A similar decision in opposite circumstances is already possible. If an individual tenant votes no, the autumn consultation paper on tenants' choice made it clear that such a tenant would have an option to

"withdraw their objection in writing."

If a tenant who votes yes decides to stay with the council, the consequence of the phrase "tenants' choice" must be that they should be able to have the landlord that they prefer. The logic of that is that there are two stages. First, there is the decision as to whether the block or estate transfers. Secondly, if it does, tenants have to decide whether they want to go with the transfer. I will suggest two different circumstances in which people could reasonably want to have, and should be given, the chance to decide to stay with the council after they know that the freehold of their estate or block is to be transferred.

First, a tenant may find out late in the procedure circumstances and facts that influence the decision whether he or she wishes to transfer. It is easy to think of examples of that. For example, someone may vote for a transfer and then find out that everybody else on his or her floor or in his or her row will be staying with the council. They may regret their decision to vote for a new landlord because they would stick out like a sore thumb. They might decide that it would be better if their floor or row remained with the old landlord. The circumstances after the vote would determine their preference.

I would be interested to know from the Minister why they should not be able to exercise their preference. Under present arrangements, tenants in such circumstances cannot choose to stay with the council that reflects the Government's aim of de-municipalisation. It is a way of achieving the maximum transfer out of the council housing sector. Tenants in similar but opposite circumstances in which a few tenants find that they are the only people on a block or on an estate to vote against a transfer and decide that they want to join their neighbours in transferring will be able to do so.

The second circumstance is one in which the two-stage voting procedure, which our amendment proposes, is not only desirable in the interests of maximum tenants' choice but is necessary. It is where there is to be a secret ballot. It is an important point, and I should be fascinated to hear

[Mr. Simon Hughes]

the Minister's response. Does the Minister accept—this is a crucial question—that the system as proposed does not allow a secret ballot in any circumstances? If there is a secret ballot, people vote anonymously and nobody knows who casts which vote for which result. Under the Bill, the votes cannot be secret because individual decisions are made as to who transfers and who does not, as well as a collective decision about the future of the block. There cannot be a secret ballot because the result of those voting yes is then notified to everybody on the estate or block in question.

7.45 pm

If a secret ballot were to take place under what is called tenants' choice, it would inevitably have to be followed by a separate procedure under which tenants would make known their effective decision about the transfer or stay with the council landlord. When a decision about the transfer of an estate or block is made, there should always be a secret ballot. That is important so that adverse or pecuniary pressure is not applied. The necessary consequence of a secret ballot is a two-stage voting procedure. I hope that the Minister will confirm that there is a fundamental defect on the procedure because tenants cannot vote on a proposed landlord in secret. We must have an amendment to allow secret ballots to take place.

Another interesting implication of the present arrangement whereby tenants can make a second stage decision to transfer but not to stay with the council must be pointed out. The rent terms offered by the council may be different depending on whether the council continues to own the block or, following a transfer to a non-council landlord, rents it from that new landlord and sub-lets to the tenants. A council may charge a rent of £20 a week to its tenants and an applicant may offer tenants a rent of £30 a week plus substantial improvements to the estate. We can imagine for simplicity that tenants have a straightforward choice between higher rents and improvements with the new landlords or lower rents and no improvements with the council landlord.

If a transfer took place, the council would, for those flats where tenants wish to remain with the council, have to pay the new landlord the higher rents. In paragraph 36, the document on tenants' choice makes it clear that

> "In general terms, it is proposed that the rent and service charge payable by a landlord under a leaseback arrangement should be neither more or less than the rent and service charge payable by a tenant of a similar property who has chosen to transfer to the applicant."

For that reason the council may make its policy for future rents dependent on its costs. If transfer takes place, council rents may, indeed probably will, be higher than if the transfer does not take place. That will happen because the council will be charged more and, as the Minister said, the only option is for the council to subsidise the difference. Councils will not have the money to do that, and rents will go up. That is a fact of municipal life. The council will not be able to finance an ongoing deficit to keep its rents down when it is being charged more.

For that reason, tenants who vote to stay with the council may decide to transfer, which they will be able to do. The rent differential will no longer pertain because the council will have to charge higher rents as well. Therefore, tenants may want to make a second choice. The essential point about amendment No. 387 is that somebody's vote for what should happen to a block or estate might be different from what that person would prefer for himself or herself. Each tenant must make two separate decisions. I hope that the Minister will accept that this issue needs to be reconsidered. At present, the Bill does not permit the two decisions to be taken separately. Clause 93(2) identifies the vote as one and the same thing—the public decision about whether to transfer.

Confusion clearly exists in Government. The Secretary of State nearly slipped up in an interview with *Municipal Journal* on 10 June 1988. The interview says:

> "The Environment Secretary says: 'There are two separate questions. First is who shall be the block landlord and it is to that which the voting system applies . . . The second point is that the legislation says each individual tenant has the right to decide who is his own landlord. The second stage is that such a tenant can say I will stay with the local authority in which case he takes a local authority tenancy and the local authority takes the tenancy of the landlord. Or he can say I'm quite happy to go with the new landlord and he gets a direct tenancy with the new landlord.' Mr. Ridley denies that is a new fallback stage."

Officials had to come to the Secretary of State's rescue. The interview continues:

> "Department of the Environment officials later clarified this point. There is one vote, they said, with two implications. The sum total is where the block goes, individual decisions are where the tenancies go. As for whether there will be a demand for new landlords Mr. Ridley exclaims 'What harm is there in giving them a choice.'"

It is not only a one-way choice but a false choice made without knowledge of the facts. Further, it will not be a secret choice. The ballot concerns not only the rigged vote, to which we shall turn in a moment——

Mr. Boateng: The sooner the better.

Mr. Hughes: It is important to show the inadequacies of the voting system.

Mr. Spearing: Letters system.

Mr. Hughes: That is true. To call it a voting system is cloaking it with an authenticity that it clearly will not have.

The application procedure as a whole will take six months or more. The proposal in the amendment would add, at most, an extra four weeks. Tenants certainly would not object to it, because it would cater for their interests and maximise their choice. I hope that the Government will think again about this additional iniquity in a ridiculous voting system.

Mrs. Roe: Tenants' choice procedures are potentially time-consuming, and we do not want to extend them further unless absolutely necessary.

The hon. Member for Brent, South (Mr. Boateng) mentioned asset-stripping. I remind him of the stringent approval criteria under the Housing Corporation amendments that we discussed earlier, and of the Secretary of State's power to control, by his consent under clause 98, any disposals of property transferred under this part of the Bill.

Mr. Boateng: Will the Minister give way?

Mrs. Roe: I shall not give way, because we have much to do.

As to amendment No. 125, once the scope of the application is agreed, the landlord sets his proposed price. I do not understand why an applicant would need more than two weeks to dispute that price. He will have had time to make an assessment of the price, so he should be able to react more quickly.

Amendment No. 126 would allow the landlord six weeks to dispute a final notice of intention to proceed. I cannot see the need for this amendment. What will the landlord be disputing? As we are all agreed on the need for an independent teller, such as the electoral reform society, the conduct of the ballot should be beyond question.

As to the principle of amendment No. 130, I assure hon. Members that we have no intention of prescribing unrealistically short periods for consultation. I do not think that a period for consultation and a ballot should be less than 28 days. We have agreed to consult expert and interested bodies such as the Electoral Reform Society about this matter, which will help us to arrive at a sensible and fair time limit.

As to amendment No. 127, I am advised that there is no need to say that the completion of the transaction can be accomplished only subject to the necessary legal requirements being met, including the drafting of relevant papers. Time limits should not be set to accommodate the slowest performer. On the contrary, we wish to encourage the swift and businesslike conclusion of each application. I remind hon. Members that, under clause 101, it is open to the parties to extend the time limit by agreement. I ask hon. Members not to press the rest of the amendments.

Amendment No. 387 addresses the separate issue of how many times tenants should decide the future of their tenancies. If the overall ballot is such that the applicant decides to proceed and issues notice to that effect, amendment No. 387 would allow the tenant a further month to change his vote. Those who had voted yes could change their minds, thus throwing the applicant's calculations into a meaningless muddle. The applicant must be in a position, before he decides whether to proceed, to know which tenants intend to remain with the council. We therefore cannot agree to prolong and disrupt the consultation process in that way.

The hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) said that the tenant should not have to decide whether to go or stay until his neighbours had decided. In theory, that process could go on for ever. There comes a time when tenants must choose, not on the basis of what their neighbours are doing but on what the applicant offers on consultation.

The hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey mentioned the issue of the secret ballot. It is a feature of the consultation procedure that each tenant can decide the future of his or her tenancy. As the hon. Gentleman said, there cannot be an anonymous ballot.

Mr. McCartney: Will the Minister give way?

Mrs. Roe: I will give way to the hon. Gentleman if he will be patient and allow me to finish the points that I am making.

Any anonymous ballot is not the same as a secret ballot. The independent teller will collect the votes and will pass on to the applicant only the information that he needs to pursue his application. That gives the appropriate protection of the tenant's private interests.

Tenants who decide to stay will not pay private sector rents; the existing landlord pays what the transferring tenants have freely agreed to pay. The rent to be paid for existing tenancies is a matter for the tenant and the landlord to agree, and full-cost recovery is not a usual feature of individual council rents.

Mr. McCartney: This is a historic moment; it has taken four months for the Minister to give way to me.

In Committee, I asked about the voting procedure and individual tenants. Was the hon. Lady sneaking out a concession when she mentioned each tenant? In Committee, when we asked what would happen if each tenant had the right to vote, the Minister was unclear. Is the Minister clarifying the position and saying that in joint tenancies each tenant will have the right to vote or will tenants be nominated? If so, which tenant will have the vote?

Mrs. Roe: This matter has been covered in debate. It has been made clear that it is one vote per household.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 92

DETERMINATION OF PURCHASE PRICE

8 pm

Mr. Waldegrave: I beg to move amendment No. 350, in page 63 line 19, after 'acquired', insert—

'or, as the case may be, the disposal cost which, disregarding section 93(3) below, is attributable to the property to be acquired by virtue of subsection (2A) below'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): With this it will be convenient to take Government amendments Nos. 351 to 360.

Mr. Waldegrave: The amendments are simpler than they look. The principle, which we have already debated, concerns dowries. With our present select band, although rather fewer than in Committee, it is right that we should look at such complicated amendments. My hon. Friend the Member for Stamford and Spalding (Mr. Davies) is here in case we get muddled. He may be able to produce some visual aids if we get into difficulties.

Amendment No. 350 provides for dowries. We foreshadowed this in our October explanatory paper. We said that market value subject to tenancy could give rise to negative valuations, and we debated the principle earlier on tenants' choice. That could arise when the landlord had failed to fulfil his contractual repairing obligations. Once a sum is deducted from a valuation to allow for a backlog of landlord's repairs, the value of the property could well be less than nothing. In those circumstances, it would be open to a tenant to take the present landlord—the council —to court and insist that the repairs were made. This provision merely transfers an obligation that already exists.

Hon. Members have argued against dowries but, as long as we ensure that the subsidy regime takes account of them, it is logical that dowries—which do not invent any new obligations or costs for local authorities that do not exist already but simply capitalise them—should be available. The amendments bring that about.

Amendment agreed to.

Amendments made: No. 351, in page 63, leave out line 22.

No. 352, in page 63, line 23, leave out 'attributable to the houses' and insert

[Mr. Waldegrave]

'the amount attributable to houses as defined in section 93(4) (b) below'.—*[Mr. Waldegrave.]*

Mr. Simon Hughes: I beg to move amendment No. 1, in page 63, line 25, after second 'be', insert

'the greater of the amount of any debt attributable to its construction, acquisition or renovation which is outstanding on the relevant date and'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take the following amendments: No. 128, in page 63, line 25, leave out 'relevant date' and insert—

'date of valuation subject ot a revision of such valuation if completion is delayed by more than twelve weeks and such delay is not the result of a failure on the landlord's part to meet deadlines prescribed in this Part of the Act'.

No. 134, in page 63, line 27, leave out 'on the following assumptions' and insert—

'with the addition of a sum equal to the value of any arrears of rent owing by the tenant of that property. The following assumptions will apply to the assessment of open market value'.

No. 137, in page 63, line 40, at end insert—

'; and

(f) that the price payable must not be less than the debt outstanding on the dwelling at that time.'.

No. 138, in page 63, line 40, at end insert—

'; and

(f) that the price will be a positive value payable to the vendor.'.

No. 261, in page 63, line 40, at end insert—

'provided that the price shall not be less that the market value of the property with vacant possession reduced by an amount equating to the national average discount under Part V of the Housing Act 1985 as prescribed from time to time'.

No. 158, in page 64, line 5, leave out from 'valuer' to end of line 6 and insert—

'and there shall be an appeal to Tribunal set up for this purpose; and any costs shall be shared between the parties equally'.

No. 394, in page 64, line 6, at end insert—

'(6) If, following an acquisition made under this Part at a purchase price determined under this section, a local authority has outstanding debt attributable to construction, acquisition or renovation of any property subject to the acquisition made under this Part, the Secretary of State shall take responsibility for servicing and paying the debt.'

Mr. Hughes: It is a strange circumstance that four and a half days into the Report stage we are debating amendment No. 1, but that is the way of the world. It is debated with amendment No. 394, in my name, and with other no doubt excellent ideas put forward by other hon. Members, which, I must be honest, I have not considered as carefully.

The amendment is about transfer price. The Minister touched on this matter in his brief remarks in the debate on amendment No. 350. The proposal is that local authorities should not be left with outstanding loan debt on properties in which they no longer have an interest. If the tenanted market value is less than the outstanding loan debt, and the local authority continues to have responsibility for the debt and does not receive resources to cover it, the cost to the local council of servicing and paying off the remaining debt will have to be borne—this is the crucial point—by the remaining tenants of the council and-or by the ratepayers. From what we understand will be in next year's housing Bill—when debts arising out of housing matters will not be allowed to be transferred across to the general rate account—those debts will have to be borne by the remaining tenants.

That raises the bizarre and grossly inequitable prospect of local authorities that have had a large proportion of their stock bought by new landlords—with no say by the local authority; it has no power to stop that—having to impose the remaining debt burden on an ever-decreasing number of tenants. It raises the bizarre consequence that local authorities that dispose of all their stock to a new landlord for a price less than the outstanding loan debt would have to pay off that debt without any resources.

That must be the implication of the scheme as proposed. Ministers are forced to agree, although they may not politically want to concede it, that the logic lies with the amendment, which says that the purchase price cannot be lower than the outstanding debt.

Amendment No. 394 proposes an alternative way forward. There is some evidence that the Government are aware of the problem raised by it and plan to provide additional subsidy to local authorities that are left with outstanding loan debt on property that they no longer own. In the general election campaign last year, the Secretary of State made it clear, according to the "Housing Association Weekly" of 5 June 1987—the week before the general election—that

> "Any local authority which loses money on a transfer will be able to claim extra RSG to cover the loss of interest on debt."

In Committee, in the debates on housing action trusts, the Minister of State said that revenue expenditure to cover outstanding loan debt charges should be covered by subsidy arrangements. The press briefing which the Minister gave last week and which was widely reported in the specialist press referred to that problem, and included this quotation from the Minister:

> "The Government won't write off debt, but it will take account of its effects. The subsidy system will have to direct resources to those who have a new burden."

In Committee—*[Interruption.]*

Hon. Members: Give way.

Mr. Hughes: Do not tempt me. The Principality—in the form of my hon. Friend the Member for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Livsey)—is coming to the rescue, hot-foot from Korea, as I understand it.

In Committee, referring to housing action trusts, the Minister said that if there were a negative sale value such that the capital payment had to be made by the council to the new landlord when the council sold property to him, that payment, or dowry, would be financed through the housing investment programme. There is plenty of evidence that the Government have already thought that there will have to be additional subsidy.

Amendment No. 394 requires the Secretary of State directly to take responsibility for servicing and paying any outstanding loan debt. It is important that some requirement be written into the Bill to guarantee local authorities that they will not face a massive debt and have no money to pay it. They might be able to call on only a small number of residential tenants. We need to hear exactly what the Government will do about outstanding loan debt. It is not a theoretical problem.

The Government must tell local councils what happens if they sell housing stock or have it forced out of their hands, but are left with a debt to pay. The Government must accept that, even if they do not want high prices putting off new landlords, the ratepayers or the tenants who remain with the council—the only people left—should not effectively have to subsidise new landlords because of a purchase price determined by central Government on the basis of ensuring that it is low enough to benefit the new landlords. This is an important point. Ratepayers and tenants remaining with the council will pay to subsidise the landlords who buy under this so-called tenants' choice.

The Government have stated that the principal subsidy for new landlords lies in the purchase price. They must make sure that it is a subsidy, but one from Government and not one that must be paid by tenants who remain with the council.

A similar amendment was tabled by the hon. Member for Mid-Staffordshire (Mr. Heddle)—[HON. MEMBERS: "Where is he?"] I do not know. He was here earlier, but he has disappeared again.

Mr. Winnick: He is looking after his tenants.

Mr. Hughes: He is looking after his tenants.

The hon. Gentleman tabled the amendment at the request of the Conservative-controlled Association of District Councils, which is worried about this issue. In response to the "Tenants' Choice" document, the ADC said:

> "We are concerned that in some circumstances property may have to be sold at a price which is lower than the outstanding loan debt. Authorities which are still in receipt of housing subsidy will be somewhat cushioned from this loss. However other councils will be left with the residual debt in the housing revenue account."

The ADC naively asked:

> "Will the Government be making financial assistance available to these local councils in order to service the debt?"

We need to be assured that ratepayers and remaining council tenants will not have to subsidise the new takeover landlords. If the Government want the scheme, they must make money available to the councils to pay for it. The Government must not be allowed to get off the hook by saying that this is a theoretical problem. It is a very real problem that will cost most councils in England and Wales millions of pounds.

Mr. Waldegrave: I despair of my powers of persuasion. I have tried to persuade the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) so many times out of his views, but I have not succeeded. *[Interruption.]* The hon. Gentleman says, from a sedentary position, that all sorts of people try to persuade him out of his views, which I have no doubt is true, but so far they have all failed.

The point is that nothing will change. The valuation will reflect the reality in the area concerned. If a local authority has property that is costing it more than it derives in rent, it has a negative value. I refer to the experience of the hon. Member for Knowsley, North (Mr. Howarth). I know that his local authority is in the unfortunate position of having a large amount of housing that has a very large amount of outstanding debt attached to it and that, in terms of market valuations, is not worth very much. Practically every local authority has similar properties. If local authorities were to receive something that was based not on a property's valuation but on the historic cost, that would dramatically change the position. The Government's position will not change the authority's position. We are capitalising the flows, whether they be negative or positive.

Ms. Primarolo: To give the Minister's powers of persuasion yet another chance to correct our views, I mentioned earlier that Bristol city council asked the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy to calculate the valuation price of the transfer of a single unit in Bristol to a private landlord. Its valuation was £3,000. I do not say that the Minister is being dishonest, but I think that he is misleading us about the criteria on which such a valuation is made. Apparently the valuation is to be made by saying that that unit has a depreciation value. If all houses were valued on that basis, the price of houses would be lower, instead of which there is growing concern about house prices. Property Investment Company, which is a subsidiary of TSB, has been set up to advise on the transfer of council houses to private landlords under the scheme. It says that the valuation of the housing would have to be extremely low to attract investors' interest. That flies in the face of what the Minister has said.

Mr. Waldegrave: The hon. Lady knows that the ultimate valuation, in case of dispute, would come from the district valuer. I do not detect Bristol city council objecting to the acceptance of district valuer prices in other circumstances. I do not therefore see why the council should object to district valuer prices in this case.

The argument about dowries has been advanced several times today. The hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey had to go back to the general election campaign to detect that we then said that there would be subsidy consequences. He did not need to go back as far as that. In a previous debate today, I said that there would be subsidy consequences and that the Government must take them into account.

Mr. Simon Hughes: To pursue the point made by the hon. Member for Bristol, South (Ms. Primarolo), the managing director of Property Investment Company is quoted in the *Financial Times* of 20 June as saying:

> "Private investors would not finance the purchase of council housing estates by housing associations unless the Government was prepared to write off local authority debts on council homes."

What does the Minister have to say in reply?

Mr. Waldegrave: The gentleman in question can say what he likes. We say that it would be wrong if local authorities did not get the proper value for their properties, which is tenanted market value. In some cases that will mean that councils will do very much better out of it than if they received outstanding loan debt. The hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey wants councils to win in either case. It is far simpler to have a proper valuation. It is not a transfer within the public sector, and the best way to deal with it is by means of tenanted market value. On that basis, I oppose the amendment.

8.15 pm

Mr. Simon Hughes: The Minister's answer was no more convincing than the one that he gave in Committee. It is not believed by many of the advisers, and I quoted somebody who is regarded as authoritative and independent. The Minister did not answer some of the key questions that were put to him about who would pick up the tab. The answer is that the only people who are left to pick up the tab are the ratepayers and remaining council tenants. They will have to foot the bill and subsidise the new landlord. They will have to pay for the Government's policies. That is why I tabled the amendment and why I do not intend to withdraw it.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The question is, That the amendment be made. As many as are of that opinion say, Aye. To the contrary, No. I think the Ayes have it. The Ayes have it. *[Interruption.]* I beg the pardon of the House. The Noes have it.

Mr. McCartney: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I am not trying to cause mischief, but this is the second time that the Opposition have been cheated out of an amendment—once in Committee and again tonight. A vote was taken, and you stated the result absolutely clearly. There should be no attempt to alter the decision. It should be accepted.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: There was a misunderstanding by the Chair, just as there can be a misunderstanding by any hon. Member. The sensible way out of the difficulty would be for the Chair to put the Question again.

Mr. Simon Hughes: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It would at least be generous of the Government to concede that on amendment No. 1, of all amendments, they were happy to accept your initial ruling. I ask the Minister to do so.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The House had better put the matter right beyond doubt. The Chair will put the question again. The Question is, That the amendment be made——

Mr. McCartney *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The Question is, That the amendment be made. As many as are of that opinion say, Aye. To the contrary, No. I think that the Noes have it. The Noes have it.

I understand that amendments Nos. 140, 141 and 159 are not to be moved.

Mr. McCartney: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I do not wish to cause further problems, but I want this matter clarified. It is important for those hon. Members who have spent literally hundreds of hours on the Bill. It seems that when a vote is taken and then retaken it is just to give credence to an arrangement about the outcome of votes. That is not how I, as a Back Bencher, see the matter. A vote was clearly taken, and I find the outcome extremely difficult to understand. If that is to be the principle that governs voting, I think that each time the Opposition lose a vote we should ask for it to be retaken.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: It is within the discretion of the Chair. If there is doubt about the outcome of the Question that has been put to the House, it is right that the Chair should put the Question again to remove any doubt.

Mr. Simon Hughes: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. At the time that the vote was taken, I counted 10 hon. Members on this side voting and nine hon. Members on the other side voting. I know that we are talking about a funny voting system, but it seems to me that 10 over nine is a majority for the amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: If the hon. Gentleman had said that he wished to press the matter to a Division, that would have clarified matters. I did not get that impression from the hon. Gentleman. I heard a distinct cry of "No" and I said that the Noes had it. I did not hear the hon. Gentleman challenge the Chair's ruling. These points of order are delaying the House.

Amendments made: No. 353, in page 63, line 40, at end insert—

'(2A) Subject to section 93(3) below, there is a disposal cost attributable to the property to be acquired if, having regard to the expense likely to be incurred in carrying out the works referred to in paragraph (d) of subsection (2) above, the property to which the acquisition relates would not realise any price in the circumstances specified in that subsection; and that disposal cost is the amount by which the expense likely to be so incurred exceeds what would be determined under that subsection as the price if those works had already been carried out.'

No. 354, in page 63, line 42, after 'price', insert—

'or, as the case may be, disposal cost'.—*[Mr. Waldegrave.]*

Clause 93

DETERMINATION OF PURCHASE PRICE

No. 355, in page 64, line 23, leave out from 'acquisition' to 'that' in line 25 and insert—

'(a) there shall be determined the sum (in this subsection referred to as "the sum referable to excluded houses") which represents'.

No. 356, in page 64, line 28, at end insert—

'and

(b) if the amount attributable to house is a price, the sum referable to excluded houses shall be applied as a deduction from any price payable for the property to be aquired, as determined under section 92 above, and as an increase in any disposal cost attributable to that property; and

(c) if the amount attributable to houses is a disposal cost, the sum referable to excluded houses shall be applied as an increase in any price payable for the property to be acquired, as determined under section 92 above, and as a deduction from any disposal cost attributable to that property.'.

No. 357 in page 64, line 29, after 'In', insert 'section 92(1)(ii) and'.

No. 358, in page 64, line 33, after 'price', insert—

'or, as the case may be, disposal cost'.

No. 359, in page 64, line 34, leave out from 'the' to end of line 35 and insert—

'price or disposal cost which, under subsection (2) or subsection (2A) of section 92 above, would be attributable for, or attributable to, the property to which the acquisition relates if there were excluded from that property all property other than dwelling-houses which are houses.'.—*[Mr. Waldegrave.]*

Mr. Spearing: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The difficulties for the House are not being caused by hon. Members but by the complexities of the Bill and the amendments.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I am afraid that it is not unusual for the House and the Chair to be confused about complex matters.

Clause 95

CONSULTATIONS BY APPLICANT

Mr. Soley: I beg to move amendment 170, in page 65, line 10, at end insert 'subject to subsection (3) below'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to consider the following amendments: No. 175, in page 65, line 10, at end insert—

'For the purposes of this section, tenant(s) shall include——

(i) sole tenants,
(ii) all joint tenants,
(iii) the spouse of any tenant as defined in (i) and (ii) if residing with the tenants,

(iv) any other person residing with the tenant(s) who on the relevant date have a right to succeed to the tenancy in accordance with sections 87 and 89 of the Housing Act 1985'.

No. 171, in page 65, line 13, at end insert—

'(3) The applicant will cause to permit such consultation to be carried out by an independent person agreed by the landlord, or such independent persons as may be prescribed'.

No. 302, in page 65, line 13, at end insert—

'(3) The provisions governing the consultation shall include the appointment of an independent teller to supervise the conduct of the consultation.

(4) If the independent teller, appointed under the provisions of subsection (3) above, has reason to believe that any financial consideration or other improper material inducement has been or will be offered or made by the applicant to any qualifying tenant, to influence that tenant not to give notice under section 93(2) above, he shall be empowered to declare the consultation null and void.'.

No. 384, in clause 96, page 65, line 16, at end insert—

"(1A) This subsection applies to any qualifying tenant whose tenancy commenced before the relevant date and who, before the end of the period mentioned in section 95 above, has given notice in such manner as may be prescribed of his wish to become a tenant of the applicant.'.

No. 173, in page 65, line 18, leave out from 'above' to end of line 21 and insert—

'where—

(a) in the case of flats fewer than 66 per cent. of those eligible to vote support the transfer; or

(b) in the case of houses fewer than 50 per cent. of those eligible to vote support the transfer,

a secret ballot to be conducted by the Electoral Registration Officer for the area, or such other person who may be agreed by the applicant or landlord'.

No. 174, in page 65, line 18, leave out from 'above' to end of line 21 and insert—

'(a) where—

(i) in the case of flats fewer than 66 per cent. of those eligible to vote have supported the transfer on principle; or

(ii) in the case of houses fewer than 50 per cent. of those eligible to vote support the transfer in principle, and

(b) unless it is accompanied by the written consent from all those households who wish to participate in the transfer, such consent to be in the form as shall be prescribed'.

No. 385, in page 65, line 18, leave out 'if' and insert 'unless'.

No. 386, in page 65, line 19, leave out '93(2)' and insert '96(1A)'.

No. 303, in page 65, line 21, at end insert—

', or if the independent teller appointed under the provisions of section 95(3) above has declared the consultation null and void.'.

No. 172, in page 65, line 21, at end insert—

'(3) A ballot under this section shall be conducted by the approval body referred to in section 87 above and shall be so conducted by it as to secure that—

(a) so far as is reasonably practicable and subject to the approval body's obligations in subsection (5) below, all those entitled to vote shall have an opportunity of voting and of doing so in secret; and

(b) the votes given in the ballot are fairly and accurately counted.

(4) The method of voting in the ballot must be by the marking of a voting paper by the person voting. The voting paper must inform the person voting of the likely consequences of the acquisition and shall contain such other information as may be prescribed.

(5) As soon as is reasonably practicable after the holding of the ballot, the approval body shall take such steps as are reasonably necessary to ensure that—

(a) All persons entitled to vote in the ballot, the applicant and the landlord are notified of the number of—

(i) votes cast in the ballot;

(ii) individuals voting in favour of the acquisition proceeding;

(iii) individuals voting against the acquisition proceeding;

(iv) spoiled ballot papers;

(b) where the condition referred to in subsection (2) above has been satisfied, that the applicant and the landlord are informed of the name and address of every individual who has voted against the acquisition proceeding.

(6) The applicant shall bear the approval body's reasonable costs and expenses in conducting the ballot and in complying with its obligations in subsection (5) above'.

No. 177, in page 65, line 34, at end insert—

'; and

(f) the consent in writing of tenants to whom section 95 above applies'.

We may also discuss new clause 43—*Need for positive tenant's choice before change of Landlord (Part IV)*—

'(1) For the avoidance of doubt, it is hereby declared that nothing in this Part of this Act shall mean that the landlord of a tenant shall change unless the tenant has notified the independent teller that he wishes to become a tenant of the applicant.

(2) For the purpose of this section, the independent teller shall be a person approved for that purpose by the Secretary of State.'.

Mr. Soley: I can understand the frustration of the House because some hon. Members felt that they had given more in Committee than they had received. Much of the frustration arises from the so-called voting system that we are about to discuss. That is the key area and it has been considerably debated in Committee. Fortunately, we seem to have been able to draw the matter to the attention of the media. It is by far the most iniquitous part of the Bill in terms of the misuse of the English language. The Government presented the matter as if it were about tenants' choice, but it is about "pick-a-tenant" because a landlord can choose which properties he wants to take over.

As some of my hon. Friends have said, this is not a voting system but one carried out by letters. Our amendments seek to make clear that a voting system is necessary. The hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) and other hon. Members will be pleased to see from an examination of the full group of amendments that they cover a number of areas about which we have already spoken. Those areas have been causing some anxiety, not the least important being that concerning the right of a spouse to vote whether or not it is a joint tenancy, a sole tenancy, or involves the spouse of any tenant. The most important amendments in the group are amendments Nos. 172 and 174, and if necessary we shall push them to a vote. Those amendments would create a genuine voting system.

In an attempt to be clever, the Minister said that the leader of the Labour party approved the principles of the system contained in the Bill, but the Minister misread the report in *The Guardian*. My right hon. Friend's speech was a very good one. I know that, because I checked it. It reiterates what I have been saying since the Bill first appeared, that we have no objection to tenants being able to change their landlord. However, it must also apply in the private sector for non-resident landlords, and it must be done in a proper way, with a proper voting system. It must be done in a way that makes sure that proper rights are safeguarded and that the tenants have an absolute veto. That is crucial.

[Mr. Soley]

It is also necessary, as has been done successfully by Labour councils in Glasgow and Sheffield, that the change be made in co-operation with a good alternative landlord. The Minister will know that, where it has been done successfully by Labour local authorities, it has been carried out in conjunction with co-operatives and housing associations. We have no objection to that. We have every objection to the introduction by the Government of a system that basically allows a private developer approved by the Government to make a bid for property. Having made that bid, he can make the local authority offer all the information that he needs about the number of tenants, the cost of servicing the estate and a whole range of other matters. That will give the developer an idea of whether it is worth taking over the properties.

The so-called voting system angers council tenants more than any other part of the Bill. I do not blame them, because the dead are counted as having voted in favour of a transfer. If a person dies at the time a bid is made for an estate, he is counted as having voted in favour of a transfer. By any standards that is wicked, but it goes further than that, because all empty properties are also counted as yes votes. That is an incredible system. In order to stop a sale going through, there would have to be a majority against it. I shall give a simple example. If 50 per cent. of the people vote no, 25 per cent. vote in favour of a takeover and 25 per cent. do not vote at all, the takeover will go ahead. In an extreme example, where no one votes in favour of the takeover, it will go ahead if a majority does not vote against it.

Mr. Tony Banks: That could happen.

Mr. Soley: As my hon. Friend says, that could happen. This system is a disgrace to democracy and its description is a gross misuse of the English language. I am all for the flexibility of the English language, but this cannot be called a voting system. How does the Minister justify it? He justifies it by an incredible statement. He says that it is quite all right because people who want to stay with the local authority can do so. But then we read in the newspapers that the rent will be set by the new landlord. That wipes the smile off the face of the hon. Member for Stamford and Spalding (Mr. Davies).

The Minister says that a local authority can decide whether to subsidise a tenant and make up the difference. We know that umpteen service charges can be imposed on tenants by a new landlord. That has happened in Thamesmead. There can be service charges for the caretaker, for the maintenance of the estate and for landscaping. No fewer than 13 different surcharges can be levied. The Minister says that these matters will not worry the tenants, but they will, because it is their money that is being given away. The Government have their hands in the pockets of the tenants and are trying to get money out to give to some other organisation that has taken over those tenants.

This is a grossly unreasonable attempt to fool tenants, but it has gone badly wrong. That is one of the reasons —we shall come to it later—for the Government now looking with such interest at new clause 47. They have twigged that, even with this incredibly distorted voting system, the vast majority of council tenants will not be fooled and will vote against. In Peterborough, where a massive 95 per cent. voted to stay with the local authority, the Government stepped in and said that, as with other new towns, they would try to find a way of transferring the properties without a vote and will have a vote in two years. That is the latest trick. The Government are desperate to get local authorities out of the provision of housing. The tenants do not want that, yet the Bill is supposed to be all about tenants' choice. If tenants vote to stay with a local authority, why should they not be allowed to do so? That is the issue.

In these amendments, particularly amendments Nos. 172 and 174, we are laying down what the voting procedures should be. There must be a proper ballot, with an approved body—such as the Electoral Reform Society —to oversee it. There must be proper checks on the way in which voting is carried out. The Government felt it necessary to impose the toughest of legislation on the trade unions, but all of a sudden, someone can have their home transferred over his head, and although he might object, nothing can be done about it and he simply has to pay the new rent set by the new landlord, plus all the service charges and the rest, or move out of the home. That is one of the most appalling proposals to be before the House, particularly because it is dressed up by misuse of the English language.

8.30 pm

The matter goes further. We want an answer from the Minister on this. Last Thursday, the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey asked a question of the Prime Minister. She replied:

> "I thought that we had arranged that it was a majority of those voting—either for tenants' co-operatives or for a possible transfer to housing associations."

There was an interruption, and the Prime Minister went on to say:

> "In that case, may I have another look at it? I think in fact that we have arranged for a block to be transferred only with a majority of those voting and for those who do not wish to be transferred to remain under existing ownership."—[*Official Report*, 23 June 1988; Vol. 135, c. 1257.]

That is not the case. The Prime Minister is wrong about the Bill as drafted. Therefore, will the Minister alter the Bill to fit what the Prime Minister thought was being done? Alternatively, has he told the Prime Minister that she was wrong last Thursday when she said that the decision was taken by a "majority of those voting"? He could change the Bill along the lines of our amendments and bring it into line with what the Prime Minister thought it was doing. If we are in favour of majority voting, which we think is the basic necessity, we ought to move in that direction.

Mr. Spearing: My hon. Friend is explaining the matter clearly, but is it not even more serious? Would it not be proper for the Prime Minister tomorrow to correct what she said if we are right, or for the Secretary of State, who is, after all, a member of the Cabinet and should have informed her, to say that he will incorporate that provision in the Bill? Should not one of them be here before we reach the vote to tell us what they are going to do?

Mr. Soley: I agree with my hon. Friend. I understand that the Prime Minister cannot be in the House tomorrow, but we intend to pursue this matter. We want to know whether the Minister will amend this, so that the decision is taken by a majority vote. In Committee, we had long debates about this extremely important matter. I appreciate that we have major time problems today, but this is so important that we expect the Minister to tell us——

Mr. Spearing: No, the Secretary of State.

Mr. Soley: Well, we expect the Secretary of State to tell us—that the Prime Minister was right and he will change the Bill accordingly, or she is not right, and he will go back and tell the Prime Minister that she was wrong. We want an answer, and we want it now.

Mr. Simon Hughes: I remember both my question and the Prime Minister's answer well. I was anticipating that we might debate this part of the Bill and my hon. Friend the Member for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Livesey) and I tabled three amendments, Nos. 384, 385 and 386 and new clause 42 as part of the debate. They simply say that there can be no transfer unless and until the tenants say that they want a transfer. That is simple, straightforward and democratic and the basis of the new clause is the declaratory nature of the new clause that the Government moved in part I. If tenants' choice means what it says, it surely follows that the principle declared in new clause 42 should be in the Bill and that no tenant should become a tenant of a different landlord unless the tenant has chosen to so.

I remind the Minister that in this respect the English and Welsh Bill differs from the Scottish Bill. The principle of majority voting and support is enshrined in the Scottish Bill. In Committee, the Minister gave some reasons for the differences in legislation, saying that it depended on the legal systems and legal terminology. It is true that that difference exists, but that is not a reason why the principle should be different and people in England and Wales have a system that says that there need not be a majority in favour before there is a transfer of property. Why, if Scottish council tenants can have a fair voting system, cannot English and Welsh council tenants? Presumably, the reason is that the Government are not in favour of tenants' choice, but they are in favour of removing council property from council ownership.

Last Thursday I mentioned to the Prime Minister a letter written on her headed notepaper on 9 June last year, two days before the last general election, in reply to Mr. St. John of Thessaly road, the Patmore estate, London SW8. It says:

> "Dear Mr. St. John, Mrs. Thatcher has asked me to thank you for your recent letter on council tenancies and to reply."

The substantive point is:

> "You really do mistake our intentions".

It goes on to state clearly:

> "if the majority agree their tenancies can be transferred to approved institutions, housing associations and building societies those council tenants who wish to remain with the council will be able to do so, so there is no need for the anxieties you mention."

It was signed, "Reginald Eyre". He was a former hon. Member and a Minister. When I asked the Prime Minister last Thursday to explain, she twice said this, among other telling points:

> "I thought that we had arranged that it was a majority of those voting—either for tenants' co-operatives or for a possible transfer to housing associations."

Then, when it was made clear that that was not what was in the Bill, she said:

> "In that case, may I have another look at it? I think in fact that we have arranged for a block to be transferred"—

I shall come back to the block issue, which is another one which has been misunderstood—

> "only with a majority of those voting and for those who do not wish to be transferred to remain under existing ownership"—[*Official Report*, 23 June 1988; Vol. 135, c. 1257.]

That was not surprising, as the Prime Minister was confirming what she had written to a voter just before the last election. I wrote to her last week and the letter was delivered to Downing street on Friday. I have not yet had a reply, unless one has arrived in my office since the debate began. Quite clearly, as of Thursday, the Prime Minister believed that there was a majority voting system. I believe that she, the Secretary of State and the Minister cannot justify going back on an express commitment made before the general election that it required a majority to be in favour before property was transferred.

In Committee, the Minister revealed that the Government's primary purpose was the ideological anti-public sector, pro-private sector purpose of de-municipalising housing. The Minister said:

> "at this stage the primary purpose is to introduce greater plurality into the near monopoly holders, the municipal sector."—[*Official Report, Standing Committee G*, 25 February 1988; c. 1166.]

Perhaps he said that by accident, but I do not think that that was the case. That was evidence of the Government's real motivation.

Giving tenants what the Government call a choice is only a mechanism for achieving what they want. It is not their primary purpose. If it were their primary purpose to give tenants choice, we would still have the Bill, but with very different clauses. Above all, there would be majority voting in favour in a secret ballot before council property was transferred. As the Government's primary purpose is not tenants' choice but taking property from the council sector, they have to introduce a mechanism which distorts that voting system.

The housing under-secretary of the ADC, Mr. Paul Johnson, has argued adamantly against the voting system in the Bill. On 22 April, he wrote in the *Municipal Journal:*

> "However, on the crucial issue of a majority vote the Government has not given way. The voting system thus reflects the primary purpose of the Government of 'introducing greater plurality into the near monopoly holders, the municipal sector' . . . Yet is it really defensible to transfer the apathetic, the absent and the absent-minded without their agreement? Leaving aside the perhaps extreme case of a transfer proceeding when nobody voted in favour, not untypically an estate might vote: for transfer 20 per cent.; against 40 per cent.; non-voters 40 per cent.; and the application would proceed."

Mr. Johnson goes on to point out that the Department of the Environment's own booklet "New Directions for Council Housing", sent to council chief executives in March, states:

> "Building societies will not wish to become involved in the ownership or management of council estates unless arrangements for transfer from the council have the agreement of the great majority of tenants."

That is what the Government said, yet they are introducing a system which allows transfer without such agreement.

The Government say that, where transfers go through, there will have to be a majority of significantly more than half the tenants in favour. If that is the Government's position, there is no reason why they should not accept the amendments, which are positive amendments for a voting system. If the Government believe that that should be a precondition, then let them write it into the Bill. If the Government maintain their position, they are out of touch

[Mr. Simon Hughes]

with local authority associations of all colours and with the majority of financial backers whom they are seeking to encourage, let alone the tenants.

Like other hon. Members, I have had meetings with tenants and there has been unanimous incredulity at and opposition to the Government's concept of a voting system. Quality Street and the TSB-run Property Investment Company Ltd. have made it clear that they consider that the great majority of tenants should be in favour of transfer and that the voting system should provide for that.

What is the Government's defence case for the voting system? The Minister of State said:

> "We have thought carefully about it . . . If people have looked at all the structures—not just at what is written in the Bill but at the pre-selection procedures that we have described —and are still not interested enough to register a vote, the most likely and common-sense conclusion is that they do not much care."—*[Official Report*, Standing Committee G, February 1988; c 1145.]

Did the Minister not realise that that reveals exactly the Government's ideology and their anti-democratic position? If people do not have a view, the Government will make their decision for them. The Government will say, "We know what they want and we shall make sure that, whatever they think and say, our will prevails." Those people have not chosen to be transferred. They have not assented to that, but the Government will make sure that it happens. That is not a case of tenants' choice, but of the Government imposing their will. That is an example of the Government as the worst inertia salesman or saleswoman in the land.

It is a principle of law in this country, and has been for a long time, that silence means no. "Halsbury's Laws of England"—there is no greater basis for authority—states in paragraph 250 of volume 9:

> "The offeror cannot bind the offeree against the latter's will by expressly stipulating that if the offeree does nothing he will be bound to a contract."

Does the Minister not agree that the voting system in the Bill breaks the principle of English law that silence means no? It does not mean, "Yes, I am happy for the property to be transferred and for you to do the job for me," but, as the Government well know, "Thank you but I have not given my assent."

The voting system abuses electoral law, the concept of electoral system and the concept of voting. As the hon. Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) said, under the Government's system the dead are voting. The Government are having to get the dead on their side to force the legislation through. The more people die, the happier the Government will be. If they cannot get the living to vote for them, my goodness they will get the dead. If someone alive on the relevant date dies before the end of the consultation period, the Government will have the word yes plastered all over the coffin as it comes downstairs.

Mr. George Howarth: Or goes upstairs.

8.45 pm

Mr. Hughes: As the hon. Gentleman says, we hope that some of those people will be going upstairs, too. Downstairs is only a temporary measure. Perhaps we should leave the theology to another debate.

The same applies to people who are resident in a flat or a house on the relevant date and subsequently leave before the end of the consultation period. They will count as yes votes, too. Even if one moves and therefore has no right to a say, one will nevetheless be voting yes. That does not even include people who are in hospital or in the forces and those who cannot be contacted.

The ADC said:

> "On this, the Government have surely already lost the argument."

On this, the Government have not only lost the argument, they have not even persuaded the Prime Minister. Last Thursday, at the Dispatch Box, she said that the Bill required a majority of people to be in favour for a transfer to go through. Last week, we had a debate on the confusion in the Government's housing and planning policies. When the Prime Minister says twice that the Bill does one thing and the Department of the Environment writes in something else, there is something pretty rotten at the heart of Government.

Last June, the Prime Minister made a clear commitment that majority means majority. We need to go back to that commitment and have a clear undertaking that the Government will amend the legislation now. I warn them that their credibility and reputation may well hinge, at the end of the day, on this issue and this group of amendments. The Government have denied democracy to every council tenant in Britain by this Bill. They now have a last opportunity in the House to do something about it.

Mr. Waldegrave: First, I shall dispose of one or two of the more exciting headlines. Empty flats are not counted as yes votes. Voting goes by a majority of tenants eligible to vote and, obviously, there are no such tenants in properties vacant on the relevant day. In addition, the dead do not count. Clause 96(2) allows the applicant to proceed if the number of tenants to whom clause 95 applies who have voted no does not exceed 50 per cent. If one is dead, one is no longer a tenant to whom clause 95 applies.

We dealt with the situation in Scotland several times in Committee. The reason that Scotland does not have a voting system, as the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey accepted, even if other hon. Members did not, is that there is a completely different legal system in Scotland and freehold flats are routinely bought and sold. Under the Scottish system, therefore, everyone can have a separate landlord.

As the hon. Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) rightly said, our case rests on the fact that no tenant need be transferred from the landlord of his or her choice and each tenant can stay a council tenant. The hon. Gentleman then fell back on the argument that the underlying landlord, the council, would then have to pay the higher rents, if it wishes to leave the sub-tenant on the same rent as before. That is perfectly true, and there is nothing particularly unusual about it. In Committee, my hon. Friend the Member for Dulwich (Mr. Bowden) told us about the case, which is not so rare, of councils having property which is leased with an underlying leasehold from somewhere else. It is then up to the council to decide how much rent to charge and how much to subsidise a particular property, assuming that the rents are higher, although that may not be so.

Mr. Tony Banks: Does the Minister accept that, under the provisions of clause 91, it is theoretically possible that someone who has died after the relevant date will be considered to have voted for the proposition in the consideration of those who voted against and those who voted for? What other example can he quote of a system where no one needs to vote in favour, and unless 51 per cent. have voted against the vote is considered to be in favour of change?

Mr. Waldegrave: These provisions are directly precedented because, as the hon. Gentleman knows, they stem from existing legislation. He will know that they have been carried from the 1986 Act.

Mr. Boateng: The question posed by my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) was a simple one. Will the dead have a right to vote—yes or no?

Mr. Waldegrave: The hon. Gentleman knows that what I have said is true. No one who is dead can be a qualifying tenant. That must be a truism.

Since we discussed these matters in Committee, we have developed a policy that is aimed at meeting some of the legitimate, as opposed to the absurd, concerns of the Opposition parties. It was argued that we must invent a proper pre-selection procedure. I am sure that the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) is right when he says that no financier, whether a building society or a bank, will want to lend money to a housing association or any other body when there is not tenant support for it. He claimed to quote me saying that on a previous occasion, and that is likely to be right.

We have introduced a system whereby the Housing Corporation will be able to judge an applicant and refuse permission for the application to go forward if there is not a reasonable amount of support among the tenants. That is perhaps unnecessary, however, for the very reason that the hon. Gentleman has advanced. As he has said, it is exceedingly unlikely that an approved landlord—a housing association or any other body—will wish to pursue the application if there is not considerable support for it.

Mr. Simon Hughes: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Waldegrave: The hon. Gentleman made a long speech and I have been pressed by hon. Members on both sides of the House to assist in bringing the debate to a conclusion.

Mr. Hughes: I am alive.

Mr. Waldegrave: I am glad to hear that. Sometimes there has been doubt about that.

Mr. Hughes: Be rude to the dead but not to the living.

If the logic is that the requirement will be a majority before the investment is made and the system operates, why is that provision not written into the Bill? That is the position in Scotland and in the Prime Minister's mind that is what is in the Bill, but the Minister and his colleagues refuse to insert that provision.

Mr. Waldegrave: I have explained that in Scotland it is possible for every tenant to go in exactly the direction he wants. In Scotland it is not necessary to have an underlying landlord who owns the property. I find myself making no apology to the hon. Gentleman.

I recognise that these matters have been debated at public meetings which have been attended by many tenants. Some of these meetings have been addressed not altogether truthfully by some who have represented Opposition parties. [HON. MEMBERS: "Withdraw."] I was referring to no Member of this place.

Mr. Keith Bradley (Manchester, Withington): Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Waldegrave: I can refer hon. Members to a number of leaflets which have been circulated by Opposition parties, the contents of which are far from the truth.

If there are tenants who continue to have little interest in the procedures that we have introduced—that is after they have been visited and pursued by the independent teller, who has a duty laid upon him to ensure that he brings home the right to vote to everyone who is present —I have nothing to apologise for in saying that they do not care one way or the other. I have in mind those who say, "I do not care and I am not going to vote," after all the procedures have been completed.

The finest hour of the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey was his ambushing of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister at Question Time. That has given him a great deal of pleasure. That is not relevant, however, to the debate. The hon. Gentleman was an assiduous attender of the Standing Committee and he knows exactly what the proposals have been all the way through.

Mr. Simon Hughes: The Prime Minister does not.

Mr. Waldegrave: That may be because my right hon. Friend, sadly for us, was not a member of the Committee. Undoubtedly we would have proceeded a great deal faster if she had been. I doubt whether many Opposition Members would have dared to open their mouths if my right hon. Friend has been a member of the Committee. The truth of the matter was set out clearly in the discussion paper, the White Paper and the Bill. It was discussed ad nauseam in Committee, and that can be said too of many of the arguments that have been advanced by Opposition Members tonight.

We have made all the changes which were argued for sensibly by my hon. Friends in Committee. We have done so to ensure that there is competition among applicants, a proper procedure to ensure that applicants are approved and of a high standard and that the sort of canvassing by private landlords that was described in Committee cannot take place. Despite all the misleading propaganda that has been disseminated by those representing Opposition parties, a recent survey conducted by the National Consumer Council showed that up to 25 per cent. of council tenants are interested now—this is before they have seen the truth of the matter—in transferring from the council to a housing association. We shall bring forward a system that will meet their needs. As I said on Second Reading and have said since, I suspect that, once the Bill takes its place of the statute book and has been shown to work, Opposition Members will find that they will come to support it.

Mr. Bruce Grocott (The Wrekin): We have heard the Minister explain the Government's alleged commitment to tenant democracy. I shall briefly place on record the Government's performance in my constituency. There is not much point looking into the crystal ball when we can read the history book, and I shall describe how a ballot was conducted in my constituency to determine the future of Telford development corporation houses. The Government promised repeatedly that tenants would be

[Mr. Bruce Grocott]

consulted on the future ownership of their homes. I received two letters from the Under-Secretary of State for the Environment, the hon. Member for Broxbourne (Mrs. Roe), which contained repeated promises and assertions about consulting tenants. I am talking about 8,000 tenants in my constituency who are very anxious about who their landlord should be.

I wrote to the Minister immediately after the general election seeking her assurance that there would be proper consultation. On 20 August 1987, she replied:

> "My Department has now written to the Development Corporation asking them to set in hand arrangements for the consultation of their tenants at the earliest practicable time. It is for the Corporation to decide, in discussion with the housing associations and the council, exactly when the consultation can take place, but I hope that it can be during October".

I assumed that that meant that consultation would take place within a month. However, from the Government's point of view, something disastrous then happened. A ballot took place in Peterborough in November about the future of new town houses in Peterborough. The result was that 93 per cent. favoured transfer to the local authority, thinking that a democratically elected local authority was the right organisation to take control of their houses.

9 pm

I wrote again to the Minister, who replied on 29 February this year. As a mass of convolution and incompetence, her reply would take some beating. She said:

> "I am still considering issues such as the timing of consultation and the financial arrangements for transfer in the light of the exercise carried out in Peterborough last November."

Tories do not like democracy when it produces results that they do not want. The next part of her letter takes some beating for incompetence. She said:

> "With regard to the community centres, shops . . . there are a number of possible alternatives. For example, regardless of the outcome of any tenant consultation which is undertaken, it could be decided to negotiate the transfer of these assets to the local authority. Similarly, transfer to the housing associations is another possibility. Alternatively, one could wait until the consultation has taken place and then try and negotiate the transfer of these assets to whatever alternative landlord has gained the majority of votes on each estate."

If that is not making policy on the back of a fag packet, I do not know what is. This Bill has the same characteristics.

Surprise, surprise, at the end of April this year—this is the end of the Government's commitment to tenant consultation in my constituency—the Government postponed indefinitely any ballot for tenants in my constituency. The Government's record of tenant consultation in The Wrekin is one of consulting tenants or anyone else only when they know that they will get the answer they want. As soon as they know that democracy means people giving the thumbs down to the Government or the Telford development corporation, they postpone any democratic consultation. The Bill, including its commitment to tenants' consultation, is not worth the paper that it is written on, as my constituency experience shows.

Mr. Tony Banks: I realise that it probably helps to be dead to vote Conservative and it certainly helps to be politically dead to be a Minister at the Dispatch Box having to argue this nonsense.

Let me assist the Minister in better understanding his Bill. The Prime Minister does not understand it and it appears to us that neither does the Minister of State. Clause 95(2) states:

> "This section applies to any qualifying tenant, or tenant under a long tenancy, who on the relevant date occupied a dwelling-house proposed to be included in the acquisition."

The definition of "relevant date" is given in clause 86(4) which states:

> "'the relevant date' . . . means the date on which is made the application under section 89 below".

We know from what was said in Committee that that process can last as long as six months. It must follow that, if anyone has died since the relevant date, up to six months before, when the votes are being counted and those who have not voted against are said to have voted in favour, clearly the dead will have had a vote.

Mr. Waldegrave: The hon. Gentleman is simply wrong. Clauses 95 and 96 provide that they must be tenants. It follows that they must be alive. If the hon. Gentleman wants to consider an odd situation, it is possible that the teller may not have been aware of a very recent death. If he is aware of a death, the electorate is smaller in number as a result of the death.

Mr. Banks: Who is going to inform the teller? That brings us to another good question. What about the independent telling of the ballot or vote? Although we understand that the Secretary of State can appoint someone, nothing is written into the Bill about that.

It is clear to Opposition Members that under the present system, translating it back into broader political terms, the Prime Minister could say to the electorate that no one needs to vote Conservative at the next general election, but unless 51 per cent. of the electorate vote against, they will get a Conservative Government. Frankly, I challenge the Minister to say where on earth he could find any particular reference point to that perversion of democracy by anyone's definition. It makes Pol Pot look like a progressive. It makes Vlad the Impaler look like someone who is only interested in democracy. It makes the Prime Minister look like the totalitarian and Stalinist that she is and it makes the Minister look like the fool that his right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has made him.

Mr. Waldegrave: I do not wish to interfere with the hon. Member's peroration, but the ballot is not like a general election because he cannot select to have a Labour Government for himself, whereas tenants can choose to remain with the council.

Mr. McCartney: The Minister's sham of so-called tenant choice has been exposed. It is rather like Robin Hood and Maid Marian, although she has returned to her castle in Marsham street.

Mrs. Alice Mahon (Halifax): She is coming to Halifax on Friday.

Mr. McCartney I shall not ask why.

In Committee, the Minister was asked specific questions about tenants' entitlement to vote. I may use the practical example of my own daughter Karen and her husband, who are tenants on the Millers lane estate in

Wigan. Under the Government's proposals, only one of them will have a vote. Who will determine which of two joint tenants is to vote? Who will determine whether it is the husband or the wife who votes? What will happen if one joint tenant is working away from the property? Who will determine who actually casts the vote?

The situation grows even more incredible when one considers abstentions. A person living on an estate, registered as a legal tenant, and paying a legal rent, will under the Government's proposals be denied the right to a say in the determination of the tenancy and to affect the outcome of the ballot. Yet the Minister still hangs on to the concept of tenant choice and of the right of all tenants to share in determining their landlord.

It is incredible that a Minister should stand at the Dispatch Box and tell the House that after eight years the Prime Minister does not know what she is talking about in respect of housing, for that is precisely what he said. The Minister said that the Prime Minister did not know what she was talking about on Thursday. He offered the plausible excuse that it was because she did not serve on the Standing Committee. It must be the only Committee on which she has not served, when one considers the control that she has over the Cabinet and Cabinet Committees.

Whether the Prime Minister was talking through the back or the front of her head, she made a commitment —both last Thursday and prior to the general election— that every tenant would have a right to vote in respect ot transferred tenancies. The Minister is attempting to wriggle over the whole concept of a rigged ballot. It is really all about rigging the ballot, to ensure that local authorities will cede their rights to housing action trusts where they exist, and that local councils and their tenants will lose their right to control the housing stock.

An even more ludicrous situation applies in respect of the tenants of flats. Someone who has clearly voted not to change his landlord can remain as a council sub-tenant even if, because the ballot was rigged, there is a change of landlord. However, the local authority faces a further disincentive because it must accept the rent levels and other impositions of the new landlord.

The local authority will have to make two further decisions. It will have to decide whether to impose new rent levels and new conditions on a tenant who, in a so-called secret ballot, voted against them. Alternatively, the authority will have to do so in respect of other of its tenants, who will have to pick up the tab, in the common pool of rent levels. That will represent a subsidy for the tenant in question, in fulfilling the requirements of the sub-tenancy. That is a negation of democracy. Under no circumstances could anybody—even Pincochet in Chile —argue that such a proposal represented a proper plebiscite of the rights, conditions and views of local residents in determining policy.

The Minister is still wrigglng about the position in respect of voters who subsequently die—the zombie amendment, with the dead being taken to vote. What would happen if the votes were close? A whole estate could be transferred just because someone had gone to another place, to a happy home, either upstairs or downstairs. The Minister should not complain, although he has done so. We all know that it is a rigged system.

What about a tenant's right to challenge the ballot procedures if a majority of the tenants who participated in the ballot voted against changing the landlord? What about the tenant's right to challenge a ballot in which the minority have imposed on the majority a change of landlord and the change of circumstances on an estate? That will create a minefield throughout the country because tenants will rightly seek legal redress because of rigged ballots and because their right to remain a local authority tenant will be denied and taken from them.

Finally, the Under-Secretary of State has still not answered a question which was asked in Committee and again tonight. In joint tenancies, why do not both tenants have the right to vote? Will the male or the female in a relationship be given the right to vote and thus to determine? Who will have the right to vote if, for example, two males or two females are living together, and who will determine which tenant will have the vote?

The Minister should answer these points because tenants will have to take legal redress to challenge their right to a vote which is being denied them. They are practical, sensible questions, irrespective of whether one will vote for or against the Government's policies. The Minister has an obligation to tell the House precisely what procedures will be used to determine whether a tenant will be disallowed or allowed to participate in the ballot.

Mr. Soley: With permission, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because we are totally disatisfied with the Minister's response, which is a sham, and everyone knows that it is a sham, we shall seek to divide the House on this group of amendments.

Mr. Spearing: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. During the important debate it was quite clear that when using the word "ambush" the Minister, whose name is on the Bill, has admitted that the Prime Minister, whose name is also on the Bill, in this House, in the hearing of many and on the record of the *Official Report* gave me a wrong interpretation of this most important clause— although, of course, it might have been thought to be correct.

Is it in order, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for the Prime Minister to come to the House to apologise and to put the matter right? Is there any way in which the House can command the attendance of the right hon. Lady, since her name is on the Bill, or will it be left entirely to her volition to come here to correct the grievious error which many people will have heard because the House is now broadcast?

Mr. Simon Hughes: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. What is important is that the Prime Minister said in her answer to me on Thursday that she wanted to have another look at the matter. She said that specifically and it is recorded in the *Official Report*. She did not accept that what was in the Bill was what I asserted and she clearly believed that the Bill——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. These are not matters for me. I do not have responsibility for them. However, they will no doubt be taken into account by the House when it reaches its conclusion and will, no doubt, have been heard by those who may have some responsibility for reporting such matters to the Prime Minister. They are not matters for me. Perhaps we can now get on.

Mr. Hughes: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The matter is simply this. Given that the

[Mr. Hughes]

Prime Minister has said that she will look at the matter, is it not difficult, if not impossible, for the House properly to vote on the matter before we have had her response?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: These are matters for the House to take into account when reaching its conclusion. They are not matters for the Chair. I have no authority to instruct the House on these matters.

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 170, Noes 234.

Division No. 381] **[9.14 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Bell, Stuart
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Buchan, Norman
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Dalyell, Tam
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fearn, Ronald
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fyfe, Maria
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Harman, Ms Harriet
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Heffer, Eric S.
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Howells, Geraint
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Janner, Greville
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kirkwood, Archy
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum A.
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
McNamara, Kevin
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliott
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Robertson, George
Robinson, Geoffrey
Rogers, Allan
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stott, Roger
Straw, Jack
Turner, Dennis
Wall, Pat
Wallace, James
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Frank Haynes and
Mrs. Llin Golding.

NOES

Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amess, David
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carttiss, Michael
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Hon Alan *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Critchley, Julian
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Durant, Tony
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Tony
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Gow, Ian
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon *(Bury St E')*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David

Heddle, John
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Charles
Jack, Michael
Janman, Tim
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Knowles, Michael
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
McCrindle, Robert
Mans, Keith
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Moate, Roger
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Sir Charles
Neale, Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Chris *(Bath)*
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Price, Sir David
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Redwood, John
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham

Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rost, Peter
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(Hertfordshire N)*
Stokes, Sir John
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Trippier, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Waller, Gary
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Mike
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Peter Lloyd and
Mr. David Maclean.

Question accordingly negatived.

Clause 96

NOTICE BY APPLICANT OF INTENTION TO PROCEED

Amendment made: No. 360, in page 65, line 34, at end insert

'or, as the case may be, the disposal cost attributable to that property'.—*[Mr. Waldegrave.]*

Clause 98

CONSENT REQUIRED FOR SUBSEQUENT DISPOSALS

Amendment made: No. 250, in page 66, line 22, leave out from beginning to 'for' in line 29 and insert—

'(3) If, apart from subsection (4) below, the consent of the Housing Corporation or Housing for Wales would be required under section 9 of the Housing Associations Act 1985 (control of dispositions of land by housing associations) for a disposal to which subsection (1) above applies, the Secretary of State shall consult that body before giving his consent in respect of that disposal for the purposes of that subsection.

(4) No consent shall be required under the said section 9'. —*[Mr. Waldegrave.]*

Clause 101

EXTENSION ETC. OF RELEVANT PERIODS

Amendment made: No. 375, in page 67, line 12, at end insert—

'( ) Where a notice of revocation of the applicant's approval is served under subsection (4) of section 87 above and subsequently withdrawn as mentioned in paragraph (b) of that subsection, any relevant period which, apart from this subsection, would have expired before the withdrawal shall be taken to be extended by a period equal to that beginning with the date of the service of the notice of revocation and ending on the date of the withdrawal.'.—*[Mr. Waldegrave.]*

Clause 105

INTERPRETATION OF PART IV. 1985 c. 68

Amendment made: No. 376, in page 68, line 11 *[Clause 105]*, at end insert—

'"the Corporation" means the Housing Corporation or Housing for Wales but—

(a) an approval given by the Housing Corporation shall not have effect in relation to buildings or other property in Wales; and

(b) an approval given by Housing for Wales shall not have effect in relation to buildings or other property in England.'.—*[Mr. Waldegrave.]*

Clause 106

PREMIUMS ON LONG LEASES

Amendments made: No. 54, in page 68, line 35, leave out 'to (3D)' and insert 'and (3)'.

No. 55, in page 68, line 36, leave out 'subsection' and insert 'subsections'.

No. 56, in page 69, line 4, at end insert—

'(3) The reference in subsection (2) above to a power of the landlord to determine a tenancy does not include a reference to a power of re-entry for forfeiture for breach of any term or condition of the tenancy.'

No. 57, in page 69, leave out lines 5 to 7 and insert—

'(3) Subsection (3C) and (3D) shall be omitted and in subsection (5) for "(2)(c)" there shall be substituted "(2)(b)".' —*[Mr. Waldegrave.]*

Clause 109

RENT OFFICERS: ADDITIONAL FUNCTIONS RELATING TO HOUSING BENEFIT ETC.

Mr. Keith Bradley (Manchester, Withington): I beg to move amendment No. 93, in page 70, line 17, at end insert—

'The functions prescribed by the Secretary of State shall not apply to any tenancy or licence granted by a local authority'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to consider the following amendments: No. 389, in page 70, line 22, after 'areas', insert—

> '(bb) shall make provision that the rent level for any accommodation determined by a rent officer as reasonable for the calculation of rent allowance subsidy shall be the maximum rent chargeable by a landlord for that accommodation;'.

No. 390, in page 70, line 22, after 'areas' insert—

> '(bc) shall make provision that the rent level determined by a rent officer as reasonable for a tenancy for the calculation of rent allowance subsidy shall not be lower than the rent level for that tenancy determined by a rent assessment committee under this Act or under the Rent Act 1977;'.

No. 92, in page 70, line 24, at end insert—

'; and

> '(d) shall not apply to a tenancy granted by a registered housing association.'.

No. 95, in page 70, line 24, at end insert—

'; and

> (d) shall make provision that the Rent Officer, in determining the rent on an assured tenancy for the purpose of housing benefit subsidy shall, if he determines that the rent payable is above the proper market level, in every case provide the local authority in writing with such details as shall be prescribed in the order concerning the availability of suitable alternative properties in the authorities area at the rent level which he has determined.'.

No. 97, in page 70, line 24, at end insert—

'; and

> (d) shall contain provisions such that the rent of an assured tenancy determined by a Rent Assessment Committee shall be the minimum rent eligible for rent allowance subsidy. The minimum eligible rent will be the rent payable after the deduction, in accordance with such provisions as may be prescribed, of any items ineligible for the purposes of calculating entitlement to benefit.'.

No. 98, in page 70, line 24, at end insert—

> '; and
>
> (d) shall make provisions for a local authority to have a right of appeal against a Rent Officer's determination in any particular case.'.

No. 96, in page 70, line 29, leave out subsection (4) and insert—

'(4) In section 20 of that Act (income related benefits) at the end of subsection (8) there shall be added the words "or maximum payments eligible for a rent allowance.".'.

No. 94, in page 70, line 47, at end insert—

'(8) In Section 51(1) of the Social Security Act 1986 shall be added:

> "(iv) Pending a determination by the Rent Officer under section 106 of the Housing Act 1988 the authority shall make payments calculated on the basis of the actual rent payable."

(9) No reduction in an authority's entitlement or subsidy shall take effect until the notice of a determination by the Rent Officer is received by the authority.'.

Mr. Bradley: I have been asked to move the amendments briefly. I am happy to do that, because in the past few hours we have witnessed the biggest shambles that I imagine the House has ever witnessed involving the Housing Bill. It would be a complete waste of time for me to contribute further to that shambles.

As a new Member of the House, I thought when I served on the Committee to consider the Housing Bill, that there would be some meaning to our discussions and that today we would be debating the consequences of those discussions. This evening, and particularly the Minister's response to the last set of amendments, has made it clear that that was an illusion. Therefore, we can move the rest of the amendments very briefly so that we do not contribute any more to the shambles of the Housing Bill, which is a complete mess between the Secretary of State and the Minister.

The amendments centre on the important provisions relating to housing benefit and rents in the private rented sector. They concern the powers of the rent officer and the rent assessment committee, and the particular power of the Secretary of State to set a rent stop to the new market rents that will be charged.

Throughout the discussions on the Housing Bill, we have argued, whether through social security or by the provisions of the Housing Bill, that the only way in which low-income families will be able to afford the new rent regime that will be set up by the Housing Bill is if housing benefit fully covers the new rents. *[Interruption.]*

I know that many Conservative Members are not interested in listening to the debate, as other discussions are taking place around the Chamber. They are not interested in the issues that we are debating and I am sure that you, Mr. Speaker, would prefer them to participate in the debate. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Bradley: If the hon. Member for Littleborough and Saddleworth (Mr. Dickens) wishes to contribute to the debate, I am happy to give way.

Mr. Geoffrey Dickens (Littleborough and Saddleworth): I was saying that the noise was coming from places other than behind the Bar of the House. Other people were talking; the hon. Gentleman knows to whom I am referring.

9.30 pm

Mr. Bradley: That sums up the contribution of the hon. Member for Littleborough and Saddleworth (Mr. Dickens) to the debate on the Housing Bill. He has no interest in the topic or in the needs of the tenants of Littleborough and Saddleworth. I am sure that they will recognise that at the next general election.

We are talking about the rent stop that will be imposed by the Government and the way in which it will apply to many low-income families in desperate need of private rented accommodation. It could be summed up by a letter that I am sure will be received by many Members of Parliament in their advice surgeries after the Bill is enacted. Such a letter may be written to the Minister and it may say something like the following:

> "I am a widow responsible for two children. I have always worked and have never had to claim means-tested benefits before now. I live in an assured tenancy and pay a rent of £67 per week, which I was able to meet until I was forced to give up work due to illness. I have claimed income support which goes part of the way to meeting the day-to-day needs of my family, but the local authority is only allowed to pay £55 towards my rent. The local authority tells me that it has no discretion and that the £55 is a rent stop imposed by central Government. I don't know if I will get better or how long it will take. I don't know how to meet the £12 a week that I am short for the rent. My only options appear to be as follows: (a) to go into rent arrears while I hunt for cheaper accommodation; (b) to go without food and other essentials so that I can meet the full rent commitment; (c) to give up my present accommodation and report as homeless to the local authority; or (d) to go into arrears, have possession proceedings taken against me and again end up homeless.
>
> Option (a) is a difficult and time-consuming process in this area at the best of times, but virtually impossible in my present state of health. Option (c) depends upon the local

authority not finding me intentionally homeless. I hope it will have something more than a bed and breakfast hotel to offer. What should I do?"

That is a direct question to the Minister. He should explain what people in such circumstances should do. People at the top of the rented market will not be able to afford the accommodation that his new private sector regime will impose on many families desperately seeking accommodation.

For once I want the Minister to answer a question that has been posed. He would not give way to me during a previous debate when he again attacked local authorities which are trying to give information to their tenants about the Housing Bill and perhaps about this issue. He made that attack during an Opposition day debate on housing three or four weeks ago. He said that a local authority has issued misinformation about the Housing Bill. I asked him to supply me with a copy of the leaflet that Manchester city council had issued. He acknowledged receipt of my letter but has not supplied me with the leaflet. I should like to know when he will supply me with the leaflet.

I should also like to question the Minister on a concession he made in Committee. We have heard a lot about concessions and about the fact that he has reneged on many of the commitments he gave in Committee. He gave a concession on amendment No. 98 which gives a local authority a right to appeal against the rent level set by the rent officers' determination. He gave an undertaking that the regulations would provide "some form of appeal" by the local authority. What rights will that appeal give and where is his provision for the appeal? I should like him to say that the provision can be used by the authority in every case and that the Government do not restrict it to specific circumstances.

I have moved the amendments briefly. A large part of clause 109 will put decent housing, backed up by rent allowances through housing benefit, out of reach of many people. I should like the Minister to honour his earlier commitment that housing benefit will be available. Cut after cut in housing benefit has forced people out of decent housing. He should honour the commitments that he has given and, for once, answer the questions put to him.

Mr. Simon Hughes: I wish to speak especially to amendments Nos. 389 and 390. They are linked to the important point made by the hon. Member for Manchester, Withington (Mr. Bradley).

We have moved from debates about the way in which people can decide to part V of the Bill and how much a decision or lack of a decision will cost them. My hon. Friend the Member for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Livsey) and I tabled the amendments to address the most fundamental defects of the new regime for the calculation of rent allowance subsidy and housing benefit. We want to ensure—it will be crucial to tenants—that there will be a guarantee that a rent assessment committee and a rent officer will not determine different levels of rent as suitable for the same accommodation. It is equally crucial that, once a rent officer has deemed a rent suitable for any accommodation—whether or not a decision has been made by a rent assessment committee—the tenant should not have to pay rent at a level higher than that used for calculating the housing benefit to which he or she is entitled.

In the amendments, we are trying to ensure that rent determined as reasonable by a rent officer shall be the maximum rent chargeable by a landlord. If not, a rent assessment officer may decide that a reasonable rent for a property should be about £80—that is the amount by which housing benefit is calculated—but the rent may be assessed at over £100, leading to a shortfall. As the system of subsidy will be through housing benefit, for someone on Government subsidy that shortfall will be unmanageable.

Amendment No. 390 provides

"that the rent level determined by a rent officer as reasonable for a tenancy for the calculation of rent allowance subsidy shall not be lower than the rent level for that tenancy determined by a rent assessment committee under this Act or under the Rent Act 1977".

Instead of coming to the rescue of tenants on state or low incomes with a system of guaranteed affordable rents, the Government are saying that, through the DHSS housing benefit system, the taxpayer will subsidise any shortfall. That presumes, first, that the amount of rent paid is equal to the amount of subsidy, which clearly is not the case, and, secondly, that the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Secretary of State for Social Services—if he is to be in charge of writing the cheques—will continue to meet the subsidy.

Since 1979, the Government have regularly cut housing benefit. When times get harder—today's economic news is not too encouraging—we do not trust the Government not to cut housing benefit again. The more housing benefit is cut, the more there will be prejudice against people who desperately need housing and do not have the personal income and capacity to go out into the market place to buy it.

We have tabled two straightforward amendments. They are crucial to the proper and just functioning of a system that says that housing will be available and that, no matter how low one's income, one will not be priced out of the market. The figures which the Under-Secretary of State revealed to me last week of the record numbers of homeless show that record numbers of people in England and Wales are being priced out of the market, in town and country, in the north and south. We are trying to ensure that the welfare state—part of whose legacy we are celebrating in the coming weeks—is not seen as an irrelevance in coping with the new jungle of the Government's market place. I hope that the Government will accept the principle and detail of the amendments.

Mr. Waldegrave: The reasons for the Government opposing amendment No. 93 are not as obvious as our reasons for opposing some other amendments. It would confine the rent officer procedure to benefit claims submitted by private sector tenants. The precise definition of cases to be referred to the rent officer is still under consideration, in consultation with local authority associations. It is important to ensure that the scope of the arrangements is sufficient to embrace all appropriate cases.

Although the rent officer procedure has been formulated with the intention that it should apply to private sector tenants—those who claim rent allowances—the question whether one small category of rent rebate cases might sensibly be referred to the rent officer is being discussed. If there were a desire to include the rent rebate cases, amendments to the Bill would be needed to include a reference to rent rebate subsidy.

Amendment No. 389, to which the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) referred, would require the rent officer's assessment under the clause 109 procedure to become the maximum rent chargeable for the

[Mr. Waldegrave]

accommodation. I shall be more friendly about amendment No. 390, but amendment No. 389 would fly in the face of the principle of our scheme.

I hope that I can reassure the hon. Member for Manchester, Withington (Mr. Bradley), the first part of whose speech I did not hear completely—through no fault of his—but I got the general drift. He knows that the present system for housing benefit has a rent stop, to which he rightly referred. There is an interim system of regional rents and so on. I am not sure that the hon. Gentleman has fully recognised that the Bill does away with that system and improves the position for exactly those tenants to whom he referred.

The real market rent must be met by housing benefit for those eligible for it. Under the present interim system, there are circumstances in which that need not be so. The Bill makes it clear that in his new role the rent officer merely has to ensure against the possibility—as we discussed in Committee—of rents being led by a racket, so that housing benefits lead the rents ahead of the real market rent. That is all—no more and no less—that the scheme intends to do.

Amendment No. 390, providing that the rent officer's assessment shall not be lower than a rent determined by a rent assessment committee, is unnecessary. Where the rent assessment committee has determined the rent for a tenancy, the regulations will provide that that rent will automatically be accepted as a reasonable market rent. The point made by the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey is therefore met. The rent assessment committee's assessment overrides the rent officer's assessment if there is a conflict. Amendment No. 97 is likewise unnecessary.

Amendment No. 92 would exclude registered housing association lettings. It is exceedingly unlikely that registered housing associations will be relevant in this respect. They receive large subsidies to keep their rents below market levels, but it seems wrong to exclude them, lest there is some isolated case in which the rent charged by an association is above market level and in which referral to the rent officer is appropriate. That is unlikely, but we have decided to leave in that provision.

Amendment No. 95 would require rent officers to consider the availability of suitable alternative accommodation. We do not believe that that is the role of the rent officer. His job will be to establish whether a particular rent that is being charged is reasonable in terms of the market and to assess the claimant's accommodation on the basis of the criteria prescribed by the Secretary of State.

Mr. Simon Hughes: How, in practice, will that be possible without carrying out a comparative exercise, which has traditionally been required during the last 20 years? That seems to me to be the logical action for rent officers to take.

9.45 pm

Mr. Waldegrave: Yes, in assessing the market the rent officer must look at a variety of comparable properties.

I return to the important point which was raised by the hon. Member for Withington and which is dealt with in amendment No. 98. I gave, and I repeat now, a firm undertaking in Committee that there will be a right of appeal against rent officer assessments. That is important. We have had complicated discussions with local authority interests about it and about the best way to deal with it. There is no dispute between us, but there are a variety of ways of dealing with the matter. Therefore, we are looking at it in detail. We want to devise a system that can operate quickly—it must not be too elaborate—and produce fair decisions. I assure the hon. Gentleman that we stand by our undertaking to introduce an appeals procedure. If an amendment is needed, we shall table such an amendment in the other place.

Amendment No. 96 is directed at our intention to place a limit in due course on housing benefit in circumstances where the claimant is occupying unreasonably expensive accommodation. That is what local authorities do already. It is a matter that we discussed in Committee. It is right that such a limit should be introduced. There is nothing new about that principle.

The power to limit benefit will not be used until adequate market evidence is available, but the need to make proper use of public funds makes it imperative that there should be some kind of restriction on such cases. That is no different from what local authorities do already.

Amendment No. 94 would provide for the making of interim payments, pending assessment of a benefit claimant's rent by the rent officer. We recognise that some provision for interim payments is likely to be needed and we are discussing with the local authority associations and rent officers what form it should take. We would certainly not accept the principle of the amendment that the payment should be based on whatever rent is currently being paid, however unreasonable that rent might be. An interim arrangement will be needed.

There is a difference of opinion about some of these matters but I hope that I have reassured hon. Members about others and that they will feel able not to press the amendment to a Division.

Mr. Bradley: In the light of the Minister's reply, and given his assurance that local authorities will have the right of appeal and that housing benefit will be paid on new market rents in full, I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Mr. Soley: I beg to move amendment No. 99, in page 70, line 19, leave out paragraph (a) and insert—

'(a) shall not be made in the first instance unless a draft of the order has been laid before and approved by an affirmative resolution of each House of Parliament.'.

Mr. Speaker: With this, it will be convenient to discuss Government amendments Nos. 58 and 59.

Mr. Soley: It may be convenient if I allow the Minister to respond, as he has gone some way towards meeting our point.

Mr. Waldegrave: The hon. Gentleman is right. There is little between us. When we discussed clause 109—it was clause 106 in Committee—Opposition Members argued that all orders made under the clause should be subject to the affirmative resolution. We took the view that that would be an unreasonably cumbersome procedure. However, we accepted that the initial order made under the clause, which will set out the new procedures for the first time, will attract particular interest and that Parliament might reasonably expect to have an automatic opportunity to debate it. Therefore, we propose as a compromise that the provision in the Bill should be modified to the extent of requiring that the affirmative resolution procedure should be applied to the first order made under clause 109. That is what amendments Nos. 58 and 59 are designed to do.

Amendment negatived.

Amendments made: No. 58, in page 70, line 19, after 'instrument', insert—

'which except in the case of the first order to be made shall be'.

No. 59, in page 70, line 24, at end insert—

'and the first order under this section shall not be made unless a draft of is has been laid before, and approved by a resolution of, each House of Parliament'.—*[Mr. Waldegrave.]*

Clause 114

AMENDMENTS AND REPEALS

Amendment made: No. 242, in page 72, line 28, at end insert—

'and in that Schedule Part I contains general amendments and Part II contains amendments consequential on the establishment of Housing for Wales'.—*[Mr. Waldegrave.]*

Schedule 12

MINOR AND CONSEQUENTIAL AMENDMENTS

Amendments made: No. 243, in page 115, line 12. at end insert—

'PART I
GENERAL AMENDMENTS'.

No. 365, in page 115, line 18, at end add—

'2. In section 215 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1971 (Procedure for making certain orders), in subsection (8) (definitions of "relevant area" and "local authority") after the words "Part IV of the Local Government Act 1985" there shall be inserted "a housing action trust established under Part III of the Housing Act 1988".'.

No. 367, in page 115, line 18, at end insert—

'*The Local Goverment Act 1974*

In section 25 of the Local Government Act 1974 (local government administration: authorities subject to investigation), in subsection (1) after paragraph (bd) there shall be inserted the following paragraph—

"(be) any housing action trust established under Part III of the Housing Act 1988".'.

No. 60, in page 115, leave out lines 20 to 25 and insert—

'2. In the Rent Act 1977, sections 68 and 69 (which provide for applications by a local authority for the determination of a fair rent and for applications for certificates of fair rent) shall cease to have effect as respects applications made before the commencement of this Act.

2A. In section 77 of that Act (which provides for the reference of restricted contracts to rent tribunals by the lessor, the lessee or the local authority) the words "or the local authority" shall be omitted.'

No. 366, in page 115, line 33, at end insert—

'*The Justices of the Peace Act 1979*

In section 64 of the Justices of the Peace Act 1979 (disqualification in certain cases of justices who are members of local authorities) at the end of subsection (6) there shall be added the words "and a housing action trust established under Part III of the Housing Act 1988".'.

No. 361, in page 115, line 34, at end insert—

'4A. In Schedule 16 to the Local Government Planning and Land Act 1980 (bodies to whom Part X applies) after paragraph 8 there shall be inserted the following paragraph—

"8A. A Housing action trust established under Part III of the Housing Act 1988.".'.—*[Mr. Waldegrave.]*

Ms. Primarolo: I beg to move amendment No. 396, in page 116, line 13, at end insert—

'9. In Part I of Schedule 1 of the Matrimonial Homes Act 1983 there shall be inserted after (c).

"(d) an assured tenancy within the meaning of Part I of the Housing Act 1988."

10. In part II of the Schedule 1 of the Matrimonial Homes Act 1983 there shall be inserted after "Housing Act 1985" in paragraph 2(1)

"or an assured tenancy within the meaning of Part I of the Housing Act 1988."

11. In Part II of Schedule 1 of the Matrimonial Homes Act 1983 there shall be inserted after paragraph 4:

"*Statutory tenancy within the meaning of the Housing Act 1988*

4A. Where the spouse is entitled to occupy the dwelling house by virtue of a statutory tenancy within the meaning of the Housing Act 1988, the court may by order direct that, as from such date as may be specified in the order, that spouse shall cease to be entitled to occupy the dwelling house and that the other spouse shall be deemed to be the tenant or, as the case may be, the sole tenant under that statutory tenancy.".'.

The amendment is sponsored by the Shelter Housing Advisory Committee and the One Parent Family Association. The Bill as it stands is confusing and does not give legal powers for the transfer of assured joint tenancies on the break-up of a marriage following divorce. As hon. Members are probably aware, if a marriage breaks up and ends in divorce it is possible for one of the partners to apply for the tenancy to be transferred directly into one person's name. Unfortunately, the Bill does not give the legal powers to the courts to enable them to transfer what was a joint assured tenancy to one of the partners when the property is settled and the divorce is agreed.

I understand that in the discussions between the Under-Secretary of State and the organisations that I have mentioned, an assurance was given that an amendment would be placed before the House to change this situation. I shall say no more about the amendment, because I should like to hear what the Under-Secretary of State has to say.

Mrs. Roe: We gave assurances in Committee that we would bring forward amendments to the Matrimonial Homes Act 1983. Those assurances still apply. The amendments, which we shall introduce in another place, will have the same intention as the amendment moved by the hon. Lady. They will extend the scope of the Act to assured tenancies so that, in the event of a divorce, judicial separation or decree of nullity, the courts may allocate an assured as part of the settlement. They will also cover assured agricultural occupancies, which the hon. Lady's amendment does not. We do not think that it will be necessary to introduce a consequential amendment along the lines of paragraph 11 of the amendment since a statutory periodic assured tenancy, unlike a statutory tenancy under the Rent Act 1977, is a true tenancy and not a personal right of occupation.

I hope that the hon. Lady will accept my assurances that we have these amendments in hand and will withdraw her amendment.

Ms. Primarolo: We look forward to seeing the amendments coming before the House, and in view of the Under-Secretary of State's comments, I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Amendments made: No. 244, in page 117, line 30 leave out from beginning to end of line 21 on page 118.

No 62, in page, 118, line 23 at beginning insert—

'(1) In section 5 of the Landlord and Tenant Act 1985 (information to be contained in rent books), in subsection

[Ms. Primarolo]

(1)(b) after the word "tenancy" there shall be inserted "or let on an assured tenancy within the meaning of Part I of the Housing Act 1988".

(2) In subsection (2) of that section after the word "tenancy" there shall be added "or let on an assured tenancy within the meaning of Part I of the Housing Act 1988".'

No. 79, in page 118, line 23 leave out

'the Landlord and Tenant Act 1985'

and insert 'that Act'.

No. 63, in page 118, line 39 leave out

'Chapter I or Chapter III of'.

No. 245, in page 118, line 39, at end insert—

'PART II

AMENDMENTS CONSEQUENTIAL ON THE ESTABLISHMENT OF HOUSING FOR WALES

The Land Commission Act 1967

31. In section 56(4) of the Land Commission Act 1967 (bodies exempted from betterment levy) after paragraph (e) there shall be inserted the following paragraph—

"(ea) Housing for Wales".

The Parliamentary Commissioner Act 1967

32. In Schedule 2 to the Parliamentary Commissioner Act 1967 (departments etc. subject to investigation) after the entry "Housing Corporation" there shall be inserted—

"Housing for Wales".

The Income and Corporation Taxes Act 1970

33. In section 342 of the Income and Corporation Taxes Act 1970 (disposals of land between Housing Corporation and housing societies) and in section 342A of that Act (disposals by certain housing associations) after the words "Housing Corporation" in each place where they occur there shall be inserted "or Housing for Wales".

The Land Corporation Act 1973

34. In section 32(7B)(b) of the Land Compensation Act 1973 (supplementary provisions about home loss payments) after the words "Housing Corporation" there shall be inserted "or Housing for Wales".

The House of Commons Disqualification Act 1975

35. In Schedule 1 to the House of Commons Disqualification Act 1975, in Part II (bodies of which all members are disqualified) there shall be inserted at the appropriate place the following entry—

"Housing for Wales".

The Statutory Corporations (Financial Provisions) Act 1975

36. In Schedule 2 of the Statutory Corporations (Financial Provisions) Act 1975 (bodies corporate affected by section 5 of that Act as to their power to borrow in currencies other than sterling) after the entry "The Housing Corporation" there shall be inserted—

"Housing for Wales".

The Development of Rural Wales Act 1976

37. In section 8(2) of the Development of Rural Wales Act 1976 (assistance to the Development Board for Rural Wales from public authorities and others) for the words "The Housing Corporation" there shall be substituted "Housing for Wales".

The Rent (Agriculture) Act 1976

38. In section 5(3) of the Rent (Agriculture) Act 1976 (no statutory tenancy where landlord's interest belongs to Crown or to local authority etc.) after paragraph (d) there shall be inserted the following paragraph—

"(da) Housing for Wales".

The Rent Act 1977

39. In section 15(2) (a) of the Rent Act 1977 (landlord's interest belonging to housing association etc.) after the words "Housing Corporation" there shall be inserted—

"(aa) Housing for Wales".

40. In each of the following provisions of that Act, that is to say, sections 86(2) (a) (tenancies to which Part VI applies), 93(1) (increase of rent without notice to quit) and Schedule 12 (certificates of fair rent) in paragraph 12 (meaning of "secure tenancy"), after the words "Housing Corporation" there shall be inserted "or Housing for Wales".

The Criminal Law Act 1977

41. In section 7(5) of the Criminal Law Act 1977 (authorities who may authorise occupation by protected intending occupier for purposes of offence of adverse occupation of residential premises) after the words "Housing Corporation" there shall be inserted—

"(ba) Housing for Wales".

The National Health Service Act 1977

42. In section 28A(2) (e) of the National Health Service Act 1977 (power to make payments towards expenditure on community services) at the end there shall be added the following sub-paragraph "and

(vii) Housing for Wales.".

43. In section 28B(1) (b) (v) of that Act (power of Secretary of State to make payments towards expenditure on community services in Wales) for the words "the Housing Corporation" there shall be substituted "Housing for Wales."

The Local Government, Planning and Land Act 1980

44. In Schedule 16 to the Local Government, Planning and Land Act 1980 (bodies to whom Part X of that Act applies) after paragraph 9 there shall be inserted the following paragraph—

"9a. Housing for Wales."

The Finance Act 1981

45. In section 107(3) of the Finance Act 1981 (exemption from stamp duty in case of sale of houses at discount by local authorities etc.) after paragraph (c) there shall be inserted the following paragraph—

"(ca) Housing for Wales."

The Housing Act 1985

46. In the Housing Act 1985 for the words "Housing Corporation" in each place where they occur there shall be substituted "Corporation".

47. In Part I of that Act (introductory provisions—authorities and bodies other than local housing authorities) after section 6 there shall be inserted the following section—

"6A. In this Act "the Corporation" has the meaning assigned by section 2A of the Housing Associations Act 1985."

48. In section 57 of that Act (index of defined expressions: Part II) after the entry relating to "compulsory disposal" there shall be inserted—

"the Corporation section 6A".

49. In section 117 of that Act (index of defined expressions: Part IV) after the entry relating to "co-operative housing association" there shall be inserted—

"the Corporation section 6A".

50. In section 188 of that Act (index of defined expressions: Part V) after the entry relating to "co-operative housing association" there shall be inserted—

"the Corporation section 6A".

51. In section 238 of that Act (index of defined expressions: Part VII) after the entry relating to "clearance area" there shall be inserted—

"the Corporation section 6A".

52. In section 459 of that Act (index of defined expressions: Part XIV) after the entry relating to "building society" there shall be inserted—

"the Corporation section 6A".

53. In section 577 of that Act (index of defined expressions: Part XVI) after the entry relating to "co-operative housing association" there shall be inserted—

"the Corporation section 6A".

The Landlord and Tenant Act 1987

54. In section 58(1) of the Landlord and Tenant Act 1987 (exempt landlords) after paragraph (e) there shall be inserted the following paragraph—

"(ea) Housing for Wales".

The Income and Corporation Taxes Act 1988

55. In section 376(4) of the Income and Corporation Taxes act 1988 (qualifying borrowers and lenders) after paragraph (k) there shall be inserted the following paragraph—

"(ka) Housing for Wales."

56. In section 560(2)(e) of that Act (persons who are sub-contractors or contractors for the purposes of Chapter IV of Part XIII of that Act) after the words "Housing Corporation" there shall be inserted "Housing for Wales".'.—*[Mr. Waldegrave.]*

Clause 115

SHORT TITLE, COMMENCEMENT AND EXTENT

Amendments made: No. 379, in page 72, line 35, after '110', insert—

'(Schemes for payments to assist local housing authority tenants to obtain other accommodation)'.

No. 380, in page 72, line 39, after '110', insert—

'(Schemes for payments to assist local housing authority tenants to obtain other accommodation)'.—*[Mr. Waldegrave.]*

New Clause 21

COMPENSATION FOR MISREPRESENTATION OR CONCEALMENT

'Where a landlord obtains an order for possession of a dwelling-house let on an assured tenancy on one or more of the grounds in Schedule 2 to this Act and it is subsequently made to appear to the court that the order was obtained by misrepresentation or concealment of material facts, the court may order the landlord to pay to the former tenant such sum as appears sufficient as compensation for damage or loss sustained by that tenant as a result of the order.'—*[Mr. Waldegrave.]*

Brought up, read the First and Second time, and added to the Bill.

New Clause 29

DUTY OF HOUSING CORPORATION AND HOUSING FOR WALES IN RELATION TO RACIAL DISCRIMINATION

'At the end of section 75 of the 1985 Act (general functions of the Corporation) there shall be added the following subsection—

> "(5) Section 71 of the Race Relations Act 1976 (local authorities: general statutory duty) shall apply to the Corporation as it applies to a local authority.".'. —*[Mr. Waldegrave.]*

Brought up, read the First and Second time, and added to the Bill.

New Clause 30

GUIDANCE AS TO MANAGEMENT OF ACCOMMODATION BY REGISTERED HOUSING ASSOCIATIONS

'. After section 36 of the Housing Associations Act 1985 there shall be inserted the following section—

"*Issue of guidance by the Corporation.*

36A.—(1) In accordance with the provisions of this section, the Corporation may issue guidance with respect to the management of housing accommodation by registered housing associations and, in considering under the preceding provisions of this Part whether action needs to be taken to secure the proper management of an association's affairs or whether there has been mismanagement, the Corporation may have regard (among other matters) to the extent to which any such guidance is being or has been followed.

(2) Guidance issued under this section may make different provision in relation to different cases and, in particular, in relation to different areas, different descriptions of housing accommodation and different descriptions of registered housing associations.

(3) Without prejudice to the generality of subsections (1) and (2), guidance issued under this section may relate to—

(a) the housing demands for which provision should be made and the means of meeting those demands;

(b) the allocation of housing accommodation between individuals;

(c) the terms of tenancies and the principles upon which the levels of rent should be determined;

(d) standards of maintenance and repair and the means of achieving these standards; and

(e) consultation and communication with tenants.

(4) Guidance issued under this section may be revised or withdrawn but, before issuing or revising any guidance under this section, the Corporation—

(a) shall consult such bodies appearing to it to be representative of housing associations as it considers appropriate; and

(b) shall submit a draft of the proposed guidance or, as the case may be, the proposed revision to the Secretary of State for his approval.

(5) If the Secretary of State gives his approval to a draft submitted to him under subsection (3)(b), the Corporation shall issue the guidance or, as the case may be, the revision concerned in such manner as the Corporation considers appropriate for bringing it to the notice of the housing associations concerned.".'.—*[Mr. Waldegrave.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Mr. Ridley: I beg to move, that the clause be read a Second time.

Mr. Speaker: It will be for the convenience of the House to discuss Government new clause 47—*Consents to disposal of housing stock and application of receipts.*

Mr. Ridley: I shall deal first with new clause 47 and then with new clause 30.

The purpose of new clause 47 is to clarify the criteria which I may consider when deciding whether to give consent to local authority applications for the disposal of housing, and the conditions that I can impose on such consent. Local authorities may dispose of property with my consent under sections 32 or 43 of the Housing Act 1985 and, if the disposal involves a gratuitous benefit given to the purchaser by the local authority, section 25 of the Local Government Act 1988. When a local authority wishes to dispose under section 32, the most commonly used power, my consent is given by virtue of section 34 of the same Act. The existing consent powers are silent as to the basis upon which such consent may be given.

A number of local authorities are considering selling their entire housing stock, subject to being given consent under section 32 of the 1985 Act. New clause 47 is intended to remove any doubt about my powers to adopt such criteria and impose such conditions as I consider relevant, particularly in relation to large-scale disposals, Subsection (2) amends section 34 and 43 of the 1985 Act by specifying that I may take into account the independence of the purchaser from the council, the extent to which the disposal results in the purchaser becoming the main or a substantial landlord in the area, the terms of the disposal, including the financial terms, and whatever else is considered relevant. Subsection (3) applies the new clause to Scotland. Subsections (4) to (6) are amendments to the legislation consequent to the power in subsection (2) to direct authorities in the use of proceeds.

Subsection (8) makes the clause effective from the date of publication. There is no retrospectivity. We are responding to an initiative from local authorities who wish to dispose of their stock before the Bill becomes law. I must clear away some misconceptions. This is not a major new Government policy, but the Government responding to a local authority initiative.

The clause does not dispose of council housing stock. It does not extend local authority powers to dispose of property, nor does it compel any local authority to dispose of its housing. Any disposal in that context will be a voluntary one, initiated by the local authority. Local authorities already have powers to dispose of property where my consent is already required. The clause simply clarifies those powers.

[Mr. Ridley]

Large-scale disposals such as are being mooted now were not considered as possible when the existing consent powers were drafted. It is clear that there are considerations which apply to large-scale disposals which are not less likely to apply to the smaller scale. What is not clear is whether we have the powers to take some of those considerations into account as things stand.

For example, we are concerned not to perpetuate large monopolies of rented housing. As we want to provide a wider choice of rented housing and improve housing management, we believe it would be inappropriate—

It being Ten o'clock, the debate stood adjourned.

Ordered,

That, at this day's sitting, the Housing Bill may be proceeded with, though opposed, until any hour.—*[Mr. Lennox-Boyd.]*

Question again proposed, That the clause be read a Second time.

Mr. Ridley: As we want to provide a wider choice of rented housing and improve housing management, we believe that it would be inappropriate to allow a stock of, say, 20,000 to transfer in a single block. There are other criteria, such as the need to ensure that the terms of the transfer are acceptable and the purchaser is independent.

If a council comes to us now for consent, we must be in a position to take into account every factor which we believe to be important and relevant. These applications will not wait until enactment of the Bill. They are being prepared now.

New clause 30 would give effect to the policy of the tenants' guarantee to tenants of registered housing associations. It enables the Housing Corporation and Scottish Homes and Homes for Wales to issue guidance to registered associations on the management of their housing stock. In exercising its duties and powers under part I of the Housing Associations Act 1985, in relation to the proper management of an association's affairs, the corporation would be able to have regard to the extent to which the association had followed the guidance.

Such guidance would apply to large-scale voluntary transfers, as in new clause 47, as well as to tenants' choice transfers. It will cover, broadly speaking, those for whom housing should be provided—for example, those who are inadequately housed, or homeless—and where housing requirements cannot be met, at prices within their means or at all, elsewhere in the local market. Groups with special difficulties such as members of ethnic minorities and the disabled should get special attention.

The guidance will also cover what terms should be offered. In addition to the statutory assured tenancy requirements, I would expect the corporation to insist on the incorporation of a number of contractual rights within the tenancy agreement. I do not suggest that these would replicate the existing secure tenancy provisions, but some elements familiar from the old tenants' charter—rights to exchange, to take in lodgers, to carry out improvements and so on—will certainly reappear.

The guidance will also cover clear policies, procedures, targets and responsibilities for maintenance and repair and tenant relations. Above all, associations must communicate to tenants in intelligible terms what their rights are and how they are seeking to meet their needs.

I believe that the new guidance that the Housing Corporation will bring forward, after consultation with the associations, for approval by me will meet the needs that have arisen in the debate to give the proper control which the House seeks and which has been debated earlier.

Mr. Soley: We are concerned about both the new clauses. I shall deal first with new clause 30.

The Government need to come clean on their intentions for the Housing Corporation. The Government are handing over to the corporation duties which, in the past, would have been carried out, at least to some extent, by local authorities. We all know that the Government are intent on strangling local authorities, and they have made it clear that they want an end to the provision of local authority housing. The Minister has said that several times. We do not yet know what role they see for the Housing Corporation, but we are told that there is some underlying guarantee. It would be wrong of me to go through the debates that have taken place today, but I reiterate that there is no guarantee. There is not even a published charter. There is a great vacuum, and everyone knows it.

The Housing Corporation is being told that it can turn its attention somehow to what landlords are doing, but no one has any real power. Tenants have no real power unless they have the force of a great deal of money to pay for bright and able solicitors to represent them, and even then their power will be limited. In effect, the Government are saying to the corporation, "We shall give you generalised powers that can be used in an unspecified way over a period." In effect, the Minister is saying, "We may add to or subtract from those powers from time to time."

The Minister for Housing and Planning has said already that, if the corporation becomes too large or bureaucratic, the Government may have to reconsider its position. We are not even sure whether the corporation has a secure future. I suspect, however, that, because its present leadership is to a considerable extent falling into line with the Government—perhaps it has no alternative—it will continue in being. To some extent, it will pay the Government to keep the corporation acting as it is and to give it rather vague and unspecified powers. That is not in the interests of the rented sector, either public or private.

It was new clause 47 which so much angered us last week and which so badly wrong-footed the Government. The Secretary of State rightly says that local authorities already have the power to transfer properties. The new and dramatic features of the clause were its contents and the way in which the Government proceeded with it. I shall describe the effect that we believe that it will have on housing and the way in which we believe the Government intend to use it.

First, the new clause is retrospective. The Government constantly lecture us about the undesirability of retrospective legislation, yet subsection 8 states:

> "This section shall be deemed to have come into force on 9th June 1988."

That is virtually the day on which the Government published it. That is retrospective legislation by any standard. The factor that angered so many Scottish Members—rightly, in my judgment—to the extent that they were ready and willing after an all-night sitting to take the House through a second night, was the Government's decision to amend the Housing (Scotland) Bill by introducing a new clause to the Bill that is before us, without taking it through consideration in Committee.

Subsection (3) of the new clause refers to

> "Section 13 of the Housing (Scotland) Act 1987"

and the 1988 Bill is proceeding through Parliament. The Government could have amended the Bill in this Parliament by introducing an amendment in another place, but they chose not to do so. They decided instead to introduce—to slip through—a new clause to the Housing Bill, which had been considered in Committee by hon. Members representing only English or Welsh constituencies. The Committee membership did not include a Scottish Conservative Member or a Scottish Opposition Member. Scottish Members are right to be angry about the way in which the Government have proceeded.

Mr. Michael Fallon (Darlington): There are three of them here.

Mr. Soley: There would have been more of them present the other night if the Government had not drawn stumps and surrendered by giving us this additional day.

What do the Government intend to do about housing with the new clause? Why is it that they chose to introduce it at the last moment? We are told that they did so because about 100 local authorities—most of them Conservative —wanted to transfer all their stock. That is the reason that was given. Although no doubt that explanation is part of the reason, the real reason for that is that the Government realised that, even with the grossly distorted voting system for transferring local authority stock, the vast majority of tenants are deeply angry and offended by the voting system.

Now that the Secretary of State is in the Chamber, perhaps he can tell us whether the Prime Minister was right to say on Thursday that the voting system should be carried out by a majority of those voting. That is what she said, although the Secretary of State will know that that was wrong and the system operates with the minority. It would be helpful if we could clear up that division within the Government.

Leaving that matter aside—although I hope that the Secretary of State will consider it, as he has an opportunity to put the record straight tonight—it is obvious that the Government want to find a new way to get local authorities to give up their housing. We have no doubt that the Government will continue to screw down the financial assistance from central Government to local government. There will come a point when all local authorities will not be able to manage their housing. That is precisely what the Government want. At that stage the Government hope that the local authorities will do their job for them and say that they cannot manage any more, but must hand the properties over to someone else. If the Government would come clean and admit that that is what they are doing, there would at least be some honesty in the Bill. There is no honesty in the new clause.

One reason why I object so strongly to the proposal is that we have a Committee system in the House designed to look at legislation in detail, not just at legislation over which there is agreement or disagreement between the parties, but all legislation in a way that enables any Government to avoid some of the pitfalls of the unintended consequences of legislation. We all know that the more superficial the attention that we give to legislation, the greater the risk of mistakes.

New clause 47 is a classic example of a disaster area. What did the Government do? They introduced new clause 47 and surreptitiously slipped out a short 10-page document which deals with the

> "Large-scale voluntary transfers of local authority housing to private bodies."

It was not given to anyone in advance, not even to me as Opposition spokesman. It was placed in the Vote Office on virtually the same day that the new clause was tabled, almost immediately before Report.

The new document says:

> "it would be acceptable for the council to enter into contracts with landlords in order to fulfil statutory duties to secure accommodation, primarily for those accepted as homeless."

The local authority will have statutory responsibility not just for the homeless, but for the disabled and certain other groups. However, authorities will no longer have any houses with which to supply those people.

According to the guidance document—this is not in the Bill—local authorities are told that they must continue to fulfil their other statutory responsibilities and do that by entering into a contract with other landlords. However, a problem arises because neither the Bill nor the document tell us anything about what will happen if the landlord says, "I'm sorry, I'm not taking in homeless people." We do not know what will happen if the only landlord who chooses to take in homeless people decides to charge the earth. We are told nothing about what will happen to homeless people who have been taken in for a short period by a landlord. What will happen to them? The local authority has a statutory responsibility for them, but no way of delivering that. All this is being slipped through on Report with the minimum debate.

I believe that the Secretary of State does not even know the answers to the questions that I am posing. I am sure that the Secretary of State has no idea what he will do if only one landlord decides to take homeless or disabled people and then says that he will charge a certain amount of money and people can take it or leave it. The Secretary of State will have no idea what will happen if one landlord accepts people and then says that people will be out after two months. No local authority has received any guidance about that. That is what is so wrong about the proposal in parliamentary terms and why it is suicidal for housing.

10.15 pm

On another page of the guidance notes, there is the statement:

> "The Secretary of State would normally expect councils to obtain undertakings from the purchaser that he would . . .normally relet housing which became vacant, at rents set and maintained at levels within the reach of those in lower-paid employment."

One can see what the Government are worried about. They have twigged rather late in the day that there has been a drastic decline in the supply of low-cost rented accommodation in both the private and public sectors. Yet there is only the hope that those organisations to which local authority housing will be transferred will re-let it at rents which those on low incomes can afford. What happens if they do not do so? That question has not been asked in Committee, and the matter has not been subjected to the scrutiny that it would normally receive there.

Conservative Members had better ask themselves that question because, initially, the consequences will hit them much harder than they will hit my hon. Friends, because most Conservative local authorities will be transferring their housing stock. All of a sudden, the Association of

[Mr. Soley]

District Councils, which is Tory-dominated, is saying that the situation is crazy. Councils will find themselves trying to deal with the statutory responsibilities of homelessness, and trying to contain the financial aspects of that, while not having a clue how they are supposed to cope with the situation—never mind whether or not they will be helped by the Government.

The local authorities' continuing statutory housing obligations are mentioned on other pages of the guidance notes. Again, there is a reference to local authorities entering into contracts with landlords in respect of section 28 of the Rent (Agriculture) Act 1976. That too should worry Conservative Members. The notes comment:

> "It would be inconsistent with the independence of the new landlord for the council to retain nomination rights."

If the local authority is unable to nominate, what will it do if someone turns up saying, "You have a statutory obligation to house me, and please do so"? Presumably there will be an information officer on duty, because there will be no housing department left. He will have to reply, "Go and see this housing association. If that doesn't work out, we'll try to enter into a contract with a landlord on your behalf." There remains the question where that homeless person is to go in the meantime, and who is to pay for them.

This is a disastrous and stupid new clause, and it is an appalling way of legislating. This is what we mean by legislating on the hoof. It will create a disastrous situation for those local authorities which decide to adopt this course of action. I can understand local authorities under any political control saying, "The Government will drive through their Housing Bill, so we will get rid of our housing stock," and being driven into that trap, although my advice to them is not to panic yet. Although matters are coming to the crunch, we are not at that stage yet.

Local authorities should be looking at ways in which they can meet their statutory responsibilities, nominate, and do other things of that nature. None of those aspects has been addressed or debated in Committee. We have only the Government's single-minded determination to make local authorities give up their housing stock. They will continue to turn the financial screw on councils until they have to give up. When local authorities do so, they will be unable to fulfil their statutory responsibilities without all the risks I have described. As other local housing associations and private organisations fail to make up the difference in the provision of low-cost rented accommodation—the figures show that housing association provision is already frozen and that the private sector is declining very dramatically—there will be a catastrophic housing crisis in this country.

Mr. Spearing: Does my hon. Friend not agree that one of the points the Secretary of State has failed to explain—either here or at Harrogate a week or so ago—is why, in a free-market economy of the kind he advocates, and which the Bill is now releasing, any housing association or private landlord should fix rents for local authority homeless or for anybody else at something below the their market rates?

Mr. Soley: There is no reason why housing associations should want to take that on. The Government have managed to divide the housing association movement, and that is another crisis.

This is an appalling way of legislating, and an insult to the procedures of the House. It will accelerate the decline in the supply of low-cost rented accommodation in this country. As long as that decline continues, there will be an increasing crisis in house-price inflation affecting those who seek to buy.

We strongly object to the new clause. It is ill thought out and ill conceived. It is at best irrelevant to the housing crisis, and, at worst, will make it dramatically worse.

Mr. Robert Key (Salisbury): I welcome Government new clause 47. I am amazed by the blinkered attitude of the hon. Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley). I suppose that he is taking every part of the Bill, looking at it in narrow terms and drawing the worst possible conclusion from it. The reality is very different. The new clause will be welcomed in the rural areas where work has been going on for many months on the new housing associations that will take over local authorities' housing role. That is especially true in Salisbury, where we have taken an advanced look at housing in the new Chequer housing association.

I should like to know what my right hon. Friend means by large-scale disposal. He talked about 20,000 houses. My point relates to those local authorities that have always had small municipal housing stocks—in my area about 8,000. I do not think that it would make sense—I hope that he will agree—that when such local authorities hand over their small housing stocks to housing associations, they should be forced to break up a stock of 8,000 into several smaller units simply on grounds of management costs and efficiency. I hope that when my right hon. Friend talks about large-scale disposal as the criterion, he does not mean that just because a small housing stock constitutes 100 per cent. of a local authority's housing stock, he will turn down its application. I hope that he will encourage small housing stocks when they wish to become housing associations.

Mr. John McAllion (Dundee, East): Will the Secretary of State confirm that subsection (3) applies the new clause to Scotland and thereby amends the Housing (Scotland) Bill 1987? That will be regarded as incredible by Scots, as it is being done in the context of a housing Bill relating to England and Wales. It is all the more incredible because the Housing (Scotland) Bill is still going through its parliamentary stages and is currently being debated in the other place. In fact, Lord Sanderson of Bowden, who has responsibility for it on behalf of the Government in the other place, described the Bill as a purely Scottish measure. It is a major Bill, probably the most important Scottish housing Bill since the Tenants' Rights, Etc. (Scotland) Act 1980.

Although the Housing (Scotland) Bill has gone through its Commons stages and is now in the middle of its Lords stages, the Government still have not got it right for Scotland. They are having to tag on the back end of a Bill for England and Wales a major new clause affecting the people of Scotland, and that new clause cannot properly be debated by the representatives of the people of Scotland in this place.

I sat through part of our earlier debate on the Bill on the so-called "zombie amendment", when my hon. Friends referred to the rigged ballots, by which the Government will allow large-scale transfers of council housing stock into private ownership. It appeared from that debate that the dead will have more democratic control over housing than the people of Scotland. Not only are the people of Scotland not able to vote for the Bill, but they are not being given the opportunity to have it properly debated and examined in this Chamber or in any part of Parliament. That is a democratic nonsense and an outrage.

The Government have said that the new clause does not represent a major new Government policy and that it is a response to local authority initiatives. I hope that, when the Minister replies, he will tell us which Scottish local authorities asked for the measure to be applied to Scotland. He should specify them and state whether he is responding to initiatives from Scotland.

New clause 47 does not give new powers to local authorities; it gives significant new powers to the Secretary of State for Scotland for the disposal by local authorities of their housing stock. The new clause states that the Secretary of State will be able to take into account

"the extent . . . to which 'the intending purchaser' is . . . dependent upon, controlled by or subject to influence from the local authority".

During the debates on the Housing (Scotland) Bill, the Under-Secretary of State for Scotland, who is now sitting next to the Secretary of State for the Environment, clearly said that housing associations would have an important role in taking over control of former local authority housing stock. There is a close relationship between housing associations and local authorities in Scotland—they get on with each other very much better than they get on with the Government. They could probably reach some arrangement to allow for letting policy, for the rights of councils to nominate property, for eviction policies on rent arrears and so on. The new clause gives the Secretary of State for Scotland a veto in such arrangements. He has only to say that he is not satisfied that the housing associations are sufficiently independent of local authorities. That is an important concern with which the Under-Secretary of State for Scotland must deal when he replies to the debate.

The proposals are sinister, because new clause 47 provides that the Secretary of State for Scotland can take into account

"the terms of the proposed disposal; and . . . any other matters whatsoever".

The right hon. and learned Gentleman will have wide-ranging powers to decide whether he approves of the way in which a local authority disposes of its housing stock to a housing association or some other body. Any arrangements to cover the outstanding capital debt owed by local authorities on their housing could be overriden by the Secretary of State because he will not be satisfied until the last council house is removed from the control of a local authority.

The new clause also states that the Secretary of State

"may give directions as to the purpose for which any capital money received by the authority in respect of the disposal is to be applied".

We know that the Government do not want local authorities to spend money on housing. That is proved by a simple statistic—in 1986 Scottish local authorities built only one quarter of the number of houses that they built in 1979. The Government have deliberately imposed policies to prevent local authorities from providing housing. The Secretary of State for Scotland is being given a significant new power. He can direct local authorities how to spend the money from the sale of council houses. My hon. Friend the Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) said that local authorities could even be asked to contract out provisions for the homeless.

This significant new clause affects housing in Scotland, of which 50 per cent. is still under local authority control. We have not been allowed to debate it properly; it has not been given proper scrutiny, either in this or another place. It is symptomatic of the way that the Government have treated Scotland during the past year—they have written it off. They think that because Scotland did not vote for them they can forget about it until the next election. The unity of the United Kingdom is under threat not because of the Scottish National party or the Opposition, but because of the Government's activities.

Mr. Simon Hughes: I apologise to the Secretary of State for not being present at the beginning of his speech. It was the first time that I had left the Chamber since 3.30 pm —[HON. MEMBERS: "Oh dear."] I am not asking for sympathy.

I wish to make a few brief points about new clause 30. We must be reassured that the rents will be affordable and judged regionally. I do not know whether the Secretary of State has yet accepted the need for a regional system for adjudicating what is affordable. Any such system and any guidance from the Housing Corporation must take into account the enormous regional variations, which must be specifically reflected in the rents.

Secondly, the danger of new clause 30 is that it merely enhances the powers of the Housing Corporation. The Housing Corporation will become a monster quango and it is perhaps not premature to press the Secretary of State to say whether he is to move towards devolution of power within the Housing Corporation in England, as indicated by the Minister of State in the press briefing last week. It has already been announced that the Housing Corporation in Wales is to be devolved to Tai Cymru, and rightly so. Unless there is to be a huge quango, the same should happen in England.

10.30 pm

My third point on new clause 30 has not been adequately dealt with so far. I hope that the Secretary of State will give us some idea of his thinking on special needs issues, which clearly will have to be covered within the remit of new clause 30. A consultation paper on hostel deficit grant has long been promised. It was foreshadowed in consultation papers at the end of the last year, but it still has not seen the light of day. I wish to press the Secretary of State with some urgency for that consultation paper to be made available soon and for the new grant to be extended to self-contained housing. People working in that sector seek assurances that the budget for special needs housing grant, as it is to be called, will meet not only existing needs and schemes but future developments, as one of the key areas of acute need is clearly special need. Among all the categories, especially of the single homeless and the single vulnerable, those with special needs are perhaps the most in need of protection under the clause.

Assurances were given in Committee that 100 per cent. housing association grant for special needs housing would be retained, but there has been no clarification of whether it applies to self-contained special needs housing as well as to shared housing. I therefore seek clarification of that important point, which affects a large number of people. As I understand it, the Department of the Environment now has two proposals for housing association funding —either block grant to be used in conjunction with private finance, or risk-sharing between the Housing Corporation and the housing association—but so far there have been no proposals for a third procedure of 100 per cent. housing association grant. The housing association movement has been arguing strongly for this, and a specific pool of 100 per cent. HAG earmarked for special needs housing is earnestly sought.

A matter that was raised briefly at an earlier stage was whether the Government had yet responded to the proposals for a housing association licence. Ministers will be aware that in special needs cases a tenancy is not usually the most appropriate form of occupation, a licence being generally more suitable.

Clarification is also needed on the subject of nominations, which was raised at the beginning of the debate. We need a guaranteed procedure for special nominations in relation to move-on housing for people coming out of short-term housing—for example, people rescued from complete homelessness such as those whom I saw at the Thames Reach hostels the other day—who may not stay in the accommodation for very long.

With regard to new clause 47, I do not oppose the principle of housing being devolved from a local authority to other agencies, as is being contemplated in Salisbury. The hon. Member for Salisbury (Mr. Key) will be aware that those proposals have received some attention in the press. An article by Rosalind Bayley in the April edition of *Housing* bore the headline:

> "Salisbury District Council joins the housing association movement".

Two things have come out of that. First, rents are likely to rise. Secondly, and more importantly, the biggest unknown is the tenants themselves. In Salisbury, in Rochford, and now in Gloucester and everywhere else, the great fear stems from the fact that in most cases there has so far been no consultation whatever with the tenants.

The House must therefore seek an assurance—to be passed on to council tenants, especially in areas of Conservative control—that there will be a proper voting system in this case and not just a veto. If whole-stock transfers of thousands of council properties are to take place, it is vital that there should be full consultation with tenants and full communication of ideas between local authorities and tenants at all stages and that things do not happen in secret. In Rochford there were some nasty goings on in which the people running the council set up their friends to run housing associations which they had set up. The who-you-know idea of handing over into a self-perpetuating oligarchy without consultation with tenants and which is independent of the council is entirely unacceptable.

I certainly approve of transferring to different agencies, if the tenants agree. But tenants must be consulted throughout the process and there must be a positive vote, in which the majority of tenants approve of what is being put to them.

Mr. Key: If what the hon. Gentleman said were true I would join him, but I must say that in Salisbury and other district councils there has been a great deal of publicity, and I can reassure him that in Salisbury the policy was agreed between the political parties on the council.

Mr. Hughes: I said explicitly that I do not oppose the idea, if it is what the local authority wants and if it is done in consultation with tenants who vote that it should happen. That is a proper way to take a local decision about the management of local housing stock. It is necessary that there is proper consultation and a fair voting decision. Only if those guarantees are written in can we be assured that we, in the House of Commons, are providing a fair, democratic system for the moving from one authority to another of the council housing in England and Wales.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton) *rose*——

Mr. John Maxton (Glasgow, Cathcart): I apologise to the Minister, who is not going to get away quite as easily as he thought.

I join my hon. Friends the Members for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) and for Dundee, East (Mr. McAllion) in objecting very strongly to the way in which the Scottish Office and Scottish Ministers have been party to the new clause in what is essentially an English and Welsh Bill. It is typical of the Government's arrogance and the contempt with which they treat Scotland, despite their overwhelming rejection by the people of Scotland. As my hon. Friend the Member for Dundee, East said, that leads to such great pressures and tensions in Scotland, that, if the Government are not careful, they, the party of the union, may well be the party that breaks up that union. They must learn to treat Scotland as part of the democratic unit of the United Kingdom and aceept the will of the Scottish people.

Why have the Government introduced this new clause into this English Bill at such a very late stage? In a letter written by J. S. B. Martin, assistant secretary at the Scottish Development Department, to chief executives of district and island councils, he said:

"The new clause, which will also apply to England and Wales, appears in the (Great Britain) Housing Bill, rather than in the current Housing (Scotland) Bill, as the latter has already reached an advanced stage of consideration in Parliament."

That is a new concept. I have never heard of the (Great Britain) Housing Bill.

Mr. William McKelvey (Kilmarnock and Loudoun): What about Ireland?

Mr. Maxton: I have to say to my hon. Friend that Great Britain does not include Ireland.

The Housing (Scotland) Bill has not reached an advanced stage of consideration in Parliament. The Housing (Scotland) Bill has received its Second reading in the other place and has been committed to a Committee. As far as I am aware, that Committee has not met, so the Government have plenty of opportunities to table any amendments relating to Scotland in the other place, which, if passed by the other place, would come back here for debate when the Housing (Scotland) Bill comes back. Of course we would take the opportunity to debate it.

So why have the Government done it? It is obvious. Having introduced rather generalised powers, they will table further amendments in the House of Lords to the clause when it has been included in the Housing (Scotland) Bill. The Government will take greater powers. I do not understand why the Government could not introduce the whole thing in the other place as one amendment. They have made a complete mess of the whole thing.

There are two matterrs in particular that worry Scottish tenants and hon. Members representing Scottish constituencies. First, we are concerned that the amendments in the other place will give the Secretary of State the powers to impose the same phoney consultation and balloting that will exist in England and Wales. That does not exist at present and will basically mean no consultation with tenants before selling off large blocks of houses.

Yet again, the words that the Government have uttered about introducing choice in Scotland will be seen to be nonsense. The Government are not introducing choice. In fact, there is a lack of choice. Lots of Scottish Special Housing Association and new town tenants in Scotland have said that they want to go to the local authorities. The Government have said, "No way can they do that." That is what the Government mean by choice.

Secondly, for the first time, the Secretary of State will have the power to use the money from sales and direct it as he chooses. Until now, unlike England and Wales, Scottish local authorities have received all the money that has been gained from sales and have been able to use it for housing. Now, the Secretary of State will be able to direct the money, and we find that objectionable.

I disagree marginally with my hon. Friend the Member for Dundee, East (Mr. McAllion): I do not believe that the Minister will direct local authorities to use the money outside housing. He will direct them to use it to improve existing housing stock to make it ready for sale to private companies. Rather than using the money to build sheltered housing, special amenity housing and shelter for those who really need council houses, it will be spent to improve council housing for sale to the private sector—[HON. MEMBERS: "Good idea."]. The Scottish people do not think that it is a good idea. They have consistently rejected the Government, and so they should.

The new clause will do nothing to improve Scottish housing. It is a shabby strategem by the Government. The Minister is not renowned for making a sensible case at the Dispatch Box, but perhaps he will be able to do so on this occasion.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The hon. Member for Glasgow, Cathcart (Mr. Maxton) is incorrect in saying that the other place has not yet completed the Committee stage. The Bill has completed its Committee stage and is awaiting Report and Third Reading.

In reply to the hon. Member for Dundee, East (Mr. McAllion) I should say that we are strongly committed to the housing association movement in Scotland and we have given it an extra £40 million in capital investment this year.

Hon. Members have asked, fairly, why the new clause applies to Scotland. We are including Scotland in the scope of the new clause, not through any wish to hide the measure or avoid discussion of it, but for precisely the opposite reason. We want to allow sufficient parliamentary time for the measure to be discussed fully by both Houses. By proceeding in this way, the total time available for consideration of the provision will be substantially longer.

It has been suggested that, with the delay last week in the other place in proceeding with the Report stage of the Housing (Scotland) Bill, we could introduce amendments there which would give effect to our policy by way of the Scottish Bill. I should like to put it on the record that we intend to bring forward amendments to the provisions before the House. The first will preserve the right to buy for all tenants involved in disposals of this type. The second will require tenants to be consulted, and the majority of tenants to be in favour of disposal, before approval to large-scale disposals can be given.

As the hon. Member for Cathcart acknowledges, these are important amendments. In large-scale disposals, although a majority of tenants would have to be in favour before the Secretary of State could agree to an authority's proposals to dispose of the stock concerned, it is possible that a minority might have to transfer against their will. It is therefore desirable that the rights of those tenants should not be prejudiced, which is why we shall introduce amendments to preserve the right to buy for tenants

[Lord James Douglas-Hamilton]

involved in large-scale disposals. The housing Acts that apply south of the border already contain such provisions, but the Housing (Scotland) Acts do not.

10.45 pm

Mr. Maxton: Why, when the Housing (Scotland) Bill was going through the House, were not the Government aware of that fact, and why did they not introduce their proposal at that time? Why cannot the Government introduce the Scottish provisions in the other place rather than in the Bill?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: This matter was brought forward because many local authorities in England were interested and made applications. As yet, there have been no applications from Scottish local authorities. The hon. Member for Cathcart should be aware that the district council has made large-scale disposals at Castlemilk to the Scottish Special Housing Association. Many disposals have been made by district councils in favour of co-operatives.

The amendments necessary to preserve the right to buy and to require consultation with tenants could be lengthy and complex. We want to ensure that we get their wording right. The Housing Bill is behind the Housing (Scotland) Bill in its progress through Parliament. We believe that it is right to take extra time to prepare such amendments properly.

The new clause is intended to clarify the Secretary of State's powers under section 12 of the Housing (Scotland) Act 1987. Section 13 of that Act says that the Secretary of State may impose such conditions as he thinks just in giving approval. Clarification will be of assistance to local authorities proposing to dispose of stock, to potential purchasers, who will more readily know what the likelihood is of a disposal being allowed, and to the tenant, who will be more aware of the relevant issues. As the Secretary of State has already said, the considerations that will be taken into account are the extent to which the receiving body will be independent of the disposing council, of the extent to which the interested purchaser would become the predominant or substantial owner of housing to let and of the terms of the disposal.

The hon. Member for Cathcart asked about receipts from sales. Receipts from the sales of substantial parts of a local authority's housing stock should be used to repay outstanding loan debt of the housing revenue account. There are powers under the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 to ensure that receipts are used to repay loan debts.

The hon. Member for Dundee, East (Mr. McAllion) asked about the number of applications from Scottish authorities. This is not an immediate matter in Scotland, but it may suddenly arise if a local authority wishes to apply. In those circumstances, we want to ensure that the interests of tenants are properly safeguarded.

Mrs. Maria Fyfe (Glasgow, Maryhill): Will the Minister explain why capital receipts must be used to repay loan debts and why local authorities must disregard what everybody in Scotland regards as the priority of getting decent housing and carrying out the repairs programme? The Minister may not be aware that Glasgow suffers from much debt and that 40 per cent. of its income is spent on repaying loan charges because of the vast home-building programmes necessary to clear the slums and create housing after the second world war. Given that councils such as Glasgow are already spending a vast amount of their income on repaying debt, why do the Government insist that they spend more money on repaying debt rather than dealing with the housing crisis in Scotland?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The answer is that, if loan charges were not repaid from receipts, the amount of debt per house would increase significantly, thus pushing rents up, which is not what the hon. Lady wants.

Although few local authorities in Scotland have shown any definite interest in making large-scale disposals of their stock, it will be helpful to them to know where they stand, should they wish to pursue sales of this type. The provisions in the new clause in no way compel local authorities to sell their stock. We are talking about voluntary sales. The Government are sympathetic to the concept of large-scale disposals, provided sales take place on the right terms. The Scottish Development Department has written to all local authorities in Scotland. In the summer, guidelines will be formulated and circulated to local authorities, giving details of the ways in which the Secretary of State will exercise the powers in section 12(7) of the 1987 Act and the new clause.

The guidelines will make it clear that new landlords will be expected to allocate houses to those most in need. They will be expected to give disadvantaged groups special attention. Before approval is given, the Secretary of State will have to be satisfied that the receiving landlord is a stable and responsible organisation with a long-term commitment to the provision of rented housing for those who need it. Councils will be expected to obtain undertakings from the purchaser that he would normally relet housing which becomes vacant at rents set and maintained at levels within the reach of those in lower-paid employment.

Mr. McAllion: The Minister said that the Government would be sympathetic to large-scale disposals of housing stock by local authorities. That was not mentioned during the passage of the Housing (Scotland) Bill. Lord Sanderson of Bowden repeatedly said that that legislation did not contain a word of compulsion affecting tenants. The Minister has just explained that, in future, with the amendments that will be attached to the new clause, tenants must either accept a majority decision to have a private sector landlord or buy their house. They will not be allowed to remain as local authority tenants or tenants of Scottish Homes if they so desire. By any standard, that is compulsion.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: We are talking about voluntary disposal by local authorities. As I said, no Scottish local authorities have come forward, but, if they do, we want to be certain that the powers are clarified so that they know the position. The hon. Gentleman knows that tenants' choice under part III differs from large-scale disposals, with which we are dealing in the context of the new clause.

We shall bring forward amendments at a later stage requiring the Secretary of State to give consent to first subsequent disposals of stock transferred from local authorities in this way. Such consent would again normally be given only to disposals where the housing continues to be available for rent.

I hope that those points will reassure the House that the new clause does not represent a substantial change in the law. It will ensure that the terms of any disposals approved are right and that tenants' interests are safeguarded.

Question put, That the clause be read a Second time:

The House divided: Ayes 241, Noes 172.

Division No. 382] **[10.53 pm**

AYES

Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amess, David
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Batiste, Spencer
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Hon Alan *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Critchley, Julian
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Tony
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gow, Ian
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon *(Bury St E')*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Charles
Jack, Michael
Janman, Tim
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Knowles, Michael
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Maclean, David
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miscampbell, Norman
Moate, Roger
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Neale, Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Chris *(Bath)*
Patten, John *(Oxford W)*
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Price, Sir David
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Redwood, John
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rost, Peter
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(Hertfordshire N)*
Stokes, Sir John
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Tracey, Richard
Trippier, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Waller, Gary
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Mike
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Kenneth Carlisle and
Mr. Mark Lennox-Boyd.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Bell, Stuart
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Buchan, Norman
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Dalyell, Tam

Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fearn, Ronald
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Harman, Ms Harriet
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Heffer, Eric S.
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Howells, Geraint
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Janner, Greville
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kirkwood, Archy
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum A.
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael

Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliott
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Robertson, George
Robinson, Geoffrey
Rogers, Allan
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stott, Roger
Straw, Jack
Turner, Dennis
Wall, Pat
Wallace, James
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Frank Hayes and
Mrs. Llin Golding.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Clause read a Second time, and added to the Bill.

New Clause 31

SUCCESSION TO ASSURED PERIODIC TENANCY BY SPOUSE

'(1) In any case where—

(a) the sole tenant under an assured periodic tenancy dies, and

(b) immediately before the death, the tenant's spouse was occupying the dwelling-house as his or her only or principal home, and

(c) the tenant was not himself a successor, as defined in subsection (2) or subsection (3) below,

then, on the death, the tenancy vests by virtue of this section in the spouse (and, accordingly, does not devolve under the tenant's will or intestacy).

(2) For the purposes of this section, a tenant is a successor in relation to a tenancy if—

(a) the tenancy became vested in him either by virtue of this section or under the will or intestacy of a previous tenant; or

(b) at some time before the tenant's death the tenancy was a joint tenancy held by himself and one or more other persons and, prior to his death, he became the sole tenant by survivorship.

(3) For the purposes of this section, a tenant is also a successor in relation to a tenancy (in this subsection referred to as "the new tenancy") which was granted to him (alone or jointly with others) if—

(a) at some time before the grant of the new tenancy, he was, by virtue of subsection (2) above, a successor in relation to an earlier tenancy of the same or substantially the same dwelling-house as is let under the new tenancy; and

(b) at all times since he became such a successor he has been a tenant (alone or jointly with others) of the dwelling-house which is let under the new tenancy or of a dwelling-house which is substantially the same as that dwelling-house.

(4) For the purposes of this section, a person who was living with the tenant as his or her wife or husband shall be treated as the tenant's spouse.

(5) If, on the death of the tenant, there is, by virtue of subsection (4) above, more than one person who fulfils the condition in subsection (1)(b) above, such one of them as may be decided by agreement or, in default of agreement, by the county court shall be treated as the tenant's spouse for the purposes of this section.'—*[Mr. Ridley.]*

Brought up, read the First and Second time, and added to the Bill.

New Clause 44

POWER OF CORPORATION TO PROVIDE LEGAL ASSISTANCE TO TENANTS AFTER DISPOSAL

'(1) This section applies where a house has been disposed of by a disposal falling within section 74(1A) above, and, in relation to a house which has been so disposed of, a "transferred tenant" means a tenant of it who either—

(a) was the secure tenant of the house immediately before the disposal; or

(b) is the widow or widower of the person who was then the secure tenant of it.

(2) On an application by a transferred tenant of a house who is a party or a prospective party to proceedings or prospective proceedings to determine any dispute between himself and the person who acquired the house on the disposal referred to in subsection (1) above, the Corporation may give assistance to the transferred tenant if it thinks fit to do so—

(a) on the ground that the case raises a question of principle; or

(b) on the ground that it is unreasonable, having regard to the complexity of the case, or to any other matter, to expect the transferred tenant to deal with it without assistance; or

(c) by reason of any other special consideration.

(3) Assistance given by the Corporation under this section may include—

(a) giving advice;

(b) procuring or attempting to procure the settlement of the matter in dispute;

(c) arranging for the giving of advice or assistance by a solicitor or counsel;

(d) arranging for representation by a solicitor or counsel, including such assistance as is usually given by a solicitor or counsel in the steps preliminary or incidental to any proceedings, or in arriving at or giving effect to a compromise to avoid or bring to an end any proceedings; and

(e) any other form of assistance which the Corporation may consider appropriate;

but paragraph (d) above does not affect the law and practice regulating the descriptions of persons who may appear in, conduct, defend and address the court in any proceedings.

(4) In so far as expenses are incurred by the Corporation in providing a transferred tenant with assistance under this section, the recovery of those expenses (as taxed or assessed in such manner as may be prescribed by rules of court) shall constitute a first charge for the benefit of the Corporation—

(a) on any costs which (whether by virtue of a judgment or order of a court or an agreement or otherwise) are payable to the tenant by any other person in respect of the matter in connection with which the assistance was given, and

(b) so far as relates to any costs, on his rights under any compromise or settlement arrived at in connection with that matter to avoid or bring to an end any proceedings;

but subject to any charge under the Legal Aid Act 1988 and to any provision of that Act for payment of any sum to the Legal Aid Board.'.—*[Mr. Ridley.]*

Brought up, read the First and Second time, and added to the Bill.

New Clause 45

POWER OF CORPORATION TO PROVIDE LEGAL ASSISTANCE TO TENANTS IN RELATION TO ACQUISITIONS

'(1) On an application by the tenant of a dwelling-house who is a party or a prospective party to proceedings falling within subsection (2) below, the Corporation may give assistance to the tenant if it thinks fit to do so—

(a) on the ground that the case raises a question of principle; or

(b) on the ground that it is unreasonable, having regard to the complexity of the case, or to any other matter, to expect the tenant to deal with it without assistance; or

(c) by reason of any other special consideration.

(2) The proceedings referred to in subsection (1) above are—

(a) proceedings to determine any question arising in relation to an acquisition or proposed acquisition under this Part; and

(b) proceedings to determine any dispute arising after an acquisition under this Part between a transferred tenant of a dwelling-house included in the acquisition and the body by which the acquisition was made;

and for the purposes of paragraph (b) above a tenant of a dwelling-house is a transferred tenant of it if he was the qualifying tenant of it at the time of the acquisition or is the widow or widower of the person who was then the qualifying tenant of it.

(3) Assistance given by the Corporation under this section may include—

(a) giving advice;

(b) procuring or attempting to procure the settlement of the matter in dispute;

(c) arranging for the giving of advice or assistance by a solicitor or counsel;

(d) arranging for representation by a solicitor or counsel, including such assistance as is usually given by a solicitor or counsel in the steps preliminary or incidental to any proceedings, or in arriving at or giving effect to a compromise to avoid or bring to an end any proceedings; and

(e) any other form of assistance which the Corporation may consider appropriate;

but paragraph (d) above does not affect the law and practice regulating the descriptions of persons who may appear in, conduct, defend and address the court in any proceedings.

(4) In so far as expenses are incurred by the Corporation in providing the tenant with assistance under this section, the recovery of those expenses (as taxed or assessed in such manner as may be prescribed by rules of court) shall constitute a first charge for the benefit of the Corporation—

(a) on any costs which (whether by virtue of a judgement or order of a court or an agreement or otherwise) are payable to the tenant by any other person in respect of the matter in connection with which the assistance was given; and

(b) so far as relates to any costs, on his rights under any compromise or settlement arrived at in connection with that matter to avoid or bring to an end any proceedings;

but subject to any charge under the Legal Aid Act 1988 and to any provision of that Act for payment of any sum to the Legal Aid Board.'.—*[Mr. Ridley.]*

Brought up, read the First and Second time, and added to the Bill.

New Clause 46

SERVICE OF INFORMATION, ADVICE AND ASSISTANCE

'(1) The Corporation may provide in connection with Part IV a service of information, advice and assistance to, and for the benefit of,—

(a) persons who have been approved or are considering applying for approval under section 87 above; and

(b) persons who are tenants of public sector landlords.

(2) The Corporation may make charges for information, advice and assistance provided under this section otherwise than to persons falling within subsection (1)(b) above.

(3) The powers conferred on the Corporation by this section may be exercised by the Housing Corporation and Housing for Wales acting jointly.'.—*[Mr. Ridley.]*

Brought up, read the First and Second time, and added to the Bill.

New Clause 47

CONSENTS TO DISPOSALS OF HOUSING STOCK AND APPLICATION OF RECEIPTS

'(1) At the end of subsection (4) of section 34 of the Housing Act 1985 (consent to disposals of land held for the purposes of Part II—provision of housing accommodation) and at the end of subsection (4) of section 43 of that Act (consent for certain disposals of other houses) there shall be inserted the subsections set out in subsection (2) below.

(2) The subsections referred to in subsection (1) above and subsection (3) below are as follows—

> "(4A) The matters to which the Secretary of State may have regard in determining whether to give consent and, if so, to what conditions consent should be subject shall include—
>
> (a) the extent (if any) to which the person to whom the proposed disposal is to be made (in this subsection referred to as "the intending purchaser") is, or is likely to be, dependent upon, controlled by or subject to influence from the local authority making the disposal or any members or officers of that authority;
>
> (b) the extent (if any) to which the proposed disposal would result in the intending purchaser becoming the predominant or a substantial owner in any area of housing accommodation let on tenancies or subject to licences;
>
> (c) the terms of the proposed disposal; and
>
> (d) any other matters whatsoever which he considers relevant.
>
> (4B) Where the Secretary of State gives consent to a disposal by a local authority, he may give directions as to the purpose for which any capital money received by the authority in respect of the disposal is to be applied and, where any such directions are given, nothing in any enactment shall

require his consent to be given for the application of the capital money concerned in accordance with the directions."

(3) Section 13 of the Housing (Scotland) Act 1987 (power of Secretary of State to impose conditions in sale of local authority houses) shall be renumbered as subsection (1) of that section and after that subsection there shall be inserted as subsections (2) and (3) the subsections which are set out in subsection (2) above and there numbered (4A) and (4B).

(4) In section 153 of the Local Government Act 1972 (application of capital money on disposal of land), in subsection (1) after the words "127(4) above" there shall be be inserted "to any directions given in respect of the disposal under section 43(4B) of the Housing Act 1985".

(5) In section 430 of the Housing Act 1985 (application of capital money received on disposal of land), in subsection (1) after the word "applied", in the first place where it occurs, there shall be inserted "in accordance with any directions given in respect of the disposal under section 34(4B) or section 43(4B) and, subject thereto".

(6) In section 208 of the Housing (Scotland) Act 1987 (application of receipts from disposal of certain land), in subsection (2) there shall be inserted at the end the words "or has made directions under section 13(3)".

(7) In section 26 of the Local Government Act 1988 (provisions as to consents under section 25 for provision of financial assistance etc.), in subsection (5) (which excludes consent under various enactments where consent is given to a disposal of land under section 25) after the words "such a consent" there shall be inserted "then, if the consent given for the purposes of section 25 above so provides".

(8) This section shall be deemed to have come into force on 9th June 1988.'.—*[Mr. Ridley.]*

Brought up, read the First and Second time, and added to the Bill.

New Clause 48

SCHEMES FOR PAYMENTS TO ASSIST LOCAL HOUSING AUTHORITY TENANTS TO OBTAIN OTHER ACCOMMODATION

'(1) In accordance with a scheme made by a local housing authority and approved by the Secretary of State under this section, the authority may make grants to or for the benefit of qualifying tenants or licensees of the authority with a view to assisting each person to whom or for whose benefit a grant is made to obtain accommodation otherwise than as a tenant or licensee of the authority either—

(a) by acquiring an interest in a dwelling-house; or
(b) by carrying out works to a dwelling-house to provide additional accommodation; or
(c) by both of those means.

(2) A scheme under this section shall contain such provisions as the local housing authority considers appropriate together with any which the Secretary of State may require as a condition of his approval and, without prejudice to the generality, a scheme may include provisions specifying, or providing for the determination of—

(a) the persons who are qualifying tenants or licensees for the purposes of the scheme;
(b) the interests which qualifying tenants or licensees may be assisted to acquire;
(c) the works for the carrying out of which grants may be made;
(d) the circumstances in which a grant may be made for the benefit of a qualifying tenant or licensee;
(e) the amount of the grant which may be made in any particular case and the terms on which it may be made;
(f) the limits on the total number and amount of grants which may be made; and
(g) the period within which the scheme is to apply.

(3) The Secretary of State may approve a scheme made by a local housing authority under this section with or without conditions and, where a scheme has been approved, the authority shall take such steps as it considers appropriate to bring the scheme to the attention of persons likely to be able to benefit from it and shall take such other steps (if any) as the Secretary of State may direct in any particular case to secure publicity for the scheme.

(4) The Secretary of State may revoke an approval of a scheme under this section by a notice given to the local housing authority concerned; and where such a notice is given, the revocation shall not affect the operation of the scheme in relation to any grants made or agreed before the date of the notice.

(5) Any grant made pursuant to a scheme under this section—

(a) shall be regarded as a grant of a capital nature for the purposes of Part VIII of the Local Government, Planning and Land Act 1980 (Capital expenditure of local authorities); and
(b) shall be regarded as expenditure on management for the purposes of Part II of Schedule 14 to the Housing Act 1985 (debits to the Housing Revenue Account).

(6) Where a scheme made by a local housing authority under this section has been approved, a person dealing with the authority shall not be concerned to see or enquire whether the terms of the scheme have been or are being complied with, and any failure to comply with the terms of a scheme shall not invalidate any grant purporting to be made in accordance with the scheme unless the person to whom the grant is made has actual notice of the failure.

(7) In this section—

(a) "local housing authority" has the meaning assigned by section 1 of the Housing Act 1985;
(b) "dwelling-house" has the meaning assigned by section 112 of that Act; and
(c) "tenant" does not include a tenant under a long tenancy, as defined in section 115 of that Act.'.—*[Mr. Ridley.]*

Brought up, read the First and Second time, and added to the Bill.

New clause 4

RESTRICTION ON LETTING ETC, OF CERTAIN HOUSES IN NATIONAL PARKS ETC.

'(1) Section 37 of the Housing Act 1985 (restriction on disposals of dwelling-houses in National Parks etc.) shall be amended in accordance with this section.

(2) In subsection (2) (the covenanted limitation) after the word "his" there shall be inserted "(a)" and at the end there shall be added "and

(b) there will be no disposal by way of tenancy or licence without the written consent of the authority unless the disposal is to a person satisfying that condition".

(3) In subsection (3) (disposals limited to persons employed or living locally) after the words "application for consent" there shall be inserted the words "or, in the case of a disposal by way of tenancy or licence, preceding the disposal".

(4) at the end of subsection (4) (disposals in breach of covenant to be void) there shall be added "and, so far as it relates to disposals by way of tenancy or licence, such a covenant may be enforced by the local authority as if—

(a) the authority were possessed of land adjacent to the house concerned; and
(b) the covenant were expressed to be made for the benefit of such adjacent land."

(5) After subsection (4) there shall be inserted the following subsection—

"(4A) Any reference in the preceding provisions of this section to a disposal by way of tenancy or licence does not include a reference to a relevant disposal or an exempted disposal."

(6) This section has effect where the conveyance, grant or assignment referred to in subsection (1) of section 37 is executed on or after the passing of this Act.'.—*[Mr. Jopling.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Mr. Michael Jopling (Westmorland and Lonsdale): I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): With this it will be convenient to take the following: Amendment (a) to the new clause, at end add—

'(8) The limitation on disposal in subsection (2)(b) shall not apply if and so long as the House remains the only or main residence of the purchaser (including any successor in title of his and any person deeming title for him or such a successor).

(9) in this section the words "only or main residence" shall have the same meaning as in section 29 of the Finance Act 1965.'.

New clause 5—*Restriction on disposal of dwelling-houses in National Parks etc. acquired under the right to buy*—

'(1) In Part V of the Housing Act 1985 (the right to buy), section 157 (restriction on disposal of dwelling-houses in National Parks etc.) shall be amended in accordance with this section.

(2) In subsection (2) (the covenanted limitation) after the word "his" there shall be inserted "a" and at the end there shall be added "and—

(b) there will be no disposal by way of tenancy or licence without the written consent of the landlord unless the disposal is to a person satisfying that condition".

(3) In subsection (3) (disposals limited to persons employed or living locally) after the words "application for consent" there shall be inserted the words "or, in the case of a disposal by way of tenancy or licence, preceding the disposal".

(4) In subsection (4) (alternative limitation giving landlord right to a reconveyance) after the words "relevant disposal" there shall be inserted "or disposal by way of tenancy or licence".

(5) At the end of subsection (6) (disposals in breach of covenant to be void) there shall be added "and, so far as it relates to disposals by way of tenancy or licence, such a covenant may be enforced by the landlord as if—

(a) the landlord were possessed of land adjacent to the house concerned; and

(b) the covenant were expressed to be made for the benefit of such adjacent land.".

(6) After subsection (6) there shall be inserted the following subsection—

"(6A) Any reference in the preceding provisions of this section to a disposal by way of tenancy or licence does not include a reference to a relevant disposal or an exempted disposal.".

(7) This section has effect where the conveyance or grant referred to in subsection (1) of section 157 is executed on or after the passing of this Act.'.

Amendment (a) to new clause 5, at end add—

'(8) The limitation on disposal in subsection (2)(b) shall not apply if and so long as the house remains the only or main residence of the purchaser (including any successor in title of his and any person deeming title for him or such a successor).

(9) In this section the words "only or main residence" shall have the same meaning as in section 29 of the Finance Act 1965.'.

Mr. Jopling: New clause 4 has been supported, I am glad to say, by about 65 of my right hon. and hon. Friends, and I am grateful for their support of my efforts to get this change in the law. Many of my hon. Friends have supported this proposal because they come predominantly from rural areas, and their anxiety stems from the concern and pressure in their constituencies, where people are concerned about rural housing. Many hon. Members with rural constituencies are accustomed to hearing from their constituents that in such areas, particularly the beautiful national parks, the areas of outstanding natural beauty and areas of great scenic beauty, housing is becoming increasingly unavailable, and that the prices are increasingly inflated, entirely because of the outside pressure for weekend houses and holiday homes.

For example, in correspondence, the Lake District planning board has told me:

"In the central parishes of the Lake District, second and holiday-home occupancy of existing dwellings has reached levels as high as 40 per cent. of the existing housing stock and the financial inducements to let for the holiday market are strong."

As the House will recall, this is not a new problem. That problem was clearly recognised in the right-to-buy legislation which passed through the House in 1980 and was further consolidated in the 1985 legislation. At that time, Parliament decided to take steps to ensure that council houses, having been bought by the tenant under the right-to-buy arrangements, were protected from becoming holiday or weekend homes. That proposal has the support of many of my hon. Friends. As a consequence, in the 1985 Act, two alternative restrictive covenants were allowed for local authorities to put into sale agreements to ensure that, when the former tenant wished to resell the house, it remained in local ownership.

That is what the House wanted and what I wanted, but an anomaly has now emerged, that there is nothing to stop the owner of the former council house letting it as a weekend or holiday home, rather than selling it. That could drive a coach and horses through Parliament's wise decision a few years ago to seek to ensure that former council housing remained in local occupancy.

My new clauses are designed to close that loophole. Their intention is the reason why so many of my hon. Friends have flocked to support them. I hope that the Government will be able to support the new clauses. I am glad that my hon. Friend the Member for Tiverton (Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop), whom I am glad to see here, has put down an amendment to each of my new clauses. Those amendments are entirely acceptable to me, as I understand that they seek to say that the restriction that I am proposing will not apply if the house is the principal residence of the owner. I hope that the Government will find that my hon. Friend's amendments make the new clauses even easier to accept.

My intention is solely to prevent the owner of a former council house from leaving the house, buying or renting another to live in and then letting the original council house at a substantial rate which could well cover the mortgage payments on both houses. That was never Parliament's intention and we should change the law to ensure that the loophole does not occur.

Mr. Robin Maxwell-Hyslop (Tiverton): My two amendments refer to the new clauses moved so ably by my right hon. Friend the Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale (Mr. Jopling). He has already given the reason for those refinements to his new clauses, which are in no sense hostile amendments, and I recommend them to the House.

Mr. Dafydd Wigley (Caernarfon): I strongly support this proposal, because I represent an area that has problems similar to those of the Lake District. They are not only problems in rural Wales and the Lake District, but in East Anglia, Cornwall and many other areas where tremendous pressures are put on the limited housing stock and make it extremely difficult for local people to obtain housing.

The loophole to which the right hon. Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale (Mr. Jopling) referred is open to exploitation in many areas and I hope that the

[Mr. Dafydd Wigley]

Government will show that they are willing to accept the amendment. The proposal goes only part of the way to try to mitigate the considerable problems that face people in the right hon. Gentleman's area and in mine. The policy of any Government must be to try to ensure that local people can have some sort of command over the housing stock. The proposal at least deals with the sub-letting of houses that have been sold and, to that extent, is welcome.

I hope that the Government will address themselves to the generality of the problem, because it is certainly becoming worse. A cheque-book invasion in the area which I represent is making it next to impossible for local people to acquire houses to buy. The reduction of the housing stock is making it increasingly difficult to find houses to rent. There must be a mechanism that will provide an answer to the problem, and I urge the Government to give serious consideration to finding it before the problem gets out of hand.

11.15 pm

Mr. Ridley: It might help the House and assist the conduct of business if I were to ask the House to take yes for an answer to the new clause. I know that it is a terrible thing to ask the House to do, but for once it might bear with me if I say that we accept the new clauses of my right hon. Friend the Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale (Mr. Jopling). We shall accept also the amendments of my hon. Friend the Member for Tiverton (Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop) to them. I fear, however, that in another place it will be necessary to amend the amendments while leaving the sense exactly as he would have them. The addition of "only or main residence" which he proposes has been taken from an Act which has been repealed. I do not think that we can leave that.

Secondly, the amendment to new clause 5 would not affect the operation of the clause in those instances where the landlord has reserved a right to pre-emption. Thus, it would mean that before any letting, however short, the owner of the house would have to give the former landlord the opportunity to buy it back. I do not think that that would be right. Subject to introducing those amendments in another place, the Government are happy to accept the new clauses and the sense of the amendments to them.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause read a Second time.

Amendment made: (a) in line 26, at end add—

'(8) The limitation on disposal in subsection (2)(b) shall not apply if and so long as the house remains the only or main residence of the purchaser (including any successor in title of his and any person deeming title for him or such a successor).

(9) In this section the words "only or main residence" shall have the same meaning as in section 29 of the Finance Act 1965.'.—*[Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop.]*

Clause, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

New clause 5

RESTRICTION ON DISPOSAL OF DWELLING-HOUSES IN NATIONAL PARKS ETC. ACQUIRED UNDER THE RIGHT TO BUY

'(1) In Part V of the Housing Act 1985 (the right to buy), section 157 (restriction on disposal of dwelling-houses in National Parks etc.) shall be amended in accordance with this section.

(2) In subsection (2) (the covenanted limitation) after the word "his" there shall be inserted "a" and at the end there shall be added "and—

(b) there will be no disposal by way of tenancy or licence without the written consent of the landlord unless the disposal is to a person satisfying that condition".

(3) In subsection (3) (disposals limited to persons employed or living locally) after the words "application for consent" there shall be inserted the words "or, in the case of a disposal by way of tenancy or licence, preceding the disposal".

(4) In subsection (4) (alternative limitation giving landlord right to a reconveyance) after the words "relevant disposal" there shall be inserted "or disposal by way of tenancy or licence".

(5) At the end of subsection (6) (disposals in breach of covenant to be void) there shall be added "and, so far as it relates to disposals by way of tenancy or licence, such a covenant may be enforced by the landlord as if—

(a) the landlord were possessed of land adjacent to the house concerned; and

(b) the covenant were expressed to be made for the benefit of such adjacent land.".

(6) After subsection (6) there shall be inserted the following subsection—

"(6A) Any reference in the preceding provisions of this section to a disposal by way of tenancy or licence does not include a reference to a relevant disposal or an exempted disposal.".

(7) This section has effect where the conveyance or grant referred to in subsection (1) of section 157 is executed on or after the passing of this Act.'.—*[Mr. Jopling.]*

Brought up, and read the First and Second time.

Amendment made: (a) in line 26, at end add—

'(8) The limitation on disposal in subsection (2)(b) shall not apply if and so long as the house remains the only or main residence of the purchaser (including any successor in title of his and any person deeming title for him or such a successor).

(9) in this section the words "only or main residence" shall have the same meaning as in section 29 of the Finance Act 1965.'.—*[Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop.]*

Clause, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

New Clause 9

GROUNDS FOR POSSESSION: RACIAL HARASSMENT

'In Schedule 2 to the Housing Act 1985 (grounds for possession of dwelling-houses let under secure tenancies) in Part I (grounds of which court may order possession if it considers it reasonable), at the end of Ground 2 (nuisance or annoyance to neighbours) add—

"or has committed acts on racial grounds against a person or persons of a different racial or ethnic origin residing within the local authority area within which the dwelling-house is located, and those acts have interfered with that person's enjoyment of the dwelling-house or have been calculated to deter the person from occupying a particular dwelling-house.".'.—*[Mr. Tony Banks.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Mr. Tony Banks: I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to discuss the following: New clause 43—*Grounds for possession: harassment*—

'In Schedule 2 to the Housing Act 1985 (grounds for possession of dwelling-houses let under secure tenancies) in Part I (grounds of which court may order possession if it considers it reasonable), at the end of Ground 2 (nuisance or annoyance to neighbours) add—

"or has committed acts against a person or persons residing within the local authority area within which the dwelling-house is located, and those acts have interfered with that person's enjoyment of the dwelling-house or have been calculated to deter the person from occupying a particular dwelling-house.".'.

New clause 15—*Officer to deal with harassment and illegal eviction*—

'(1) All local housing authorities to which this section applies, shall appoint and retain a proper officer, whose functions shall include those set out in subsection (3) below.

(2) This section applies to the following local housing authorities—

(i) district councils and London borough councils.
(ii) The Common Council of the City of London.
(iii) The Council of the Isles of Scilly.

(3) The proper officer for the purposes of subsection (1) above, shall investigate any complaint made to the local housing authority, by a person aggrieved, that an offence under this Part of this Act or under the Protection from Eviction Act 1977 as amended has been committed within the area of that authority and shall prepare a recommendation in writing for that authority on whether or not that authority shall commence a prosecution or other action against any person arising from these investigations.

(4) For the avoidance of doubt, it is hereby confirmed that a person aggrieved under subsection (3) above shall have a sufficient interest in the matter to bring appropriate proceedings to enforce the duties established under this section.'.

Mr. Banks: The new clauses all touch upon racial harassment. New clause 9 relates to schedule 2 of the Housing Act 1985, which sets out the grounds on which a public sector landlord can recover possession against a tenant. I am more than happy to move the new clause, but I wish that there were no need for me to do so. Racial harassment is one of the evils that unfortunately now permeates much of our society, especially within the inner cities. The boroughs of Newham—which is my part of the east end—and Tower Hamlets have found that the problem has reached crisis proportions. I am glad to be able to report that the London borough of Newham has taken a national lead in attempting to combat racial harassment, and the first case of a tenant being convicted on the ground of racial harassment occurred in the borough.

Newham commissioned a report from the Harris Research Centre as part of a crime survey. The survey examined a sample of Asian and Afro-Caribbean residents to determine their experiences and attitudes about racial harassment. A normal sample size of 1,063 people was taken and the findings were very disturbing. It showed that one in four of Newham's black residents had been victims of some form of racial harassment in the previous 12 months. Two in three victims of racial harassment were victims on more than one occasion and 116 victims reported 1,550 incidents of racial harassment. It is really worrying that it appears that only one in 20 incidents were actually reported to the police. When they were reported, 80 per cent. of black victims were dissatisfied with the police handling of the matter. The dissatisfaction largely stemmed from a feeling that the police were apathetic about the problems of black residents.

I am glad to say that, through some very intense discussions with the police, the local authority and community leaders, there has been an undoubtedly successful drive against racial harassment in the east end of London. On behalf of hon. Members on both sides of the House, I commend all those in the east end who are trying their best to stem the rising tide of unpleasantness about which all of us feel ashamed.

I am sure that hon. Members on both sides of the House deplore racial harassment. Although victim support is an essential feature of any racial harassment policy, we must concentrate our efforts on the perpetrators and the crimes that they commit. We believe that ground for possession is an essential component of that attack on the perpetrators.

The experience of local authorities is that the courts are not willing to evict tenants for racial harassment alone. They have found that a more comprehensive case including a long series of small incidents that are a nuisance or an annoyance is more likely to succeed than a case relying purely on racial harassment. For that reason alone it would be useful for Parliament to send a message to the courts that we intend that racial attacks on tenants or residents should be considered as sufficient grounds for possession. I hope that the Minister will be able to join me in sending that message out very clearly by accepting new clause 9.

New clause 15 seeks to give teeth to the Government's proposals drafted to give effect to their manifesto promise to strengthen the law against harassment and unlawful eviction. Here is a case in which the Opposition are only too happy to try to strengthen and support a Conservative party manifesto pledge. I am sure that the Minister will welcome that support.

We believe that legal protection is useless without effective enforcement machinery. New clause 15 seeks to ensure that every local housing authority has an officer called a tenancy relations officer or harassment officer who will receive complaints alleging harassment or unlawful eviction. I know that the Minister feels very strongly about these matters and I hope that he will say how delighted he is to accept the Opposition new clauses.

Mr. Simon Hughes: I associate myself and my hon. Friend the Member for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Livsey) with new clauses 9 and 15. It is clearly important to ensure that people who are often the minority community are as secure, and feel as secure and protected by the law, as people in the ethnic majority.

One of the most disconcerting and upsetting things that can happen is for people to feel that they are perpetually persecuted even when they are behind their own front doors, in their homes. They know that they can have no escape from that. That has often been remedied only by suggesting that the victims move. It does nothing for good race relations, let alone good education and tolerance in a just and fair society, to suggest that those who are persecuted must get out of the way to allow the bullies to continue to bully. I hope that the Government will respond positively to the new clauses.

New clause 43 is in most respects similar to new clause 9, except that it deals with harassment generally, as opposed only to racial harassment. I can illustrate my point with one short tale. There was living in my constituency about one and one half years ago a lady of 79, who found that there were illegal occupants in the flat above hers. They were a large family of travellers and they lived an extremely unruly life. As the days went by, she felt herself increasingly persecuted and intimidated by them.

They caused a din all the time and she found that she could not sleep. They often damaged her property and the surrounding area and were generally a nuisance to the community. The sad truth is that six months after they moved in, she died. I can testify to the fact that, having been a strong, healthy and robust pensioner, she was forced to her grave by being harassed to death. That was not a question of racial harassment, because the family concerned was the same colour as she was. There might

[Mr. Simon Hughes]

have been a slight racial difference in that they were first generation Irish immigrants, but they were white. She was a long-standing local resident of Bermondsey.

Harassment of whatever kind is entirely unacceptable. Normally, a local authority will offer assistance if the victim takes the matter to court. In reality, a pensioner of 79 is in no fit state to take the part of the principal moving against others who cause harassment. It is vital that tenants in that predicament are secure in the knowledge that their landlord will uphold their rights and will meet his obligations to his tenants, in ensuring that they have quiet enjoyment of their tenancies.

Mr. David Alton (Liverpool, Mossley Hill): I agree with my hon. Friend, but does he not acknowledge that the problem is compounded and accentuated by the number of people who, through the care in the community programme, have been dumped in places where vulnerable people already are living?—*[Interruption.]* In my constituency, there are examples of elderly people having been left in flats and of others having been dumped alongside them without any proper follow-up care. Local allocation committees do not always provide protection from the kind of harassment that my hon. Friend described.

Mr. Hughes: Some hon. Members should have listened more attentively to my hon. Friend's intervention. [HON. MEMBERS: "He has not been here."] My hon. Friend has been in and out of the Chamber throughout the whole of today, and he has voted on all the amendments. He was entitled to make his very valid point.

Those responsible for allocating housing often do so without giving due thought to the consequences for existing neighbourhoods of accommodating people who, through no fault of their own, may not be best placed there. I am sure that all hon. Members have received complaints from constituents who find unacceptable the lifestyle of somebody who may be mentally sick, but who is perfectly entitled to a home. However, such a person should not reasonably be housed together with an elderly couple, who may then find themselves persecuted as a result of that inappropriate allocation.

It is vital that tenants are protected, and it is not good enough that they should be expected to defend their own rights when they are themselves vulnerable and unable to do so. Local authorities must take the responsibility for protecting the quiet enjoyment of all our citizens. The new clauses are intended to achieve that, and I hope that the Government will be responsive to the general problem and to the new clauses in particular.

Mr. Waldegrave: It is nice to welcome several new speakers to our debate. However, the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) has been present in the Chamber throughout and knows that these issues have been debated on a number of occasions. I join him in sending out from this Chamber the strongest possible message that it is unacceptable to harass people on racial or any other grounds, so making it intolerable for them to use their accommodation. He is right to say that Newham is a borough that has dealt with such matters in a forthright way and has achieved some successes under the present law. However, as he will know, it has also had some failures under the present law, which is schedule 2 of the Housing Act 1985.

The argument between us is whether it is the law that is wrong or, as the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) has said, the force that is put behind the law and the difficulty in getting people to come forward to give evidence. I am sure that all of us with urban constituencies—this perhaps applies to other constituencies also—will know that getting people to come forward is usually the real problem. Therefore, we would argue that schedule 2 to the Housing Act 1985 provides proper grounds and that, in attaching the right importance to the subject, we must be careful not to go so far that we create a potential new double jeopardy or hazard.

New clause 9 states that any act in the nature of racial harassment in the same local authority area could lead to the loss of a property. Such an act would probably be illegal already, and we should not use eviction as an additional form of punishment. However, eviction is rightly used if it attaches to the neighbour problems and to actions which make the use of the property intolerable.

11.30 pm

Mr. Tony Banks: Ground 2 makes racial harassment a nuisance or an annoyance. Obviously, we want to strengthen that and to go all the way by saying that it is an out-and-out crime. When local authorities try to get possession on ground 2, the courts tend not to be prepared to accept racial harassment alone but want other evidence.

Mr. Waldegrave: In the hon. Gentleman's own borough, as well as in Camden and Islington, there have been successes on that ground in such cases. Cases that have failed may have failed not because of any lack in the law, but because of the difficulty of collecting evidence. That is why—I hope that this will help the hon. Gentleman—my Department has recently commissioned some research from Brunel university to look into such matters and to see whether that is the problem or whether we, or experts, can help in giving guidance to local authorities to make such cases stick better.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): If the research from Brunel university shows that there is a need for further legislation in this area, will the Minister undertake that he will be prepared to bring that forward?

Mr. Waldegrave: I cannot guarantee that, but we will take seriously anything that the report, which we have commissioned, recommends. It will be published in the normal way.

I do not want to go as far as new clause 9 or new clause 43 and to lay on local authorities in every circumstance a duty to employ tenancy relations officers. Tenancy relations officers have written to us all to urge that, and I can understand why they did so. I should like to put on record my gratitude for the help that they have given in formulating several of the proposals in the Bill. I do not think that we should lay down the way in which local authorities should carry out their statutory duties, because the range of problems facing local authorities in this area is so great. However, I think that all the authorities with which we would deal would naturally employ tenancy relations officers.

On the basis that there is no argument between us, as there is further work in hand and because there have been some successful prosecutions under the present laws, I hope that hon. Gentlemen will not press their new clauses.

Mr. Boateng: I had hoped not to have to contribute to this part of the debate, but I am concerned by one aspect of the Secretary of State's response. He seems to show undue equanimity about the state of the existing law in relation to harassment, which is not borne out by the research that has already been carried out by the Commission for Racial Equality. I fail to see the need to go to Brunel university to establish what the commission, together with the Association of Metropolitan Authorities, has already established—which is that one of the major causes of difficulty in prosecuting cases of racial harassment is that people are not prepared to come forward to give evidence because they simply do not believe that the law will be effective.

The CRE report "Living in Terror", which highlights the real problems currently faced by communities throughout the country, states:

> "It is important to point out the difficulty of proving cases some months after the incident concerned. There is a tendency by the courts to award suspended orders rather than outright possession and individuals are dissuaded from appearing in court because of its relative ineffectiveness."

That is what the Government's own body, the CRE, had to say about that matter.

Why is it now necessary to go to Brunel? What comfort will the Minister's words bring to the Bengali, Afro-Caribbean and Asian families in our cities, who every night go in fear of what may happen to them during the night? Wives and children dare not go out to shop or to school because of the level of harassment on the major estates. What comfort can the Minister give to them? To say that Brunel is carrying out research will not make them sleep any easier in their beds or enable them to lead a full life as equal members of our community.

Question put and negatived.

New clause 39

LIMITATION OF ASSURED TENANCIES TO PREVIOUSLY EMPTY PROPERTY

'A tenancy is an assured tenancy within the meaning of this Act if—

(a) the letting is or forms part of a building which at the time of the commencement of this Act was empty and had remained empty for a period of more than six months; and

(b) the landlord has obtained from the local authority a licence authorising the building or part of a building as fit to be let.'.—*[Mr. Simon Hughes.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Mr. Simon Hughes: I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

Even at this late stage, we hope to persuade the Government to proceed slightly more carefully in the deregulation of the private sector. They legislated for a new form of assured tenancy in 1980, and our new clause would allow such tenancies in the new deregulated regime that the Government so favour, but would limit them to property that was previously empty.

The problem with the Bill is that, no matter what sort of property, once someone takes a new tenancy he will not have the same security as he enjoyed previously. He cannot carry his security with him. He will move to a regime where his rights are fewer and his rent greater. He will have no facility to seek regulation of that rent because the fair rent system will disappear. He will be paying market rent and, if not in receipt of benefit, will be substantially financially disadvantaged.

We are bringing to the House a matter that we argued in Committee. We want to ensure that, rather than the Government taking a shot in the dark and arguing the theory that deregulation will solve the housing problem, they take a more common-sense approach. The Government have identified empty properties in the private sector that might be held back from the market because only the market will give the landlord the revenue that the landlord requires. However, no such argument applies to other properties. Property currently let in the private sector does not suddenly need the benefit of deregulated market rents and fewer rights for tenants. That property is already let. The Government should not suddenly sweep away all the present structures and introduce all the uncertainty of the future.

The greatest concern of tenants is that they have secure homes at rents that they can afford. The new clause would ensure that the security of thousands, possibly millions, of tenants is not put at risk because many of the new homes that become available are priced out of the market for all but a handful of people.

Mr. Winnick: The new clause would give at least some protection to the many thousands of people now in secure rented dwellings in the private sector. The Bill states that they will continue to be protected, but we know that Rachmanism arose because Mr. Rachman and other undesirable and unscrupulous landlords were aware that, under the Rent Act 1957, once the tenants were out, the places could be relet with no control whatever.

The ITV "World in Action" programme today dealt with the notorious activities of Mr. Nicholas van Hoogstraten, who describes his tenants as "scumbags", admits to spitting at them and makes no secret of the fact that he would use any method whatever—violence, gangsterism and the rest—to get rid of them. He described the Bill as a step in the right direction, and it will greatly assist people of that type.

The hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) is absolutely right: if there is to be real security—not just on paper, but real and effective security—for existing private tenants, the most effective way to achieve it within the framework of this undesirable Bill is through the provision in the new clause that assured tenancies will arise only when the property has been empty for six months.

If the Minister seriously wished to ensure that private tenants were protected, he would accept the new clause.

Mr. Waldegrave: I need not detain the House long to point out the absurdity of the new clause. The result would be to penalise landlords who have continued to let their property notwithstanding all the constraints and difficulties associated with the Rent Acts, and to reward those who have kept their property off the market. If that is what the House wants, I shall be amazed.

Mr. Simon Hughes: The Minister may be more greatly amazed that, despite all his promises, the consequence of his legislation will be that the needs of the large number of people looking for decent, cheap rented housing will

[Mr. Simon Hughes]

remain unmet. The new clause would have been a redeeming feature of the Bill, but the Minister is clearly beyond seeking redemption.

Question put and negatived.

New Clause 49

PROTECTION OF RIGHT TO BUY

'(a) Where a secure tenant of a non-fully mutual housing co-operative has claimed to exercise his right to buy, no subsequent change in the rules or status of the co-operative shall have the effect of negating that right to buy.

(b) This section shall be deemed to have come into force on 1st March 1987.'.

Brought up, and read the First time.

Mr. John Watts (Slough): I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

The new clause deals with a fairly narrow point arising from the problems of my constituent, Mr. J. Croxford, whose right to buy has been denied as a result of retrospective and capricious action by the Northborough housing co-operative, of which Mr. Croxford is a tenant.

In February 1987, Mr. Croxford made a right-to-buy application to the Northborough housing co-operative. In May 1987, the co-operative admitted his right to buy, albeit nine weeks later than it should have done. Mr. Croxford was concerned at the slow progress of his application, and wrote to me on 27 July 1987. He knew that the section 125 notice was due, but suspected that it would not arrive. I wrote to my hon. Friend the Minister for Housing and Planning, who replied to me at the end of August 1987 based on information supplied to the Department by the housing co-operative.

The co-operative claimed that it had instructed a surveyor to inspect the flat in preparation for the issue of a section 125 notice, but the co-operative's claim that it was progressing the application turned out to be a cynical lie. On 30 March 1987—before admitting Mr. Croxford's right to buy, and before supplying that information to my hon. Friend the Minister—the co-operative had changed its rules and registered as a fully mutual co-operative, thereby depriving all its tenants of their status as secure tenants and of their right to buy.

It was not until 3 February 1988 that the co-operative wrote to my constituent—almost a year from the date of his initial application—advising him that his right to buy had been retrospectively extinguished by the devious action that the co-operative had taken in changing its rules. I wrote again to my hon. Friend the Minister for Housing and Planning. My hon. Friend replied explaining that the action taken by the co-operative appeared to be in accordance with the law, although I submit that it was certainly not within the spirit of the law as enacted by Parliament.

My new clause seeks to remedy the wrong suffered by Mr. Croxford and perhaps by other people in similar circumstances. It renders void any action by a non fully mutual housing co-operative to change its rules or status so as to remove the right to buy from a tenant who was a secure tenant at the time he claimed his right to buy.

I have made the effective date of the new clause 1 March 1987. I realise that there would normally be an objection on the grounds of it being retrospective legislation, but it is justified in this instance as it is designed to provide a remedy against the retrospective action of the housing co-operative to remove a right which had been conferred by legislation.

11.45 pm

I shall not be surprised if my hon. Friend the Minister finds some technical defect in the drafting of the new clause —indeed, I should be surprised if that were not the case. However, if he cannot accept it, I hope that he will give me an undertaking that he will look again at this problem and consider whether it would be possible to introduce an amendment in another place to remedy the wrong which my constituent has suffered.

I cannot believe that it was the intention of the House, when it created the right to buy, that it should be negated by cavalier retrospective action by a mischievous housing co-operative. The House should stand by the right to buy which it conferred on tenants such as my constituent Mr. Croxford.

Mr. Graham Allen (Nottingham, North): The right to buy raises a number of very important issues, not least for some 500 or 600 of my constituents who exercised the right to buy and, unfortunately, bought a pup. They bought BISF steel-framed properties. Those properties cannot be sold on, even when willing buyers are found, because building societies do not make mortgages available because of alleged structural defects.

Rather than take up the time of the House any further, when the Minister replies to the debate, either on the new clause or on Third Reading, will he give some comfort and some hope to those people who, under the Conservative right-to-buy policy, are lumbered with houses which are impossible to sell on and which do not qualify for any grant under the structurally defective properties legislation? Will he seek at least to review the case of 500 or 600 of my constituents in Nottingham, North, so that at some point in the future they can either sell their houses or have them brought up to a reasonable standard?

Mr. Waldegrave: My hon. Friend the Member for Slough (Mr. Watts) has been in correspondence with me about the individual case that he mentioned. I am glad to say that the only such case that has come to our attention is the one that he described. The Housing Corporation, which deals with such matters, has also heard of no other such case. I doubt whether it would be wise to legislate on the basis of a single case.

It is not clear to me that it would be right in principle to make the changes which my hon. Friend proposes. A member of a co-operative is bound by its decisions. I understand that the procedure for changing the status of the housing co-operative to fully mutual was correctly followed, including making sure that all the members of the co-operative were aware that by changing from a non fully mutual housing co-operative to a fully mutual one they would lose the right to buy. If there were any doubt about the way the procedures were followed, doubtless recourse to the courts is available. The Housing Corporation, however, has undertaken to ask housing co-operatives when they apply to be registered as fully mutual whether there are any right-to-buy claims outstanding. If there are, the corporation will seek to ensure that they are cleared up satisfactorily and that no tenant who wishes to exercise the right to buy and has claimed it will lose that right.

I do not know whether that will help my hon. Friend with his case, but it will deal with the problem in future, and I hope that he will withdraw the new clause on that basis.

Mr. Watts: On the basis of my hon. Friend's reply, I will be able to get in touch with the Housing Corporation to ascertain the facts of the case.

I beg to ask leave to withdraw the motion.

Motion and clause, by leave, withdrawn.

Schedule 13

ENACTMENTS REPEALED

Amendments made: No. 64, in page 119, line 32, column 3, leave out 'Section 68' and insert—

'Sections 68 and 69'.

No. 65, in page 119, line 47, column 3, at end insert—

'Schedule 12.'

No. 251, in page 120, line 17, column 3, at beginning insert—

'In section 3(2) the words "of housing associations maintained under this section".

In section 18(3) the words from "and the Corporation" onwards.'.

No. 66, in page 120, line 51, column 3, at beginning insert—

'Section 7.'

No. 252, in page 120, line 58, column 3, leave out '15 and' insert '14 to'.

No. 253 in page 121, line 28 at end insert—

'1988 c.00.	The Housing (Scotland) Act 1988.	Section 4(4). Schedule 3. In Schedule 9, paragraph 5(b).'.

—*[Mr. Waldegrave.]*

Title

Amendment made: No. 239, in Title, line 3, after '1976', insert—

'to establish a body, Housing for Wales, having functions relating to housing associations'.—*[Mr. Waldegrave.]*

Order for Third Reading read.

[Queen's Consent, on behalf of the Crown, and Prince of Wales's Consent, on behalf of the Duchy of Cornwall, signified.]

11.50 pm

Mr. Waldegrave: I beg to move, That the Bill be now read the Third time.

This is one of the most important of the Government's Bills and one with which I am exceedingly proud to be associated—*[Interruption.]* The normal squeaks and groans of a party being dragged slowly into the latter half of the 20th century are all too clearly audible from Labour Members. We have already noticed the Leader of the Opposition dragging along behind our chariot. He is already moving. In due course he will take the trouble to explain matters to some of his hon. Friends who listen with their mouths.

Everyone knows that it is a scandal that there are 500,000 or so empty properties in the private sector in Britain and that a large number of the properties are empty because of the workings of the Rent Acts, one of the other unpleasant aspects of which are the practices of the sort of person to whom the hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) referred. The people about whom the hon. Gentleman bellowed are products of the legislation that the hon. Gentleman supports. In conditions of scarcity and black markets, such people are produced.

At last we are introducing a sensible measure to bring private rented accommodation back into use, to drive the bad money out with proper investment in good housing by serious investors who will manage their housing properly. That will help the mobility of labour and the homeless about whom the Labour party claim to be so full of care. It will help the young and all those who are excluded by the present failure of the housing market.

We are bringing the housing association movement into a new system whereby it will be able to borrow on the markets the money that is available to provide more social housing. That is absolutely right and is supported by all those who have thought about the matter for a moment. —*[Interruption.]*

The cause of all the noise and uproar from the Labour party and which has the Labour party running scared is that we will be going into some of the badly managed council estates with the housing action trusts and we will be showing the council tenants that it is possible to manage the properties properly and that there are better ways of managing housing than they are used to in boroughs such as Southwark, to which the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) referred. After a forthright programme of improvements on arrears, that borough has managed to increase them by 35 per cent. Another campaign like that and the borough's housing bill will be enormous.

The Labour party has made the most racket and least progress in its arguments about the fact that we are giving a new right to tenants. What frightens the Labour party most is that the tenants who want to escape will be allowed to do so. That is not my phrase; it is from a paper produced in the London borough of Lambeth. It said, "If we are not careful and do not start looking after property properly, we may find the tenants escaping to housing associations." That will be satisfactory for those tenants.

I make one prediction. When the Bill has been on the statute book for a while, in spite of all the witty remarks from the hon. Member for Brent, South (Mr. Boateng), all the sedentary interventions from the hon. Member from Walsall, North, the puns from the hon. Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan) and the rest of the battery of deterrents that have been used against the Bill, the Labour party will find that there are good things about it. After a year or two, the Transport and General Workers Union will accept it and it will become Labour party policy.

The hon. Member for Nottingham, North (Mr. Allen) expressed his understandable concern about BISF houses not being designated as defective. I sympathise with him as I have similar problems with houses, though not of that design, in my constituency. I am perfectly willing to discuss the problem with him, but I do not want him to believe

[Mr. Waldegrave]

that we shall easily add anything to the defective housing list. There may, however, be other ways of giving help, and I should be glad to talk to him about housing investment programe allocations.

We are sending to the House of Lords—I hope for their Lordships' approval—one of the flagship Bills of this Parliament. It is a Bill of which, in the long term, the House will be exceedingly proud.

11.56 pm

Mr. Soley: The Government will regret the Bill. They are dragging housing back into the 19th century. They have forgotten that local authorities built us out of the slums of the 19th century and the housing crises after the two world wars.

The Bill has broken the consensus on housing and threatens to divide the housing association movement. It has put private tenants at risk. I warn the Government that they are putting many private tenants at risk, and they know it. They have put public tenants at risk. They have frightened them with their proposals to undermine local democracy and the way in which the voting system operates. They have made a mockery of any claims about the democratic process of giving people a right to choose a different landlord. When they first floated this idea, we said, "We do not mind tenants having a right to choose a different landlord, but if that is a right it should apply to the private sector and where there is a non-resident landlord." The argument should be about the standards of management of housing.

In the small print of the Bill one finds that there is a voting system that allows the dead to vote and allows empty properties to be counted as a vote in favour of a transfer. Need we wonder why people are angry about the Bill's proposals?

At best, the Bill is irrelevant to the housing needs of this country; at worst it is catastrophic and will create a crisis to which even this Government will have to respond.

The Government have talked about choice. What choice does a person have who is living in a cardboard box barely a few hundred yards from here? What choice have people who have been taken in as homeless by local authorities—whose number has doubled since the Government took office? What choice does a child have who spends two or three years in bed-and-breakfast accommodation? Bed-and-breakfast accommodation hardly existed in anything like its present form until the Government took office. It did not exist under previous Conservative or Labour Governments, but, by God, it exists under this Government in a far worse form than ever before.

What chance does anybody have, with the present house price inflation, to get a house that they can afford if their salary is relatively low? What chance do they have to trade up if they have had children and need a larger home? While house price inflation rockets out of control, what chance does anybody have of renting at market rents when in certain areas they are known to be at least £100 per week and rising? All that the Government can say is that they will increase housing benefit. We know that they have cut it eight times already and propose to do so again.

The Bill will be a Rachman's charter. One saw panic on Minister's faces when the business enterprise scheme was introduced by the Chancellor of the Exchequer in a desperate attempt to get more private money into the private sector, but with no safeguards worth mentioning. Just as in 1957, when the controls were taken off and Rachman emerged, so these days there has been a dramatic loss of private property. Half a million homes have gone from the private rented sector in the past eight years—more than at any other time, except for just after 1957. I sadly predict that the people will regret the Bill and ultimately, thank heavens, so will the Government. That may be one of the few good things to come from it.

12 midnight

Mr. Simon Hughes: When the numbers of the homeless in Britain were at their highest ever, the Government came to the House with a Bill that did not once mention the homeless. Since November, we have spent a long time trying to make a bad Bill a little better. There have been more amendments than the House could properly cope with on Report. The Government resisted and said, "We do not need time. It can be rushed through. It will be all right." Even now, we have only just begun to expose the weakness and feebleness of the Government's position.

For private tenants who seek security, the Government will give them less security and higher rents. For the housing association movement which wanted a guarantee of independence, free from the public sector and from the private sector, we see a Government ever more determined to push it into the private sector's arms. With housing action trusts, local authorities that are battling to deal with the needs of past and future tenants are told by the Government, "We are coming in. We shall take over what property of yours we want and, if necessary, you will pay us to do so, even if you have no say."

The Government say that they are giving council tenants a choice. The only way they can do that is by producing a voting system that does not exist even behind the iron curtain. Last Thursday, the Prime Minister naively said:

> "I thought that we arranged that it was a majority of those voting".—[*Official Report*, 23 June 1988; Vol 135, c. 1257.]

But the Secretary of State and the Department of the Environment had blinded the Prime Minister with their science. They have gone back on her word of last June. They have put into the Bill a provision that clearly means that people can find their property taken away from them, even though no one may have voted for that to happen.

In the year when the Budget gives to the rich, when the poll tax saves thousands of pounds on the houses of Cabinet members and when the Government's legislation screws the homeless and those dependent on social security, giving them less money, people at the bottom of the housing ladder hear the Government say, "Trust us, because we trust the market." We would rather trust people to tell us what they want. The opportunity for agreement on how we house our nation should have been taken. After the Bill, the people will be as before—two nations, the well housed and the rest—and the Government will have increased the numbers of the rest, their pain and suffering. We shall vote against this disgraceful Bill because it is a legacy of an uncaring, unsympathetic and callous Government.

Question put, That the Bill be read the Third time:—

The House divided: Ayes 231, Noes 168.

Division No. 383] **[12.03 am**

AYES

Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amess, David
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Batiste, Spencer
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Hon Alan *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Tony
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gow, Ian
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon *(Bury St E')*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayward, Robert
Heddle, John
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Janman, Tim
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Knowles, Michael
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Maclean, David
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miscampbell, Norman
Moate, Roger
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Neale, Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Chris *(Bath)*
Patten, John *(Oxford W)*
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Price, Sir David
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Redwood, John
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rost, Peter
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(Hertfordshire N)*
Stokes, Sir John
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Waller, Gary
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Mike
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. David Lightbown and
Mr. Peter Lloyd.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Buchan, Norman
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Dalyell, Tam
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Harman, Ms Harriet
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Heffer, Eric S.
Henderson, Doug

Hinchliffe, David
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Howells, Geraint
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Janner, Greville
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kirkwood, Archy
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum A.
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliott
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Robinson, Geoffrey
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stott, Roger
Straw, Jack
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wall, Pat
Wallace, James
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Frank Haynes and
Mrs. Llin Golding.

Question accordingly agreed to.
Bill read the Third time, and passed.

Policing (Leicestershire)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn—*[Mr. Neubert.]*

12.14 am

Mr. Michael Latham (Rutland and Melton): I welcome my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary to this debate, and as I have told his office, I want to share this half-hour with all Leicestershire Members. I have given both you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and my hon. Friend notice that any Leicestershire Member who seeks to catch your eye over the next 15 minutes has my consent to do so. I welcome the presence of my hon. Friend the Member for Loughborough (Mr. Dorrell), whom custom requires to remain silent, but who is tremendously involved in this issue. I shall be brief, to allow time for other hon. Members to take part.

I pay tribute to the efficiency and outstanding public service of the Leicestershire constabulary, excellently led by its chief constable, Mr. Michael Hirst. It is a small force with only 1,740 members, but its reputation is high in the county, and it is fiercely proud of its good relations with the Leicestershire people. However, it is understaffed. There has been no significant increase in its establishment since 1979, but there has been a big increase in its work load. Between 1979 and 1986, there was a 64 per cent. increase in crime in the county, but worse, there was a 191·5 per cent. increase in robbery, a 127 per cent. increase in burglary of dwellings and a 151 per cent. increase in criminal damage. Those are shocking figures, and they contain some of the crimes that give the public most concern. They must be tackled; we must bring the figures down sharply, and for that we need more police.

My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary may say that Leicestershire has been treated fairly, but he has refused to allow one more officer this year, let alone the 45 extra officers for whom the chief constable called. Up-to-date figures show that nine forces with a worse percentage of officers deployed on patrol duties and a poorer population of civilians per 100 police officers, were given an increase in police numbers when Leicestershire got nothing. Again, nine forces which received an increase in numbers in May have a lower population per police officer. That seems unfair.

Leicestershire Members, including myself, have had discussions with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and my noble Friend the Minister of State, Lord Ferrers. When Conservative Members saw both those Ministers in March, we stressed that the chief constable had undertaken a major review of the force. We wanted to eliminate two grounds of criticism that had been advanced by the Chief Inspector of Constabulary in 1986. The proportion of the force on patrol duties has been significantly improved, and a substantial programme of civilianisation has been set in motion. The force believes that it has done what the Home Office asked of it, and it is dismayed that its co-operation has met with no reward of extra manpower.

I am concerned about the most recent figures relating to the health of the force. In the first three months of this year, 1,212 days were lost through injuries to officers on duty, compared with 602 in the 12 months before, and 1,048 days were lost through nervous complaints and stress, compared with only 161 a year before.

We are experiencing in Leicestershire the repulsive sight of violence and yobbish disorder in rural areas. My constituents insist that the small towns and villages be properly policed. Leicestershire had over 12 incidents of rural disorder in 1987. That is a gloomy record, which it shares with only seven other force areas. That is not tolerable, and the chief constable must have the manpower to maintain the Queen's peace throughout the county, as he is determined to do.

My final point is a very local one. The police station at Oakham is a quite deplorable temporary building, nearly 20 years old. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State told me in a letter on 31 March that he hoped to be able to give approval for a new police station in Oakham this coming November, with building work to start in 1991-92. I must tell my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary in no uncertain terms that I shall insist that that undertaking be honoured. I was at Oakham police station as recently as last Friday, meeting the chief constable, and it is not good enough for our Rutland bobbies to have to put up with such a shameful old building.

I look to my hon. Friend to assure Leicestershire people that he is concerned about their policing. I am sure that other hon. Members representing Leicestershire will want to say the same.

12.19 am

Mr. Greville Janner (Leicester, West): I thank the hon. Member for Rutland and Melton (Mr. Latham) for raising this matter on the Adjournment and for his courtesy in sharing his precious and brief time with other colleagues.

This is an issue upon which all hon. Members are united. We are outraged at the increase in crime over the past nine years, at the fact that, last year, the chief of police did not obtain any of the additional help that he requested from the Home Secretary and that, this year, not one additional police officer has been permitted.

It is not enough to pontificate about the growth in crime. The only way in which we shall enable people to walk safely on our streets is by increasing the strength of the force that patrols those streets. That applies in rural and city areas and especially in my constituency, in the great estates of Beaumont Leys, New Parks, Mowmacre, Stocking Farm, and Braunstone, where there are not sufficient police officers and where they can obtain more only by taking officers from other areas. That must stop. The police must be increased in numbers and the Government must listen to the united voice of all hon. Members from our great county.

12.21 am

Sir John Farr (Harborough): I join my hon. Friend the Member for Rutland and Melton (Mr. Latham) who has been kind enough to let us participate in his debate and, like him and the hon. and learned Member for Leicester, West (Mr. Janner), I shall be brief.

The gravity with which Leicestershire Members, from all parties, view the situation can be gauged by our presence here tonight. Every Leicestershire Member, except, of course, my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer, is present tonight, and we shall listen carefully to what my hon. Friend the Minister says.

My hon. Friend the Member for Rutland and Melton gave the bare statistics, which are very telling, but he did not elaborate on two points. First, the present calibre and quality of the Leicestershire policeman is unsurpassed. We want new recruits. We must have an increased establishment and we want more of the same top-quality officers that we have in Leicestershire now. The second point that should be emphasised,—I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will pass it on to the Home Secretary as soon as possible, is that, in Leicestershire, we have to cope with some very grave situations.

My hon. Friend the Member for Rutland and Melton referred to the strange and savage character of many crimes that we have had to face in the past 12 months in Leicester. Some of the most brutal crimes in the country have occurred there and we always have the potential for serious crime because of the large number of high-risk prisoners who are held—perhaps I should say not held —in the city and county. I refer here to the continual need for vigilance by the police force at prisons such as Gartree maximum security establishment, where the first helicopter escape in the United Kingdom took place only recently. We are a special case and, we expect special treatment next year.

12.23 am

Mr. Keith Vaz (Leicester, East): The good fortune of the hon. Member for Rutland and Melton (Mr. Latham) is shared by all of us and we are all grateful to him for allowing us the chance to participate in the debate. This is, of course, a central issue of concern to people in Leicestershire and the city of Leicester. One crime is committed every 10 minutes in the county and, last year, 50,900 crimes were committed, representing a 65 per cent. increase since 1979.

I join other hon. Members in praising the work of the chief constable, Michael Hirst, and of divisional commander David Redman, but it is important for the Minister to realise that the demand for extra policing is not just based on the inner-city areas of Leicester. The demand comes more strongly and clearly from the outer estates, places in my constituency such as Northfields, Nether Hall, Evington, Goodwood and Rowletts Hill. A recent meeting at Humberstone was attended by a number of residents who were most concerned about the increase in vandalism that is occurring in the outer areas. These are neglected areas with the inner-city problems which we have had over a number of years.

I, too, met the Minister. I was concerned when he said that he had to hold in reserve a number of police officers in case there were disorders in various parts of the country and he was called upon to allocate extra officers to deal with them. Leicestershire should not be penalised because it has good police-community relations. A survey recently conducted in the outer estates of Leicester showed a tremendous demand for increased policing, including the full-time opening of the Uppingham road police station.

The Minister's refusal to provide any extra police officers for Leicestershire is a slap in the face to the local police force, which has worked hard over the past few years, including Superintendent David Adams, who has expressed concern, and to the elderly, who are unable to walk the streets of Leicestershire without fearing for their lives and their safety. We urge the Minister to reconsider the allocation and to give Leicestershire what it deserves, which is extra police officers on the beat.

12.25 am

Mr. David Ashby (Leicestershire, North-West): I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Rutland and Melton (Mr. Latham) for raising this matter in debate and allowing myself and others to intervene.

On Friday, I met the chief constable to discuss the very matter my hon. Friend the Member for Rutland and Melton has drawn to the attention of the House tonight. I found that he was of the opinion—it was one that I shared with him—that the morale of the police force in Leicestershire is at its highest, despite all the problems that it faces. That speaks well for it.

I recently went out on a police patrol on a Saturday night—there is a problem of vandalism, especially on a Saturday night—and from what I saw on that occasion I cannot speak too highly of the force. I visited the Leicester football ground recently, and there saw all the efforts that are being made to contain rowdyism and football hooliganism. Once again, I was much impressed by the high standards of the Leicestershire police.

Unfortunately, the level of crime is rising. There are problems in rural areas in my constituency, for example, where residents are paying their rates, paying for the police force and paying their taxes generally. Those who live in villages and towns have as much right to be protected as those who live in the cities. There is a problem with hooliganism. Recently, in Coalville, a large crowd of drunken youths went on the rampage through the town and there were nine arrests. That was viewed extremely seriously by the people of the town, who were most concerned at the level of policing. Fortunately, the Leicestershire police were able to cope, but I am not too sure that they can continue doing so for much longer with problems of that sort.

All the figures show that the Leicestershire police have done their utmost to comply with Home Office demands. What more can they do to get more officers? The figures show that they have done everything possible. I join my fellow Leicestershire colleagues in saying that we must have an increase in the manpower of the Leicestershire police force.

12.28 am

Mr. Jim Marshall (Leicester, South): I congratulate the hon. Member for Rutland and Melton (Mr. Latham) on being fortunate enough to secure the Adjournment debate. I express my gratitude to him for allowing me to participate in it as well as my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Leicester, West (Mr. Janner) and my hon. Friend the Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Vaz).

The cross-party unity on this issue shows beyond a shadow of doubt the resentment that is felt by all people in Leicestershire at the Home Secretary's decision not to increase the police establishment in the county by 45. I appreciate that criticisms were made in 1986 by Her Majesty's inspector, but my view—I am sure that it is shared by all hon. Members—is that great strides have been made in eliminating two particular criticisms that were then made. In terms of officers on patrol duties and civilianisation, Leicestershire is among the best areas in the country. The two specific criticisms made in 1986 have now been eliminated.

The point has been made—which we do not need to over-emphasise—that crime is on the increase in Leicestershire, as it is throughout the country. Increasingly, that is placing an intolerable burden and stress on the present police establishment. At the minimum, to remove that stress and to remove some of the burden, the Minister can take a step in the right direction by accepting the view of the chief constable and that of the police committee that at least 45 officers are required to increase the establishment now.

I urge the Minister to make that bold decision this evening, not just to placate his hon. Friends and Opposition Members, but to reassure the citizens in the county of Leicestershire.

12.30 am

Mr. David Tredinnick (Bosworth): I too am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Rutland and Melton (Mr. Latham). I am desperately concerned that the Hinckley sub-division is becoming stretched when it has to deal with disorders such as that in Smeeton Westerby in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Harborough (Sir J. Farr), where 40 or 50 youths invaded a party. That night, police had to be drawn from Hinckley, Lutterworth and Wigston to cope with the disorders. That left Hinckley precariously under-policed.

We have heard about the disturbances at Coalville from my hon. Friend the Member for Leicestershire, North-West (Mr. Ashby). That was another occasion when police were taken from Hinckley to deal with a disturbance. I spoke to the superintendent this afternoon, who told me that there was trouble in Nuneaton a few days ago. Officers from Hinckley had to be put on duty between 2 am and 3 am. We are very concerned about the problem in Hinckley. We need the extra police. Our police are doing a tremendous job, but I appeal to my hon. Friend the Minister. We have not had an increase in complement in Leicestershire for the best part of a decade. Minister, give us our police and give them to us now.

12.31 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Douglas Hogg): I recognise the very strong feelings felt by Leicestershire Members of Parliament on this issue. That concern is manifested by the fact that all eight Members from the county are in the Chamber tonight and seven have spoken. The eighth, my hon. Friend the Member for Loughborough (Mr. Dorrell) is precluded from speaking by convention. However, he has made his views on the subject crystal clear by his presence tonight. [HON. MEMBERS: "What about Lawson?"] Of course, the same applies to my right hon. Friend the Member for Blaby (Mr. Lawson).

I want to congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Rutland and Melton (Mr. Latham) on having secured this debate and put his arguments so concisely and lucidly. Incidently, I also congratulate him on allowing six other hon. Members to join in the debate. In all my experience, I cannot remember that happening before. It made the debate much more interesting than it might otherwise have been.

This has been an important debate, because it has emphasised the strength of feeling. I want to describe the approach that my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary has adopted to the Leicestershire constabulary. If time allows, I will refer to the wider problems of the police service.

At the end of April, the strength of the Leicestershire constabulary stood at 2,250 men. That figure is made up of 1,749 police officers and 501 civilians. That represents an increase of 187 since May 1979, when the Government took office, of whom 48 are police officers. During that period, 27 extra police officer posts have been approved for the force establishment, which now stands at 1,733.

The background to the application has been alluded to by several of my hon. Friends and by Opposition Members. In June 1986, the police authority applied to the Home Office for approval of an increase of 110 police officer posts over two financial years. As hon. Members will appreciate, the inspectorate was consulted on the merits of that application. On the basis of the advice that the Home Office received, the police authority was informed that its application could not be approved.

The justification for that decision was that there existed within the force at that time considerable scope for civilianisation. It was thought that that process would release police officers that the authority required for operational duties, by filling posts that were then inappropriately filled by police officers. The force was invited to undertake a thorough-going review of posts, so as to maximise its use of existing resources.

At the same time, Her Majesty's Inspector of Constabulary for the region in which Leicestershire lies wrote to the chief constable explaining the reason why the authority's application had not been approved. It is to the chief constable's great credit that his immediate response was to release over 70 police officers from desk jobs for operational duties.

I pause here to comment that, although I recognise that hon. Members feel that the increase to which I have already referred is not impressive in itself, added to the figure of 187 must be the number of officers released for operational duties as a result of civilianisation. That process lies very much within the spirit of the Home Office circular 114/83 on effectiveness and efficiency within the police service.

I turn to the most recent application we have received from Leicestershire police authority, and I shall try to explain the considerations that were in our minds. In January this year, the authority applied for 91 extra police officers, spread over three financial years. The proposal was that 45 would be recruited in 1988-89, 33 in 1989-90, and the remainder in 1990-91. The application was accompanied by a report from the chief constable. Again, to give him credit, he outlined proposals for achieving more operational officers through civilianisation and identified 82 posts that could be civilianised over three years.

As anybody in the Chamber will appreciate, that application from the authority, supported by the chief constable, was enthusiastically endorsed by those Members of Parliament who represent the county and who are present in the Chamber tonight. They have also corresponded with and spoken to Ministers, they have put down questions, and they have made direct representations in meetings with, for example, my right hon. and noble Friend, Lord Ferrers, who has direct and immediate responsibility for these matters in the Home Office.

It may be helpful if I make it clear that, when considering such applications, my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary must take into account a wide variety of factors. They inevitably include the particular policing problems in each area, the incidence of crime, the police-population ratio, and the effectiveness with which each force's existing resources are being employed. Those are all important factors, but none of them is conclusive on its own.

It is important to consider the way in which a number of those criteria apply in the context of Leicestershire. I acknowledge at once that a number of the arguments put forward—for example, those deployed by my hon. Friend the Member for Rutland and Melton – are particularly powerful. However, they are not conclusive by themselves.

The police population ratio to which my hon. Friend alluded varied between 1980 and 1987 from one officer per 484 members of the population to one officer per 505. Excluding the Metropolitan and City police forces, the national average is 455. Nevertheless, that puts Leicestershire almost at mid-point of all forces outside London, because 17 had poorer ratios and 23 had better.

Offences and the rate of increase in the number of offences is another criterion to which a number of my hon. Friends, especially my hon. Friend the Member for Rutland and Melton, have alluded. Over the relevant period, offences grew by 31·2 per cent., which is slightly more than the average. However, in terms of offences per 100,000 of the population, the Leicestershire figure for 1987—5,817—is well below the average of 7,773. Therefore, while crime has increased, it has done so from a relatively low base. Again, the force is roughly in the middle—25 forces have higher levels of crime and 17 have lower.

In terms of offences cleared up, Leicestershire has a creditable rate of 44·7 per cent., which compares with a national average of 33·1 per cent. While clearly a force's achievements in that area are not to be used against it when considering its manpower needs, one cannot ignore the fact that those figures put Leicestershire at the top end, because 37 forces have had poorer clear-up levels.

I have dwelt on those facts because levels of crime have been argued in support of the Leicestershire application, which is understandable. However, it is right to emphasise that, while all those considerations are taken into account, none standing by itself is conclusive.

Her Majesty's Inspector of Constabulary was consulted on the merits of the latest Leicestershire application. I advise my hon. Friends, especially my hon. Friend the Member for Rutland and Melton, and Opposition Members, that this time round there was not the concern felt about civilianisation that there was on the previous occasion, because impressive steps have been taken in that connection, and all credit to the chief constable and his force for that. Nevertheless, in the light of the advice that has been received from the inspector, my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary decided that Leicestershire's application could not be given priority over other applications.

It has been explained to the police authority, and the chief constable—I repeat it again tonight—that Leicestershire's application was considered in the context of the programme of phased increases in police manpower which the Home Secretary announced in May 1986. The programme allows for total increases of 2,000 police posts for provincial police forces over four years, of which only 500 were available for 1988-89. Demand far exceeded what was available, so not all applications could be met this time around. However, the authority has been assured that its

[Mr. Douglas Hogg]

application will be reconsidered when decisions are taken on the next tranche of posts to be approved under the programme.

I understand—it is entirely understandable—that the police authority is disappointed not to have received an allocation. My right hon. Friend the noble Lord Ferrers has therefore agreed to meet the police authority to hear its views on policing the county.

I should like to make a further point about resources and the Home Office circular. It is sometimes assumed that the police authority need only satisfy specific criteria to meet the requirements and achieve the allocation. In fact, that is not the case. Although the criteria must be satisfied, it is inevitably a subjective judgment on where priorities lie. I recognise that that is very hard for individual forces to accept; it is also very hard for my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary to make. My hon. Friend——

The motion having been made after Ten o'clock and the debate having continued for half an hour, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *adjourned the House without Question put, pursuant to the Standing Order.*

Adjourned at sixteen minutes to One o'clock.

House of Commons

Tuesday 28 June 1988

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

DEFENCE

NATO (Strategy)

1. **Mr. Fatchett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation last reviewed the relationship within its overall strategy between conventional and nuclear weapons; and what role Her Majesty's Government played in that process.

3. **Mr. Heffer:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation last reviewed the relationship within its overall strategy between conventional and nuclear weapons; and what role Her Majesty's Government played in that process.

The Secretary of State for Defence (Mr. George Younger): NATO and its member nations keep all aspects of Alliance strategy under constant review, in order to ensure that it remains effective. As Defence Ministers reaffirmed at the meeting of the Defence Planning Committee last month, the strategy of flexible response and forward defence, based on an appropriate mix of adequate and effective nuclear and conventional forces, remains vital to our security.

Mr. Fatchett: Does the Secretary of State accept that the mix to which he referred is increasingly veering towards the nuclear and that that imposes particular constraints on conventional weapons and on expenditure on conventional weapons? Does he further accept that, because of those constraints, the British Army has been unable to place orders for the new generation of tanks and that that is typical of the problems facing the armed forces? When will that order be placed, and how much of it will come to the Vickers factory in Leeds?

Mr. Younger: I am afraid that I cannot agree with either of the hon. Gentleman's points. On the first point, of a much larger defence budget, no less than 95 per cent. is spent on conventional, not nuclear, armaments. That disposes effectively of the hon. Gentleman's first point.

Secondly, as he will be aware, a number of new regiments of Challenger tanks are now in production, and we ordered a seventh regiment last year. Decisions will have to be taken about further replacements, and I hope that that will be done before the end of the year.

Mr. Heffer: Are not the Government speaking—as the Indians in the old Westerns used to say—with forked voice?—[HON. MEMBERS: "Tongue."] Forked voice or forked tongue, it is the same thing. On the one hand the Government say that they welcome the initiatives of the Soviet Union, and on the other they introduce proposals that reinforce the concept of nuclear weapons. Is it not time that they accepted the initiative of the Soviet Union and got down to believing the words of Mr. Gorbachev rather than suggesting that he speaks with a forked tongue? Is it not time that they did something positive for once about getting rid of nuclear weapons, rather than using conventional weapons to reintroduce them, which is what they are doing at the moment?

Mr. Younger: I hope the hon. Gentleman will not mind if I suggest that he must be thinking with a forked mind. It was not in any sense Mr. Gorbachev's initiative that led to the INF treaty. It was an initiative taken by the Western Alliance in 1981 which, after a few years of prevarication, was eventually agreed to by the Soviet Union. The thing that really brought the Russians to the negotiating table was the knowledge that we were prepared to defend ourselves.

Sir Antony Buck: Does my right hon. Friend agree that if we were to obey Opposition Members' theories there would be an extraction of our independent nuclear deterrent, and if we were to extract our nuclear input from the negotiations independently it would be grossly destablising and would upset the whole process of negotiation?

Mr. Younger: I entirely agree with my hon. and learned Friend. If we had obeyed the instructions of Opposition Members—which, thank goodness, we did not—we should have cruise missiles for ever facing each other in Europe, which we now do not. If we agreed to the suggestion of the hon. Member for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Heffer) in future, there is no doubt that further reductions and arms control would be very unlikely.

Mr. Thorne: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that, if we had no nuclear deterrent, we would need to spend three times as much on conventional weapons to maintain any parity with the Soviet Union?

Mr. Younger: I agree absolutely with my hon. Friend's sentiment, but I must beg to differ. Even if we were to spend three times as much, we would not get anything like the same effect that we get out of our present nuclear deterrent. It is worth reminding ourselves that the entire NATO Alliance—all countries of all political persuasions—is united in its determination that the doctrine of flexible response is the best security for all of us.

Mr. Foot: Does the right hon. Gentleman understand that when he tries to detract from Mr. Gorbachev having made any contribution to such an agreement as we have recently had he makes himself look utterly ridiculous? When he insists on the phrase "flexible response", as he always does, will he take into account the fact that, in certain circumstances, it means that the NATO Alliance, or Britain, would be prepared to use nuclear weapons first? It may be that even he is not insane enough to contemplate that.

Mr. Younger: If the right hon. Gentleman does not mind my saying so, I never said that Mr. Gorbachev made no contribution to the INF treaty. He has. I have made it clear that he has made a contribution to it, but it was not his initiative that brought us to the discussion. It was a Western initiative. The right hon. Gentleman really must accept that.

None of the NATO allies has any doubt about the use of flexible response. It is based on the facts that NATO will never use any weapon first, and, if NATO were to be attacked by an aggressor, it would have a deterrent and, if necessary, in extremis, would use it.

Mr. Jacques Arnold: What is my right hon. Friend's view of the impact on strategic planning of the yo-yo nuclear and conventional defence policies of the leader of Her Majesty's Opposition?

Mr. Younger: It is too difficult for me to speculate on the Leader of the Opposition's shifting views on nuclear defence.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I remind the House that supplementary questions must relate to the question on the Order Paper.

Mr. O'Neill: Is the Secretary of State still confident that he can meet his forward defence responsibilities within NATO, given reports about the deplorable rundown in the surface fleet? Is he prepared to announce orders for the type 23 frigates that the country and our shipyards desperately require?

Mr. Younger: I most warmly welcome the hon. Gentleman to his new position and look forward to debating defence matters with him. I am sure that he will be able to put forward his party's nuclear defence policy every bit as well as the Leader of the Opposition.

There has been no official report of the sort that the hon. Gentleman mentioned. We intend in future to keep a force of about 50 destroyers and frigates. I shall announce orders for further frigates as soon as the process of assessing bids is completed.

Advanced Defence Equipment Project

2. **Mr. Dykes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the level of collaboration between the United Kingdom and the Federal Republic of Germany on advanced defence equipment projects.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Defence Procurement (Mr. Tim Sainsbury): The Federal Republic of Germany has been one of our most frequent and successful partners in co-operative equipment procurement programmes, and is likely to remain so.

Mr. Dykes: I thank my hon. Friend for that answer. Does he agree that as we are happily taking the lead on key aspects in the development of the European fighter aircraft —for example, the airframe and engine—in the true spirit of European co-operation with the Germans, it would be right and fair for other aspects of the development programme to be led by other partners, including Germany? In particular, I refer to radar.

Mr. Sainsbury: My hon. Friend will be aware that the MOU for the European fighter aircraft provides for a work share based on the declared off-take of participating countries. Therefore, the work share of a country or company for any particular piece of equipment will depend upon the assessment of competitive bids that are sought for each type of equipment.

Ms. Short: Does the Minister agree that there is enormous worry in Germany about a strategy that might involve a nuclear war being fought on its soil and that that is likely to undermine co-operation? Is it true that, in evidence to the Defence Select Committee, his Department recently said that Britain's and NATO's strategy is to look forward to a limited nuclear war in Europe?

Mr. Sainsbury: I hope the hon. Lady recognises that NATO's strategy is to prevent war.

Mr. Jack: One other successful collaborative venture with Germany has been the Tornado. When will my hon. Friend make an announcement about the mid-life update of that aeroplane?

Mr. Sainsbury: I agree that that has been a remarkably successful collaborative venture. However, I cannot answer my hon. Friend's particular question at this stage.

Mr. Rogers: Does the Minister accept that it is about time that the West Germans committed themselves to the ECR 90 radar rather than pursuing the route of the American Phantom derivation? Does he further accept that the ECR 90 radar is important to British industry, not only because it is of European design and fulfils all the operational requirements of the European fighter aircraft, but, more than that, because it safeguards our technology and prevents us from becoming subservient to the Americans in this important sector? It will also save many thousands of jobs in Scotland.

Mr. Sainsbury: I agree that the radar is a vital part of the equipment of the EFA. However, the hon. Gentleman will be aware that competitive bids from two consortia, both of which include British companies, are being analysed.

Service Men (Pensions)

4. **Mr. Andrew Mitchell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when service men will be able to purchase additional voluntary contributions for pension purposes.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Armed Forces (Mr. Roger Freeman): Facilities for service men to make additional voluntary contributions to enhance pension benefits in particular categories have been available from earlier this year. Action is in hand to extend the range and scope of those facilities as far and as quickly as is practicable.

Mr. Mitchell: Does my hon. Friend accept that his answer will be widely welcomed in the armed forces, not only because it will maintain the quality of the pension, as is the case in civilian life, but because it will be especially good for morale? It will also help in the matter of retention.

Mr. Freeman: I agree that the armed forces pension scheme is excellent. It costs the taxpayer £1 billion a year and enables a service man after, for example, 22 years' service to retire with an immediate and indexed pension. That must contribute to the excellent morale of our armed forces.

Mr. Stern: Has my hon. Friend learnt from the experience of other Government Departments that in the coming year there is scope for improving the arrangements for members of the armed forces to take up additional voluntary contributions? Does he agree that the need for flexibility in pension provision—however good the armed services pension scheme—is one of the great advances, especially for the armed forces, of the Social Security Act 1986?

Mr. Freeman: I agree with my hon. Friend. It was not just the 1986 Act but the 1987 Act that made provision for additional voluntary contributions, both free-standing and in-house, for service men and, indeed, for civilians. I confirm that we are making rapid progress on completing the introduction of facilities for additional voluntary contributions for pensions for service men.

Military Stores

5. **Mr. Graham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the current total value of military equipment held in his Department's stores; and what resources his Department devotes to safeguarding these stores against fire.

Mr. Freeman: The most recent estimate of the value of stocks held in major stores depots is approximately £10 billion. Fire prevention measures include dispersal and segregation of stocks; provision of fire control equipment, such as fire mains and hydrants; automatic fire detection and suppression systems; and our own fire brigades, where appropriate.

Mr. Graham: Is the Minister aware that after the fire at Donnington a number of recommendations were not implemented before there was a second fire? Will he assure us that he will instruct his Department fully to implement safety proposals in all Ministry of Defence stores so that people can sleep safely and comfortably at night?

Mr. Freeman: I assure the hon. Gentleman that all the personnel at our military units, and, indeed, any civilians nearby, can sleep safely at night. After the 1983 fire all the recommendations made by the military board of inquiry were acted upon. After the fire at Donnington a few months ago, a military board of inquiry was set up to examine just how many and to what degree the recommendations made in 1983 were properly implemented. I look forward, as do all my colleagues at the Ministry of Defence, to receiving the report of that board of inquiry.

Sir Michael McNair-Wilson: What is the annual wastage from Ministry of Defence establishments as a result of fire or other damage?

Mr. Freeman: Over the past 10 years I estimate that the wastage figure has been about £50 million per annum, but, of course, that must be set in the context of stores valued at about £10 billion.

Trident

6. **Mr. Cartwright:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he will make a further statement on the progress of the Trident programme.

Mr. Younger: I am pleased to be able to reaffirm that the Trident programme remains on schedule and to budget.

Mr. Cartwright: Will the Secretary of State confirm that all work on Trident submarine building at Barrow has been halted for the past three weeks as a direct result of the management's attempt to compel the entire work force to take its summer holiday during the same two weeks in August? In view of the past successes at Barrow, is it not ridiculous that that Victorian attitude to industrial relations should be allowed to imperil something as vital as Trident? As there is no sign of a settlement in the future, what steps will the Secretary of State take to safeguard the future of the Trident programme?

Mr. Younger: I would not wish to intervene in what is essentially an industrial dispute between employers and employees, but I hope that that dispute will be resolved as soon as possible.

Mr. Fallon: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that the subcontract for the Trident shiplift at Faslane will shortly be awarded either to Harland and Wolff or to Cleveland Bridge in my constituency? Will he confirm that, this time, the competition between Northern Ireland and the north-east will be fair?

Mr. Younger: Yes. I confirm that every possible effort will be made to ensure that the competition is absolutely fair. The work on the shiplift facilities and so on at Faslane is presently proceeding on schedule.

Dr. Godman: With reference to the Clyde end of the Trident programme, will the Secretary of State now confirm that the contract for the floating jetty for the Royal Naval armaments division at Coulport is to be awarded to McAlpine and that it will be constructed of concrete at Ardyne Point?

Mr. Younger: I cannot confirm any decisions of that sort. If the hon. Gentleman wishes to put down a question about it, I shall try to answer it.

Mr. Burt: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that, as an investment for peace, Trident is still tremendously effective? At its peak it will be absorbing only 11 per cent. of the defence equipment budget, which is less than the Tornado aircraft will absorb at its peak.

Mr. Younger: Yes, it is certainly true that the Trident programme is not as expensive as the Tornado programme, but it is extremely valuable. There is no way in which, by equivalent expenditure, an equivalent benefit could be given to the defence of the West and Britain.

Mr. O'Neill: Will the Secretary of State give the House the assurance that the Select Committee was unable to receive from his officials, that the delays in the Trident programme, in particular the delays at Aldermaston and Burghfield, are now being avoided and that the programme is truly up to schedule and not delayed, as has been suggested?

Mr. Younger: I hope that the hon. Gentleman will understand that it would be right for me to give a proper and measured response to the Select Committee report. I hope to do so as soon as possible.

British Army Equipment Exhibition

7. **Mr. Soley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence why it is the Government's policy not to disclose who is invited to the British Army equipment exhibition.

Mr. Sainsbury: It has been the policy of this and previous Administrations not to release details of invitations to the British Army equipment exhibition. Invitations are issued on a confidential basis, and it would be a breach of trust to release names.

Mr. Soley: That is a pretty weak and pathetic excuse. Given that we are supposed to be protecting a free and open society, would it not be a good idea if, in common with most other Western democracies, we were a little better at freedom of information?

Mr. Sainsbury: I hope that the hon. Gentleman will recognise the rights of those who are asked to the exhibition to the protection of their own confidential information. We should respect their entitlement to that.

Mr. Couchman: When my hon. Friend looks at the exhibitors at the British Army equipment exhibition, will he bear in mind Vickers' need to be able to forward-plan its programme and make an announcement as soon as possible about the new tank replacement, which is needed for the 1990s?

Mr. Sainsbury: The equipment on display covers a wide range and is a valuable display for all who attend. It is probably more important for those who attend from overseas than for members of the British Army, who can see the equipment in other ways.

Mr. Wallace: Given the Minister's negative attitude to freedom of information in the context of these invitations, do the Government propose to adopt a more open attitude when it comes to supporting the United Nations register of arms transfers?

Mr. Sainsbury: I am not sure that that arises directly out of this question. If there were an effectively policed and verified international register, we would support it.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: As information on who is invited to this military exhibition is to remain confidential, will my hon. Friend slip an invitation to the Leader of the Opposition, so that he can pick up some——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Please stick to the question on the Order Paper.

Mr. Sainsbury: My hon. Friend makes an interesting and useful suggestion. I assure——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I have already said that we must stick to the question.

Mr. Frank Cook: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. It is fine to rule a question out of order, but it seems senseless to rule it out of order if you then allow it to be answered.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I thought that the Minister was going to answer the bit that was relevant.

Mr. Sainsbury: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

A large number of right hon. and hon. Members receive invitations and attend the exhibition. If other right hon. and hon. Members would like to attend and would let us know, we should probably be able to arrange invitations.

Cruise Missiles

8. **Ms. Primarolo:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make it his policy not to acquire for British forces any warheads previously removed from cruise missiles under the terms of the intermediate nuclear forces treaty; and if he will make a statement.

The Minister of State for the Armed Forces (Mr. Ian Stewart): The warheads for cruise missiles being withdrawn under the terms of the INF treaty are the property of the United States Government, and their disposal is therefore entirely a matter for them.

Ms. Primarolo: Could not some of the nuclear-capable warheads of the multi-launch rocket system that Britain is now acquiring, or some of the American base nuclear weapons in this country, be recycled as cruise missiles, which were supposedly negotiated away under the INF agreement? The Department of Energy in the United States told Congress that that was likely to happen. Therefore, will the Minister give a categorical assurance that it will not happen to any weapons, British or American, based in this country?

Mr. Stewart: I think that the hon. Lady may be referring to nuclear material contained in warheads. As regards warheads from cruise missiles, I should point out that we are getting rid of ground-launched cruise missiles from this country under the INF treaty. We have no plans to acquire submarine or air-launched cruise missiles for our forces, so the hon. Lady's worries do not arise.

Mr. Sayeed: Will my hon. Friend continue to do his level best to continue to reduce the cost of defence procurement?

Mr. Stewart: Certainly, in such modest ways as I can contribute to that worthy objective. However, my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Defence Procurement, who is more directly concerned with these matters, will have heard my hon. Friend's remarks.

Trident

9. **Mr. Allan Roberts:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what action he proposes to take in the light of the conclusions of the Defence Committee in its recent report on the progress of the trident programme, with particular reference to the allegedly inaccurate evidence given to the Committee by his Department.

Mr. Younger: A formal Government response to the Committee's comprehensive report will be made in due course and it would be inappropriate for me to anticipate that response. I was, however, pleased to note that the Committee felt that the Trident programme was generally well run.

Mr. Roberts: Is the Minister aware that the Government are still misleading the House and the country about the cost of Trident? The Ministry of Defence is being economic with the truth rather than economic with taxpayers' money, and the Select Committee on Defence has condemned the Ministry for misleading the Committee and not telling the truth to the House.

Mr. Younger: That is a serious charge. The hon. Gentleman would not expect me to anticipate our response to a Select Committee report. He is completely wrong to say that we have misled the House on the cost of Trident which is decreasing in terms of foreign exchange costs and actual costs. I should have thought that he would be pleased to know that.

Mr. Brazier: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that whatever figure we take for the cost of Trident, it represents a comparatively modest proportion of our future defence spending and, as such, is excellent value for money? Will he further confirm that at least one of the two main parties remains firmly committed to that programme, although both were committed to it nine years ago?

Mr. Younger: My hon. Friend is perfectly correct. By any standards, the cost of Trident is extremely good value for money. I repeat that 95 per cent. of our much larger defence budget is spent on non-nuclear defence. That answers the other part of my hon. Friend's question.

Mr. Douglas: Will the Secretary of State reflect on the balance between a strategic defence commitment to Trident and the need to maintain, as the Select Committee on Defence said today, a viable surface fleet with more frigates and destroyers in operation than the number that he has available now? Will he give us a straight answer about the number of frigates and destroyers that are in operation today? When will he update his commitment to place orders for at least three frigates by the end of June?

Mr. Younger: The size of the Royal Navy is at a very high level. There are about 143 commissioned ships, and the Government intend to keep about 50 destroyers or frigates as part of a large and effective fleet. At present, 47 ships are available for service—and very valuable service they are doing. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will be pleased to know that whereas 10 years ago frigates and destroyers spent 27 per cent. of their lives in refit, today they spend only 12 per cent. of their lives in refit, which is a great improvement.

Mr. Franks: May I remind the Secretary of State that the calculation of the cost of Trident has been based on an exchange rate of £1·30 to the pound? In view of the recent, but long-sustained, increase in the exchange rate, is it not time to take a new exchange rate and thus reduce the figures presented to the House?

Mr. Younger: My hon. Friend is correct to say that the movement in the exchange rate has an effect on these matters. It has been a convention that towards the beginning of each year we announce the recosting of the Trident programme, and we base that figure on the exchange rate of the previous June. It is best to keep the figures comparable by using the same system on each occasion. As my hon. Friend knows, in each of the past two years there have been substantial reductions in the exchange rate costs and the actual costs of the Trident programme.

Mr. Foulkes: Does the Secretary of State agree that it is irresponsible to keep on building nuclear-powered submarines while we still have no safe way of disposing of the propulsion units when they are decommissioned? Will he comment on the reports in the Scottish press on Sunday that he has decided to consider disposal of those units at sea off the coast of Scotland? Has he decided that, and at so, when will a formal announcement be made about it?

Mr. Younger: That report in the papers on Sunday had no basis in fact. No such decision has been taken. It is inescapable, because so many nations have nuclear-powered submarines, that their disposal must be considered. As the hon. Gentleman knows, the Government have been considering the problem for some time.

Cadet Units

10. **Mr. Roger King:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many cadet units of the three services exist in inner city areas of the United Kingdom; and what steps are being taken to examine further expansion.

Mr. Freeman: There are 65 detachments of the Army Cadet Force, Air Training Corps and Sea Cadets located in or near inner-city areas. We are examining the feasibility of introducing a pilot expansion programme in the west midlands, initially covering the Army Cadet Force and, we hope, the Sea Cadets.

Mr. King: I thank my hon. Friend for that reply. Does he agree that it is much better that young people honour our flag as the sea cadets do, rather than dishonouring it as hooligans overseas? In considering further support for the cadet movement, will he pay particular attention to the training ship Cirius in the Bartley Green area of my constituency, which has only just commenced operations and requires all the encouragement that it can possibly get for its excellent work?

Mr. Freeman: I very much agree with my hon. Friend. The cadets is not a military organisation but is part of the national youth movement. It contributes to good citizenship, a sense of good discipline and is to be congratulated. I understand that the unit in my hon. Friend's constituency is a trial one and I shall follow its progress, as I am sure he will, very carefully.

Mr. Cryer: When the Ministry of Defence is dealing with cadet units, how does it explain that one of the philosophies of the British armed forces is the potential mass extermination of men, women and children on a scale never yet contemplated on our planet, and that this will be done whatever the views of those men, women and children, through the use of nuclear weapons? Is that not one of the most horrific and immoral attitudes, similar to the extermination of the Jews by Hitler in the 1939 war? How does the Minister square that with the philosophy——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is going miles wide of the question. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Cryer *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. We must stick to the question.

Sir Jim Spicer: I am certain that my hon. Friend will be assured of the support of most hon. Members in his laudable efforts to increase the number of units in inner city areas, but is there any way in which he can encourage local authorities and education authorities to stop blocking the expansion of units and to encourage them to be set up in association with schools?

Mr. Freeman: Yes, I agree with my hon. Friend that it is regrettable that some schools and local education authorities do not permit those seeking to establish cadet organisations in schools——

Mr. Rogers: Where?

Mr. Freeman: If the hon. Member for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers) will table a question, I shall answer it. The purpose of the cadet organisations is to serve Queen and country and to defend this country.

Mr. Tony Banks: Would it not be better if the Minister encouraged our young people to join the woodcraft folk *[Interruption.]*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. We are making slow progress.

Mr. Banks: It is a fairly reasonable question. If they joined the woodcraft folk they could learn about peaceful co-existence and go to the countryside and have a good time rather than learning about killing people.

Mr. Freeman: The purpose of the cadet organisations and the junior elements of the regular armed forces is to teach, in part, the elements of self-discipline, self-respect and service to the community.

Bullying

11. **Mr. Knapman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what representations he has received seeking further action to combat bullying in the Army.

Mr. Freeman: I have received no such representations since I announced the measures to combat bullying to the House on 26 January. I last made a statement on progress in implementing these measures on 7 June.

Mr. Knapman: I thank my hon. Friend for that reply and for the steps that he has taken to date. Will he say what are the costs involved and how many allegations of bullying have been made?

Mr. Freeman: The full cost of implementing the measures that I announced is approximately £2 million per annum. The Ministry of Defence has not shrunk from allocating the necessary resources for dealing with the problem. Over the past 18 months there have been about 130 allegations of bullying, of which 104 were investigated and 60-odd were found to be completely without foundation.

Mr. Bernie Grant: Is the Minister aware that two of the most obnoxious forms of bullying in the Army are racial harassment and racial abuse? In view of the recent exposure of the practice in the Army, what does he intend to do about it?

Mr. Freeman: I agree with the first part of the hon. Gentleman's statement. Racial harassment and racial discrimination are obnoxious. The Government's position has been made crystal clear on that subject. No racial harassment or discrimination is permitted or tolerated in the British armed forces.

Mr. Harry Greenway: Does my hon. Friend agree that there is a clear distinction between bullying and teasing, and will he assure the House that his Department will always carefully evaluate allegations of bullying in that light?

Mr. Freeman: Yes. I agree with my hon. Friend, but I am sure that he would not wish to suggest that bullying is something that the British Army should tolerate. It is absolutely obnoxious and unnecessary. One does not need to bully people in order to draw the best out of them and instil in them a sense of self-discipline.

Dog Training

15. **Mr. Latham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he will make a further statement on the progress of the efficiency study into the activities relating to dog training at RAF Newton and the RAVC centre, Melton Mowbray; and when the report will be available.

Mr. Freeman: The consultants report should be received by the Ministry by August. A decision on the future of training will be made as soon as possible thereafter.

Mr. Latham: Now that the 11th investigation in 22 years into the training of dogs is coming to an end, will my hon. Friend please stop wasting money on all these interminable investigations and simply let the RAVC get on with its valuable job?

Mr. Freeman: That is a trifle uncharitable. We are not wasting taxpayers' money by making sure that there is a thorough and proper study of the options available. I hope that my hon. Friend will avail himself of the Ministry of Defence's invitation to come in and express his views in detail on the subject.

Nuclear Weapons Testing (Compensation)

16. **Mr. Clay:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what representations he has received seeking the establishment of a compensation fund to assist service men who claim that their health was adversely affected by their participation in nuclear weapons testing in the 1950s.

Mr. Sainsbury: A number of proposals have been made by right hon. and hon. Members and by others regarding compensation for participants in the United Kingdom's nuclear weapon test programme. The Government remain confident, however, that the radiological safety precautions adopted during the test programme were effective and that the chance of anyone suffering harm to health as a consequence of participation in the tests was extremely small. We believe that the recently published NRPB report vindicates this view.

Mr. Clay: Is it not the case that, apart from deaths from leukemia and multiple myeloma, which are now established, there are many other instances of death from various diseases among those test veterans? Is it not also the case that a high proportion of them are sterile and that those who are not sterile have had partners who have given birth to deformed children to a remarkable extent, well above the average that one would expect? Are the Government simply mean, callous and heartless, or is the reason why they will not pay up that they are terrified that to do so would have the most devastating effect on the current debate on nuclear weapons and civil nuclear power?

Mr. Sainsbury: I have a great deal of sympathy with those who are suffering ill health and who firmly and sincerely believe that they are suffering because of their participation in the tests. However, if the hon. Gentleman studies the NRPB report he will find that it in no way supports the allegations that he has just made.

Mr. Sean Hughes: Is it not particularly disgraceful that a Government who are so obsessed with the role of nuclear weapons in their defence policy can be so dismissive of those who have suffered the most appalling injuries in the promotion of that weapon?

Mr. Sainsbury: I hope the hon. Gentleman will recognise that underlying the phrasing of his question is the assumption that there is a direct connection between the ill health from which those people are suffering and their participation in the tests. That view is not supported by the NRPB report, and I can assure him that if there were definite evidence linking the ill health of participants to their participation in the tests we would of course come forward with offers of compensation.

Mr. Higgins: Can the Minister undertake to review the figures each year to see whether there is any clear statistical correlation as the situation develops?

Mr. Sainsbury: My right hon. Friend makes a good point. Further work will be done by the NRPB to follow up the excellent work which it has already done and which has led, I am glad to say, to what has been recognised as a genuinely independent and authoritative report.

British Army Equipment Exhibition

17. **Miss Lestor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what representations he has received seeking the withdrawal of invitations to attend the British Army equipment exhibition from 26 June to 1 July issued to any country with a record of human rights abuses.

Mr. Sainsbury: A number of representations have been received.

Miss Lestor: Is it not a fact that over 10,000 letters and a very large petition have already been sent complaining bitterly about the fact that one third of the countries that were at the 1986 exhibition were on Amnesty International's torture list, and that the weapons that they can buy can be used for internal repression and torture? Is it not about time that this vile trade was cleared up and the Government had some mechanism to prevent those people from attending?

Mr. Sainsbury: May I point out to the hon. Lady that it is individuals rather than companies that are asked. I assume from the wording of her question that the hon. Lady is entirely against trade in armaments. May I remind her that the successful sale of arms overseas by the British defence industry supports 100,000 jobs?

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Hayward:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 28 June.

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Wakeham): I have been asked to reply.

My right hon. Friend is in Hanover for a meeting of the European Council.

Mr. Hayward: Can my right hon. Friend this afternoon express on behalf of the Government the disgust felt throughout the country at the attempt by terrorists not only to bomb the driver of a school bus in Northern Ireland but to kill the schoolchildren on that bus? Is it not a tragic irony that the children were then treated at the same hospital in Enniskillen as the people who were killed and injured in the Enniskillen bombing last year? Will my right hon. Friend send full reports of this bombing to Congressman Joe Kennedy in the United States?

Mr. Wakeham: This was a cowardly and disgusting act against an off-duty part-time member of the UDR in a situation in which many children and young people might have been killed. It indicates that there are no depths to which terrorists are not prepared to sink: first a remembrance service, then a charity fun-run, and now a school bus. I am sure that the whole House will join me in expressing horror, coupled with thankfulness that no one was killed and more people were not injured.

Mr. Kinnock: May I first join the right hon. Gentleman in strongly condemning this vile attack; indeed, no words could give full force to what decent, normal, ordinary people feel.

Just three months ago, in the Budget, the Chancellor predicted a balance of payments deficit of £4 billion for 1988. Using the same expert advice, what is the Government's prediction now?

Mr. Wakeham: First, I am glad to see the Leader of the Opposition safely in his place after his morning's activities.

The Chancellor told the House on 16 June that recent figures pointed to a larger deficit than forecast at Budget time. But, of course, current account deficit is the counterpart of capital inflows. These reflect a new-found confidence in the United Kingdom as a place to invest and are financing high investment by the private sector, which will boost future performance.

Mr. Kinnock: If everything is going so well, why are interest rates going up?

Mr. W[illegible]am: As the Chancellor said:

> "Short-term interest rates remain the essential instrument of monetary policy. Within a continuous and comprehensive assessment of monetary conditions, I will continue to set interest rates at the level necessary to ensure downward pressure on inflation."—[*Official Report*, 15 March 1988; Vol. 129, c. 997.]

That is what he did today. A ½ per cent. increase reflects a further tightening of monetary conditions in line with moves earlier this month.

Mr. Kinnock: I recall the Chancellor and the Prime Minister saying that short-term interest rates were the essential lever of monetary policy. There have been seven changes in short-term interest rates in 12 weeks. Has the lever come off in the Chancellor's hand?

Mr. Wakeham: No. As the Leader of the Opposition will surely recognise, interest rates are an essential weapon in controlling monetary conditions. However, what is more to the point is that a 1 per cent. increase in wage costs is four times as damaging to industry as a 1 per cent. increase in interest costs.

Q2. **Mr. Bill Walker:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 28 June.

Mr. Wakeham: I have been asked to reply.

I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Walker: Will my right hon. Friend attempt to organise visits to the annual conferences of the National Union of Mineworkers and the Scotch Whisky Association, because if he could he would find that the National Union of Mineworkers seems to support industrial unrest, and even the occasional killing of innocent people, while the Scotch Whisky Association employs 16,000 people, has exports worth £1 billion and contributes £1 billion to the Chancellor of the Exchequer's budget? Does not that clear comparison show which is the more important to the nation?

Mr. Wakeham: I am sorry to give my hon. Friend a disappointing reply. My duties in this House will not allow me to attend either event. On the question of Scotch whisky, I congratulate my hon. Friend on the successful passage of his private Member's Bill. As for the NUM, I hope that whoever goes to its conference will find an opportunity to condemn the use of violence in industrial action.

Mr. Steel: Since the high value of the pound, aided by runaway easy credit, sucks in imports and worsens our balance of payments crisis, why, even today, does the Prime Minister continue to resist seeking exchange rate stability through joining the European monetary system? Will the Leader of the House explain the contrast between the Prime Minister's resistance to that and her tactless enthusiasm in the Canadian House of Commons last week for Canada to join an economic unit with its larger, single neighbour?

Mr. Wakeham: The control of inflation is paramount and the Government will not bail out excessive increases in domestic costs by allowing exchange rate depreciation. Restraint of industry's costs is in its own hands. The Prime Minister is discussing those issues in Hanover today. I suggest that the right hon. Gentleman awaits her statement on Thursday.

Mr. Ian Taylor: In his discussions with the Prime Minister, will my right hon. Friend take note of the remarkable increase in charitable giving in this country in recent years, and especially the help that that provides in specific areas? Will he also convey to the Prime Minister the wide support for payroll-giving relief in the recent Budet? How does the Methodist Church think that we can behave otherwise than by that way of helping particular people? Will he condemn the Methodists' negative approach?

Mr. Wakeham: My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer has a remarkable record for a whole series of ways in which he has assisted charities in this country, and that is set to continue.

Q3. **Mr. Nellist:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 28 June.

Mr. Wakeham: I have been asked to reply.

I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Nellist: Will the Leader of the House arrange for the Prime Minister to view last night's "World In Action" programme on her return, and especially to vet the activities of millionaire gangster Nicholas van Hoogstraten, who describes himself as "probably ruthless" and "probably violent" and who has been charged on several occasions with violence against tenants? In passing the Housing Bill last night, have not the Government given the green light to such ruthless gangsters to harass tenants further under the motto "Cry, 'Havoc' and let slip the ghosts of Rachman"?

Mr. Wakeham: I am sure that no one in the House would support criminal activities by any landlord in any form. Bad landlord behaviour is the product of the Rent Acts, which held down rents and denied landlords a reasonable rate of return. The Housing Bill remedies that.

Dame Jill Knight: Has my right hon. Friend noted today the case of Dean Scott, who died so tragically as a result of parental neglect, although warnings were both given and received by the police and the local authorities? Did he note that the three local authorities concerned have said that no blame attaches to them and that they followed all existing procedures? Will my right hon. Friend use his considerable influence to ensure that existing procedures are altered?

Mr. Wakeham: I cannot be expected to comment on the particular court case and the judgment that was reached, but I am sure that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services will look carefully at all the lessons that are to be learnt from that distressing case and will see to it that any necessary changes are made and, certainly, that the proper procedures are brought to the attention of all those concerned.

Q4. **Mr. Morgan:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 28 June.

Mr. Wakeham: I have been asked to reply.

I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Morgan: When the Prime Minister returns from her latest overseas mission, will the Leader of the House ask the right hon. Lady, or the Mother of Parliament as she was mistakenly referred to in Ottawa last week—I am told that Canadian Opposition Members called her something different—urgently to knock together the heads of the Secretary of State for Transport and the Secretary of State for Wales for their further shilly-shallying over the second Severn crossing, as its further delay and the contradictions in Government policy over the matter are standing on the jugular vein of the Welsh economy?

Mr. Wakeham: As one who goes over the bridge quite frequently, I recognise that the increasing prosperity that the Government are bringing to south Wales is increasing the amount of traffic over the bridge. Both my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Wales and for Transport have those matters in hand and will make an announcement in due course.

Q5. **Mr. Goodlad:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 28 June.

Mr. Wakeham: I have been asked to reply.

I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Goodlad: Will my right hon. Friend, during the course of his busy day, find time to celebrate the 40th anniversary of the National Health Service, which takes place this weekend? Will he convey to all the people who work in it the hope that the scope and quality of the services offered will, over the next 40 years, increase by as much as they have over the past 40 years, the majority under Conservative Governments?

Mr. Wakeham: My hon. Friend is right to raise that matter. I am aware of the 40th anniversary of the National Health Service. It caused me to reflect that, for 26 years of that time, there has been a Conservative Government. We have consistently increased spending on the National Health Service, which now treats more patients with more new treatments than ever before. That contrasts with the record of the Labour party, which cut expenditure and nurses' pay and increased waiting lists.

Dr. Bray: If, as the Leader of the House has said, the root of the Chancellor's problem is that foreigners are so eager to thrust their money upon us, why has he increased interest rates?

Mr. Wakeham: I have already answered the question about interest rates and indicated that the movement of interest rates reflects a need to keep inflation under control, which is the paramount need of the economy at any time. The problem of people wishing to invest in this country would not be there if the hon. Gentleman's party were in government.

Q6. **Mr. Baldry:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her oficial engagements for Tuesday 28 June.

Mr. Wakeham: I have been asked to reply.

I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Baldry: Will my right hon. Friend explain the constitutional significance of the glorious revolution? Did it herald the dawn of a new era and a new realism?

Mr. Wakeham: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for giving me notice of his question and for having drafted the reply.

The glorious revolution granted many freedoms that we enjoy today. It heralded the realism that the will of the people is paramount and cannot be subjugated to any group in our community. Those who find themselves in the thrall of certain trade union leaders would do well to remember that.

Q7. **Mr. Terry Fields:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 28 June.

Mr. Wakeham: I have been asked to reply.

I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Fields: Is the Leader of the House not appalled at the farce that passes for Prime Minister's Question Time? Two 15-minute periods a week are spent by the Prime Minister in what can only be described as an abuse of her office. Is it not time that the Prime Minister, who is ultimately responsible for the balance of trade deficit, the crisis in the Health Service, 4 million unemployed, despair, homelessness and poverty, was ordered to come to the House to give an account of her bankrupt stewardship to the nation?

Mr. Wakeham: I have some sympathy with the hon. Gentleman. I can think of better things to do with 15 minutes of my time every now and again. *[Interruption.]* To give the hon. Gentleman a serious answer, Prime Minister's Question Time is determined by the House, not by the Prime Minister. The Committee on Procedure has many times considered the way in which Prime Minister's Question Time is conducted. I know that my right hon. Friend would be willing to change the format if that is what the House wanted. I suspect that the present format is generally acceptable to most right hon. and hon. Members. If there is any criticism of it, it is of the quality of the questions that come from Opposition Members.

Council Estates (Wales)

3.30 pm

Mr. Alun Michael (Cardiff, South [illegible] Penarth): I beg to ask leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 20, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration, namely,

> "the Government's plan for the sale of council estates in Wales."

This is a specific matter for debate because separate guidelines have been produced for Wales and these have not been given the parliamentary scrutiny which, belatedly, was possible for the equivalent proposals for England. For thousands of people throughout Wales—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. I ask hon. Members to leave the Chamber quietly.

Mr. Michael: For thousands of people throughout Wales who will be affected by the proposals it is vital that the document should be discussed fully in the House. Ministers should explain it and answer questions on the practical effect that it will have on existing council tenants, on homeless people, on young people seeking a home for their start in life and on the growing number of elderly people who should be able to count on a comfortable and secure home in their remaining years.

It is a matter of urgency, because the document was not made available in the Vote Office in the usual way, and emerged in the Library only yesterday. There has been a transparent and successful attempt to evade debate on it during consideration of the Housing Bill, and a debate without further delay is the only way to restore accountability to the House by the Secretary of State for Wales.

You will recall, Mr. Speaker, the pleas that were made for the document, along with the document on tenants' choice in Wales, which is still missing, believed to be hidden to be produced two or three weeks ago, so that they could be considered with the Housing Bill. The Welsh Office stated in the press that there would be quite a different document for Wales and that Welsh Members wanted it published and debated as quickly as possible. Those whose homes are under threat have a right to expect the House to move as a matter of urgency to allow a debate that could clarify their future.

You will be aware, Mr. Speaker, that council housing and the entire topic of social housing is a matter of serious public concern. Members have complained at the chaotic way in which the House has been engulfed in a flood of Government amendments to the Housing Bill. You have heard the angry complaints of hon. Members who are concerned about the housing needs of their constituents, who find it difficult to deal with the shifting sands of Government policy-maing long after consideration of the Housing Bill in Committee has been completed.

This is a specific matter of public concern which has been prevented, cynically and deliberately, from receiving an airing during debates on the Housing Bill. That is why the public interest demands that time be made available, as a matter of urgency, for the House to debate the Secretary of State's document, which pretends to show concern for social housing, but leaves unanswered so many important fundamental questions for the future of such housing in Wales that our failure to debate it would be an abrogation of our responsibility and would appear to condone the Secretary of State's failure to seek open discussion of his proposals.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member asks leave to move the Adjournment of the House for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that he believes should have urgent consideration, namely,

> "the Government's plan for the sale of council estates in Wales."

I listened with great care to the hon. Member. As he knows, my decision on Standing Order No. 20 applications is based on whether they meet the criteria laid down under the Standing Order. I regret that I do not consider that the matter that the hon. Member has raised is appropriate for discussion under Standing Order No. 20 and I cannot, therefore, submit his application to the House.

Question Time (Points of Order)

3.34 pm

Mr. Richard Holt (Langbaurgh): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Obviously I have not sat through as many Question Times as you have, but I think that you will concede that I frequently sit here at Question Time. Normally, you rightly rule out of order all points of order raised during Question Time, but today the hon. Member for Stockton, North (Mr. Cook) was allowed to put a point of order during Question Time. Are you creating a precedent? Is this a special arrangement with the hon. Member for Stockton, North? Will you explain how I can raise a point of order during Question Time in future?

Mr. Speaker: That is an unworthy comment for an hon. Member to make. The hon. Member well knows that if a matter arises that needs my immediate consideration it is always legitimate to raise a point of order. I hope that that will not happen too often during Question Time, because it would obviously delay the proceedings. This has always been the established rule. That is what I did today.

Mr. Holt: Further to the point of order, Mr. Speaker. I accept that I may be naive, thick and all the other things that you have suggested, but you must have immense foresight if you are able to rule that a point of order is in order before you have heard it. *[Interruption.]* Despite the rabble among the Opposition, I should like an honest appraisal of how you know that a point of order is in order before it is raised. Unless you do that, in future all of us should be able to raise our points of order.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member is right. Until a point of order is raised, it is impossible for the Chair to know whether it is in order. If today's point of order had not been one needing my immediate attention, I would have deferred it. *[Interruption.]* The House well understands the rules.

Police Act 1964 (Amendment)

3.37 pm

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. In the interests of the happy procedures of the House, I want to raise this matter before we embark upon the ten-minute Bill. I understand that the Bill requires police constables to give information about their membership of freemasonry. Freemasonry involves a direct pecuniary interest and advantage to any member of the freemasons. I hasten to say that I am not a freemason.

If hon. Members have a direct pecuniary interest in a matter, they are not allowed to vote on it. This does not involve general legislation. Because the constables covered by the Bill could be members of the lodges of which hon. Members are members, there will be a direct link. I hope, Mr. Speaker, that you will listen to the arguments advanced by my hon. Friend the Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) and conclude that hon. Members who are freemasons, but who are not, unfortunately, required to make a declaration to that effect, should stay out of the Division Lobby when the vote is taken, thereby avoiding any suspicion that they are voting for, or against, the Bill for their financial benefit.

Mr. Speaker: I think that we should wait to hear what is said in introducing the Bill. Like the hon. Member, I am not a mason. I understand that it is very difficult to find out who is a mason.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. If you will not take the advice offered by my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer), perhaps the hon. Members concerned will roll up their trouser legs when they go into the Lobbies.

Mr. Speaker: I shall watch most carefully.

3.39 pm

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): I beg to move,

> That leave be given to bring in a Bill to amend the form of declaration for a constable prescribed by the Police Act 1964.

The Bill is about freemasonry and the police, and would amend the service declaration that is made by a newly appointed police officer under schedule 2 to the Police Act 1964 by adding the words:

> "I shall abstain from any activity which is likely to interfere with the impartial discharge of my duties or which is likely to give rise to the impression amongst members of the public that it may so interfere."

This amendment to the law, which I first canvassed in 1985, is designed specifically to stop practising freemasons from serving as police officers. The core of my objection is that the secretly sworn oath of allegiance between freemasons may conflict with the publicly declared loyalty of police officers to the community as a whole.

No condition can be allowed by which a police officer's loyalty can be divided. Freemasonry is a secretive organisation that encourages secret membership. Its members use secret methods of identification designed specifically so that non-members are left unaware of the connection between them. It is the duty of the police officer to enforce the law, to quote the service declaration, "without favour or affection". Police officers can succeed in that vital task only if they have the full confidence of the public that they are acting impartially.

[Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours]

Over the years, serious allegations have repeatedly been made that freemasons in the police force have received preferential treatment over appointments, promotion, disciplinary procedures and, most important, that they may not be impartially investigating criminal cases in which other freemasons are involved. Over many years my constituency mailbag, and recent public reaction to the case of Detective Chief Inspector Woollard have reflected widespread public anxiety over this issue.

Let me make it clear that my attack is not on the altruistic principles of freemasonry. It is often justifiably claimed that freemasons are responsible for many laudable charitable activities. I unreservedly accept and applaud that. However, I strongly believe that membership of that organisation in its present secretive form is inappropriate not only for police officers, but also for the judiciary and for those responsible for public administration.

If freemasonry were to transform itself and shed its secrecy, exclusivity and oath of allegiance, I should have no objection to police officers being members. As things stand, however, police officers should not be freemasons, and those who are already members should resign either from the lodge or from the police force. It is one or the other; it cannot be both.

Over three years ago, Sir Kenneth Newman, the former Commissioner of the Metropolitan police—and at that time the most important police officer in the country—made exactly the point that I make now. In the book "Principles of Policing and Guidance for Professional Behaviour", he and his colleagues identified the

> "special dilemma of a police officer who is a freemason, and the conflict between his service declaration of impartiality and the sworn obligation to avoid any activity likely to interfere with impartiality or to give the impression that it may do so."

Sir Kenneth went on to say:

> "A freemason's oath holds inevitably the implication that loyalty to fellow freemasons may supersede any other loyalty. One who is already a freemason would also be wise to ponder from time to time whether he should continue as a freemason."

That view was shared by Sir Kenneth's successor and by at least five other chief constables, who immediately issued similar advice and guidance. In response, freemasonry closed ranks. The new and powerful lodge of St. James was forged, made up almost exclusively of Metropolitan police officers, some say as an act of defiance and a calculated insult to the commissioner. Its tentacles ran deep, with strong Conservative connections.

Sir Kenneth's concerns were prompted by a long history of problems involving freemasonry in the police force. One example that he must have had in mind was Operation Countryman, in the mid-1970s, when over 250 police officers were forced to resign and many faced criminal charges after investigations revealed that police membership of particular lodges formed the nucleus of a criminal conspiracy.

If revelations of wrongdoing and insidious corruption are not enough, what about the worries of the sergeant on the beat passed over for promotion for a less experienced or less able but better connected colleague, the disciplinary complaint against an official inexplicably overlooked, or the drunken driver who is not breathalysed?

Today, masonic penetration of the police force appears to be greater than ever. A survey in 1981 revealed that an estimated 33 out of 50 chief constables were freemasons. It has been alleged that 50 per cent. of the active membership of the Police Federation are freemasons. The latest authoritative study suggests that as many as one in five of all policemen are masons. The author of that study concluded:

> "An astonishing number of policemen are freemasons—out of all proportion with the population as a whole."

I am told that in London alone at least four lodges are made up entirely of freemason policemen. Just what are they doing?

That brings me to the case of Detective Chief Inspector Brian Woollard. One must support his campaign against the unacceptable influence of freemasonry within the Metropolitan police. Woollard's career has clearly been ruined as a result of his diligent investigation of criminal conspiracy involving freemasonry—the career of a man with an outstanding record and picked out for high command. Woollard had received seven commendations. He had served at Downing street, at Buckingham palace, with the anti-terrorist squad, and with the elite public sector corruption squad. He had even served as personal protection officer to a former Home Secretary. He was a high flyer. The mistake that he made was to question a senior DPP official who showed an unprecedented interest in his case. Of course, that official turned out to be a freemason.

The authorities have not altogether written off the case. I understand that senior officers have been working on a report that shows that a high proportion of police above the rank of inspector are freemasons. There is a particularly strong concentration in certain CID squads, in personnel and in management departments generally. Even the Police Foundation, an advisory body to the Government, has commented on freemasons' "obsession with secrecy".

Regrettably, the problem is a national one and reaches as far as my constituency in Cumbria. I received a letter from a local police officer who said:

> "You are quite correct when you say that policemen feel that impartiality is not always as it should be, but it could never be proved, as any example cited would obviously be met with an immediate denial from those in authority."

I put those concerns to the then chief constable of Cumbria, Barry Price, and asked him to issue guidance of the sort recommended by Sir Kenneth Newman. I received the curt reply, "I won't."

Another policeman told me that Cumbria police force was riddled with freemasonry and that non-masons were often heard privately to complain. I should add that former Chief Constable Price was later reported to me to be a freemason. I should have realised earlier.

The parliamentary questions that I tabled in 1985 resulted in a vast mailbag. Commander Higham, grand secretary of the United Grand lodge of England and Wales, attempted to reassure me with a masterful euphemism. He said that his was not a secret organisation, but rather had

> "a respectable inclination to privacy."

When I tried to find out who or how many he represented, I was told that the information was not secret but "private".

Freemasonry is plagued with contradictions. It claims to be open to all, yet it bars women. It makes high moral claims, yet it offends the Church. It contains some of the most powerful and respected people in the land, yet subjects them to bizarre ritual that invites ridicule.

I argue that freemasons should not serve as police officers and that police officers should sever their links with their lodges. Their inter-tribal oath of loyalty is utterly incompatible with the duty to serve the whole community impartially. The secrecy of the organisation makes it impossible to check whether impartiality might be at risk in a particular case.

I submit that the police force is considerably damaged by its links with freemasonry. Good policemen are embarrassed. We all recognise that the police depend on the full co-operation of the public in solving crime. That co-operation depends in turn on trust and a belief in their impartiality. Undermine that trust, and one undermines the fight against crime. The police force is an important institution pledged to uphold the principles of an open, free and democratic society. We all support it. It is unhealthy that large numbers of its officers should be involved in an organisation whose practices are so entirely out of keeping with those principles.

Mr. Speaker: Does the hon. Member have leave to bring in his Bill?

Hon. Members: No.

Mr. Speaker: I think that the Ayes have it.

Hon. Members: No.

Mr. Speaker: Who will prepare and bring in the Bill?

Hon. Members: No.

Mr. Speaker: I shall put the Question again. Hon. Members must follow their voices. The Question is, That the hon. Member have leave to bring in his Bill.

Hon. Members: No.

Question put, pursuant to Standing Order No. 19 (Motions for leave to bring in Bills and nomination of Select Committees at commencement of public business):

The House divided: Ayes 117, Noes 16.

Division No. 384] **[3.49 pm**

AYES

Alton, David
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Battle, John
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Corbett, Robin
Cryer, Bob
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Dalyell, Tam
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Eastham, Ken
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fatchett, Derek
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Fyfe, Maria
Galloway, George
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Haynes, Frank
Heffer, Eric S.
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Geraint
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Kennedy, Charles
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
Macdonald, Calum A.
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
McTaggart, Bob
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marlow, Eric
Meacher, Michael
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morley, Elliott
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Mullin, Chris
Nellist, Dave
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Rogers, Allan
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Steinberg, Gerry
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wall, Pat
Wareing, Robert N.
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Brian Sedgemore and
Mr. Nicholas Brown.

NOES

Alexander, Richard
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Beggs, Roy
Bendall, Vivian
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Farr, Sir John
Fearn, Ronald
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Forth, Eric
Janman, Tim
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Woodcock, Mike

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Alan Meale and
Mr. Jimmy Dunnachie.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Bill ordered to be brought in by Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours, Mr. Max Madden, Mr. Austin Mitchell, Miss Joan Lestor, Mr. Tony Lloyd, Mr. Bob Cryer, Mr. Nicholas Brown, Mr. Derek Fatchett, Mr. Roland Boyes, Mr. Brian Sedgemore and Mrs. Ann Clwyd.

POLICE ACT 1964 (AMENDMENT)

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours accordingly presented a Bill to amend the form of declaration for a constable prescribed by the Police Act 1964: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time on Friday 8 July and to be printed. [Bill 184.]

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. As the ten-minute Bill presented so ably by my hon. Friend for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) has been carried by such a substantial majority, you might be reflecting on why there was such a small number of Members opposed to it. Has it been reported to you that there seemed to be a masonic picket at the entrance to the No Lobby? Will you confirm that the Select Committee on Members' Interest is considering a request from me that Members who are masons should be required to declare their masonic membership in the Register of Members' Interests?

Lastly, will you confirm that attempts by me to table questions and a motion asking the Prime Minister to confirm that she is a member of the Lodge of the Eastern Star, which she is rumoured to have joined in 1975, have

[Mr. Max Madden]

been blocked on the grounds that they would cause annoyance? As the excellent ten-minute Bill has been carried requiring the police to declare masonic membership, it is high time that such a declaration was required of Members of Parliament.

Mr. Speaker: We have a busy day ahead of us. I do not know anything about the pickets. I understand that normally the Whips act as pickets on an ordinary division, but I do not believe that they are on for a ten-minute Bill. I have no knowledge of the other matters the hon. Gentleman has mentioned.

Mr. Cryer: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. I shall not take up much of your time, but the pickets—there were more than six of them—were composed exclusively of Conservative Members, including members of the Whips Office. Therefore, would it be fair to draw the conclusion that the House of Commons freemason's lodge is centred in the Conservative party?

Mr. Speaker: I draw no conclusions at all.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

Ordered,

That the draft Harbour Works (Assessment of Environmental Effects) Regulations 1988 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the draft Environmental Assessment (Afforestation) Regulations 1988 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the Customs Duties (ECSC) (Amendment No. 1) Order 1988 (S.I., 1988, No. 1065) be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.—*[Mr. Ryder.]*

Orders of the Day

Criminal Justice Bill *[Lords]*

As amended (in the Standing Committee), again considered.

4.3 pm

Mrs. Ann Taylor (Dewsbury): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. If the Minister is unable to answer my question now I hope that we shall have some clarification from the Government later in our proceedings.

You will recall, Mr. Speaker, that when we last discussed the Bill on 16 June, we dealt with new clause 80, which relates to DNA testing in Northern Ireland. At that time, the Minister of State, Northern Ireland Office gave certain assurances about the new clause. On the basis of those assurances, my hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara) accepted that the new clause should be added to the Bill, and Ministers will recall that we did not divide the House on that matter.

An article has now been published in the *New Scientist* that disputes the information given by the Minister of State. It demonstrates that the tests that the Minister suggested would be carried out to obtain a mouth swab would not be sufficient to obtain the necessary information, and that an intimate sample would be required. I seek an assurance from the Minister of State that, if intimate samples are required, they will be covered by other provisions in the Bill.

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. John Patten): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. I am glad to clarify the point that the hon. Lady has raised—I hope to her satisfaction.

When my right hon. Friend the Minister of State, Northern Ireland Office moved the new clause on 16 June, he said that the scientific procedures were satisfactory regarding the taking of mouth swab samples. The article in the *New Scientist* does not lead the Government to change their views in any way at all.

Mrs. Taylor *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I believe that the matter could best be clarified on Third Reading.

New Clause 64

RIGHT OF ANONYMITY TO ALL VICTIMS OF AND DEFENDANTS IN SEXUAL OFFENCES CASES

'(1) The Sexual Offences (Amendment) Act 1976 shall be amended as follows.

(2) The following subsections shall be substituted for subsection (1) of section 4 (Anonymity of complainants in rape etc. cases)—

"(1) Except as authorised by a direction of this section—

(a) After an allegation that a person has been the victim of an offence under the Sexual Offences Act 1956 or the Sexual Offences Act 1967 has been made by the person or by any other person neither the person's name nor his address nor a still or moving picture of him shall during his lifetime—

(i) Be published in England and Wales in a written publication available to the public; or

(ii) Be broadcast or included in a cable programme in England and Wales.

if that is likely to lead members of the public to identify him as an alleged victim of such an offence; and

(b) After a person is accused of such an offence no matter likely to lead members of the public to identify a person as the complainant in relation to that accusation shall during his lifetime—

(i) Be published in England and Wales in a written publication available to the public; or

(ii) Be broadcast or included in a cable programme in England and Wales,

but nothing in this subsection prohibits the publication or broadcasting or inclusion in a cable programme of matters consisting only of a report of criminal proceedings other than proceedings at or intended to lead to, or on an Appeal arising out of, a trial at which the accused is charged with the offence.

(1A) In subsection (1) above 'picture' includes a likeness however produced.".

(3) In subsection (2) and subsection (4) and subsection (7) of that section for the words "a rape offence" there shall be substituted the words "an offence under the Sexual Offences Act 1956 or the Sexual Offences Act 1967".

(4) In subsection (3) of that section—

(a) the words "before the Crown Court at which a person is charged with a rape offence" and "relating to the complainant" shall cease to have effect; and

(b) for the words "an acquittal of a defendant at" there shall be substituted the words "the outcome of".

(5) The following subsections shall be inserted after subsection (5) of that section—

"(5A) Where a person is charged with an offence under subsection (5) of this section in respect of the publication or broadcast of any matter or the inclusion of any matter in a cable programme, it shall be a defence, subject to subsection (5B) below, to prove that the publication, broadcast or cable programme in which the matter appeared was one in respect of which the person had given written consent to the appearance of matter of that description.

(5B) Written consent is not a defence if it is proved that any person interfered unreasonably with the person's peace of comfort with intent to obtain the consent."

(6) The following subsections shall be substituted for subsection (6) of that section—

"(1) For the purposes of this Section 'an offence under the Sexual Offences Act 1956 or the Sexual Offences Act 1967' means any of the following, namely, any offence specified in these Acts, any attempt to commit any offence specified in these Acts, aiding, abetting, counselling and procuring any offence or an attempt to commit any offence specified in these Acts, incitements to commit any offence specified in these Acts, conspiracy to commit any offence specified in these Acts and burglary with intent to commit any offence specified in these Acts.

(2) For the purposes of this Section a person is accused of an offence under the Sexual Offences Act 1956 or the Sexual Offences Act 1967; if

(a) An information is laid alleging that he has committed such an offence; or

(b) He appears before a Court charged with such an offence, or

(c) A Court before which he is appearing commits him for trial on a new charge alleging such an offence; or

(d) A bill of indictment charging him with such an offence is preferred before a court in which he may lawfully be indicted for the offence, and references in this section and section 7(5) of this Act to an accusation alleging such an offence shall be construed accordingly; and in this section—

'a broadcast' means a broadcast by wireless telegraphy of sounds or visual images intended for general reception, and cognate expressions shall be construed accordingly;

'complainant', in relation to a person accused of such an offence or an accusation alleging such an offence, means the person against whom the offence is alleged to have been committed; and

'written publication' includes a film, a sound track and any other record in permanent form about but does not include an Indictment or other documents prepared for use in particular legal proceedings.".

(7) In section 6 (Anonymity of defendants in rape etc. cases)—

(a) Wherever the words "a rape offence" appear in that section there shall be substituted the words "an offence under the Sexual Offences Act 1956 or the Sexual Offences Act 1967".

(b) In subsection (1) of that section, after the words "broadcast" there shall be added the words "or included in a cable programme" and after the words "at a trial before the Crown Court" shall be added the words "or the Magistrates Court".

(c) In subsection (6) of that section after the words "subsections (5) to (7) of section 4 of this Act" shall be added the words "as amended by section 150 of the Criminal Justice Act 1988".

(d) In subsection (4)(a) of that section after the words "before the Crown Court" shall be added the words "or the Magistrates Court".—*[Mr. Corbett.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Mr. Robin Corbett (Birmingham, Erdington): I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

Mr. Speaker: With this it will be convenient to discuss the following: new clause 65—*Right of anonymity to all victims of sexual offences*—

'(1) The Sexual Offences (Amendment) Act 1976 shall be amended as follows.

(2) The following subsections shall be substituted for subsection (1) of section 4 (Anonymity of complainants in rape etc. cases)—

"(1) Except as authorised by a direction of this section—

(a) After an allegation that a person has been the victim of an offence under the Sexual Offences Act 1956 or the Sexual Offences Act 1967 has been made by the person or by any other person neither the person's name nor his address nor a still or moving picture of him shall during his life time—

(i) Be published in England and Wales in a written publication available to the public; or

(ii) Be broadcast or included in a cable programme in England and Wales,

if that is likely to lead members of the public to identify him as an alleged victim of such an offence; and

(b) After a person is accused of such an offence no matter likely to lead members of the public to identify a person as the complainant in relation to that accusation shall during his lifetime—

(i) Be published in England and Wales in a written publication available to the public; or

(ii) Be broadcast or included in a cable programme in England and Wales,

but nothing in this subsection prohibits the publication or broadcasting or inclusion in a cable programme of matters consisting only of a report of criminal proceedings other than proceedings at or intended to lead to, or on an Appeal arising out of, a trial at which the accused is charged with the offence.

(1A) In subsection (1) above 'picture' includes a likeness however produced.".

(3) In subsection (2) and subsection (4) and subsection (7) of that section for the words "a rape offence" there shall be substituted the words "an offence under the Sexual Offences Act 1956 or the Sexual Offences Act 1967".

(4) In subsection (3) of that section—

(a) the words "before the Crown Court at which a person is charged with a rape offence" and "relating to the complainant" shall cease to have effect; and

(b) for the words "an acquittal of a defendant at" there shall be substituted the words "the outcome of".

(5) The following subsections shall be inserted after subsection (5) of that section—

"(5A) Where a person is charged with an offence under subsection (5) of this section in respect of the publication or broadcast of any matter or the inclusion of any matter in a cable programme, it shall be a defence, subject to subsection (5B) below, to prove that the publication, broadcast or cable programme in which the matter appeared was one in respect of which the person had given written consent to the appearance of matter to that description.

(5B) Written consent is not a defence if it is proved that any person interfered unreasonably with the person's peace or comfort with intent to obtain the consent."

(6) The following subsections shall be substituted for subsection (6) of that section—

"(1) for the purposes of this Section 'an offence under the Sexual Offences Act 1956 or the Sexual Offences Act 1967 means any of the following, namely, an offence specified in these Acts, any attempt to commit any offence specified in these Acts, aiding, abetting, counselling and procuring any offence or an attempt to commit any offence specified in these Acts, incitements to commit any offence specified in these Acts, conspiracy to commit any offence specified in these Acts and burglary with intent to commit any offence specified in these Acts.

(2) for the purposes of this Section a person is accused of an offence under the Sexual Offences Act 1956 or the Sexual Offences Act 1967; if

(a) An information is laid alleging that he has committed such an offence; or

(b) He appears before a Court charged with such an offence, or

(c) A Court before which he is appearing commits him for trial on a new charge alleging such an offence; or

(d) A bill of indictment charging him with such an offence is preferred before a court in which he may lawfully be indicted for the offence,

and references in this section and section 7(5) of this Act to an accusation alleging such an offence shall be construed accordingly; and in this section—

'a broadcast' means a broadcast by wireless telegraphy of sounds or visual images intended for general reception, and cognate expressions shall be construed accordingly;

'complainant', in relation to a person accused of such an offence or an accusation alleging such an offence, means the person against whom the offence is alleged to have been committed; and

'written publication' includes a film, a sound track and any other record in permanent form about but does not include an indictment or other documents prepared for use in particular legal proceedings.".

(7) In section 6 (Anonymity of defendants in rape etc cases)—

(a) In subsection (1) of that section after the words "broadcast" there shall be added the words "or included in a cable programme".

(b) In subsection (6) of that section after the words "subsections (5) to (7) of section 4 of this Act" shall be added the words "as amended by section 150 of the Criminal Justice Act 1988".'.

Amendment No. 209, in clause 150, in page 96, line 3, leave out subsection (5) and insert—

(5) In section 6 (Anonymity of defendants in rape etc cases)—

(a) In subsection (1) of that section after the word "broadcast" there shall be added the words "or included in a cable programme".

(b) In subsection (6) of that section after the words "subsections (5) to (7) of section 4 of this Act" shall be added the words "as amended by section 150 of the Criminal Justice Act 1988".'.

Mr. Corbett: May I remind the House that I was the author of the Sexual Offences (Amendment) Act 1976, which first provided anonymity for rape victims from the moment that an information was laid or a charge was made, and for defendants unless convicted. The House will no doubt recall that the Act was built upon a report by Mrs. Justice Heilbron.

Two issues are involved here. The first is that of how better to shield rape victims from sensation-seeking newspapers while ensuring that the defendant has a fair trial. Rape trials—or, indeed, any others—are in no way concerned with helping newspaper publishers, on the back of salacious reporting, to add to their circulations. We are concerned with the proper administration of the law.

Rape is perhaps the vilest crime that can be committed against women. That is why the 1976 Act extended extra and special protection by means of anonymity and restricting the amount of sexual mud-slinging that had undoubtedly taken place in previous rape trials. Parliament felt it right to take those steps.

I unreservedly congratulate the Government on going further with this Bill, because anonymity will now start from the moment when an allegation of rape has been made by a woman or any other person. It must be acknowledged that that gives the earliest possible protection to rape victims. It is a wide and welcome extra protection, which is needed to reassure women. The House may recall how, in 1986, the sewer *Sun* ran a certain obscene front-page photograph of what was alleged to be a rape victim. Unhappily, when I questioned the Attorney-General about the chances of prosecution, he told me that the way in which the 1976 Act was drawn did not legally prevent that sort of publication. That was extremely regrettable and it underlined the need, to which I am glad the Government have responded, to make the anonymity provisions of the Sexual Offences (Amendment) Act come into play earlier.

We should be clear what the clause does for rape victims. It dates the protection of anonymity from the moment when a woman or any other person makes an allegation of rape. That is wholly justified, but it is a unique provision. I can think of no other circumstances in which a complainant would get such treatment before possible court proceedings. In no way do I object to that; indeed, I commend it. However, if it is right to make this important exception for women who allege rape, it must be right to extend a similar protection to the defendant man.

Twelve years ago, when the 1976 Act was being debated, what won the argument and persuaded the House was the simple proposition that both complainant woman and defendant man in a rape trial should have identical treatment before the court as far as possible. That legal exception was designed to recognise the seriousness of a rape charge for the complainant and the defendant. It was my firm belief then, and it remains so now, that a man charged with rape who is subsequently found not guilty is never wholly free of the stigma in his community, among those with whom he works or the people who are responsible for his career. That follows from the special nature of the offence.

There is a more specific and compelling reason for maintaining anonymity for the defendant unless he is convicted. It has more to do with the victim than with the defendant. A major survey in *Woman's Own* in 1986, in which 25,000 women took part, showed that 55 per cent. of all rape victims knew their attacker. Most rapists were shown to be boy friends or former husbands or someone known to the woman. I ask the House and the Minister to reflect on those figures. One third of all rapes took place in the victim's home. Even in the one in eight rapes in which the attacker was unknown, the incident took place in the woman's home.

These figures provide a warning. If the rape victim knows her attacker in most cases, so do many other people. Enabling the defendant to be named will, in most cases, almost automatically indentify the rape victim, which in turn will undo the extra protection that the Bill seeks to give victims.

4.15 pm

It is sometimes argued that anonymity for the man suspected of rape can get in the way of police trying to find a suspect who is also wanted in connection with other serious criminal offences. That claim is nonsense. I acknowledge that in some circumstances—for example, the horrific M50 murder hunt—the use of indentikit drawings or photographs can help in tracing a suspect, but if that needs to be done the police can say that the man they are looking for is wanted in connection with serious criminal offences—without detailing them. In passing, I am a mite surprised that there has been no argument before the courts, in cases in which these "wanted" posters have been issued, by defence counsel contesting that matters of identification have been prejudged by the publication of drawings or photographs to such an extent that it is difficult for the client to get a fair trial.

There is not the slightest evidence—although there may be hearsay—that the provisions of the 1976 Act in respect of defendant men have in any way inhibited the police. So I do not believe the case is made. As I have said, the main argument for retaining this matching anonymity is to protect that of the victim. More than 55 per cent. of rape victims know their attacker. Those figures from *Woman's Own* tell us more than any single opinion.

The House must not risk putting rape victims in the real danger of being accidentally indentified through the naming of defendant men. At the very least, I hope that the Minister will acknowledge that the Government's proposal to remove anonymity for the defendant man will run the risk, if no more than that, of harming the victim and of perhaps deterring even more women from reporting rape to the police. The *Woman's Own* survey showed that three out of every four women keep quiet about rape because they feel they will not be believed. If the Government's proposal becomes law, it will force even more women to keep quiet, which in turn will mean even more rapists walking free to strike again, when they should be behind bars.

Mr. Tony Baldry (Banbury): All hon. Members are united in abhorrence of the offence of rape. Almost all will sympathise with the sentiments behind the comments of the hon. Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Corbett). However, I hope that on reflection he will consider that there are a number of pitfalls in what he proposes.

For the reasons that the hon. Member for Erdington outlined, there have, over a period, been good causes for Parliament and the courts seeking to protect victims in rape offences. History has shown that the vicitims of rape have often felt afraid that, however, innocent they are and however much they are the violated party, there is always the danger of a stigma attaching to them if they are dragged into the courts. That is why Parliament has properly given them anonymity from the moment when they make a complaint. However, it would be dangerous to make the logical jump and give anonymity to the defendant, for the following reasons.

We have an open system of justice, in which magistrates courts must decide whether there is a prima facie case against a defendant. As soon as the courts have found that there is, the defendant is named and the fact is promulgated that the defendant will be tried by a magistrates court or, in the case of rape, committed for Crown court trial. That is a public and open system of justice, in which everyone knows what is happening.

Inevitably, in a system of justice in which some people are found not guilty after trial, they may well consider that their names have been besmirched for ever more. That price must be paid in any system of justice, however hard one tries to perfect it. There is always a danger that a wholly innocent party may be brought before the courts and found not gulity, but his reputation may suffer irreparably ever after. But the reputations of the middle-aged woman who is accused of shoplifting or the company director who is accused of tax evasion are just as much at risk as the reputation of the man accused of rape.

The hon. Member for Erdington said that many rape victims know their attackers, and that therefore they should be given added protection. The same argument could be made in many murder cases. Many murders occur in the home, often as a result of grievous bodily harm going wrong. Does one then say that those who are accused of murder should be granted anonymity? If we did that, we should be moving from an open system of justice to a system full of exceptions and caveats.

Throughout this century we have had a public system of justice, with good checks and balances between the complainant and the defendant. The system works. The only exception to that should be, for the reasons stated, that complainants in rape cases should receive anonymity. But there is no need to extend anonymity to defendants in rape cases. To do so would be to set a dangerous precedent that could lead to many other ramifications in our system of criminal justice. All we need to ensure is similar treatment for every defendant. We must ensure that every defendant in every court case is treated the same, and we should not make exceptions for some defendants that are not available to others.

Mr. Tony Worthington (Clydebank and Milngavie): This matter was fully debated in Committee, and in the intervening months I have thought deeply about it. I remain convinced that it is right to make an exception in the case of defendants in rape cases.

In Committee my hon. Friend the Member for Newcastle-under-Lyme (Mrs. Golding) and the hon. Member for Thanet, North (Mr. Gale) made powerful speeches about the consequences to defendants of allegations that are made against them. My hon. Friend mentioned the case of the mother of an accused person whose life was destroyed by the accusation, and the hon. Member for Thanet, South told us about a suicide that occurred after a false allegation of rape.

I was pleased to hear the contribution by my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Corbett) today. He made a point that I made in Committee, although I did not have the information to substantiate it at the time. As the *Woman's Own* survey showed, there is little point in protecting the victim of the alleged rape if the name of the accused is published. That survey showed that 55 per cent. of rape victims know their attackers. In smaller communities especially, to name the accused would be to name the victim.

Some hon. Members have said that the new clause goes down a dangerous road, and in Committee the Minister said that if we gave anonymity to defendants in rape cases we would have to consider doing the same in other cases. But we should examine the extension of anonymity to all defendants. I accept the point about our open system of justice, but the primary rule is that one is innocent until proven guilty. We should take account of the fact that people who have been publicly accused of offences never shake off that accusation. It is not true to say that a company director accused of fraud or a middle-aged women accused of shoplifting need the same protection as a rape victim. No one could regard those offences as being similar to rape. A powerful case has been made for saying that rape carries a unique stigma and that we must protect the victims of that offence. But if the stigma exists for the victim, it also exists for the alleged perpetrator, and that is why I support the new clause.

Mr. Kenneth Hind (Lancashire, West): I oppose the new clause. I am probably one of the few Members of Parliament who has defended and prosecuted people charged with rape. I accept the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Banbury (Mr. Baldry) about the openness of justice. It is an important point that we must consider. Once we start to protect the identity of some accused people, we are in danger of extending it to others. There is no sound reason why a man accused of rape should have the protection of anonymity while those who are accused of robbery, murder, manslaughter or causing death by reckless driving do not enjoy that protection. Once we open the door, we shall have opened the floodgates to a series of extensions of the rule, which would not be in the interests of open justice.

Mr. Gerald Bermingham (St. Helens, South): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Hind: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will have an opportunity to speak later. As he knows, normally I would give way to him.

Some hon. Members have suggested that the stigma of being accused of rape is carried by the defendant for the rest of his life. Of course it is, but whatever the type of offence, the stigma is carried by people accused in every criminal case. There are more serious offences than rape.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: It takes a man to say that.

Mr. Hind: I hear what the hon. Lady says, but there are cases of murder, robbery and the most atrocious acts of violence. I accept that rape is terrible, but I do not understand why the man accused of rape should have his identity concealed by the courts.

Hon. Members said that it is a terrible thing for relatives. From my experience, I know that the most difficult thing for a man charged with a sexual offence or any other serious offence is to tell his mother or wife about it. That is the hardest audience with which he must deal. It is easier to tell one's counsel or admit it in court than to confess to one's loved ones.

Over five years ago, I represented a 17-year-old charged with the attempted rape of an 81-year-old woman. I advised him that, on the evidence, he had no choice but to plead guilty. He said to me, "The difficult thing is to tell his mother." I brought his mother into the cell, he told her that he was guilty and he went into court and pleaded guilty. I saw his mother two years later, following her son's release, and she insisted on disbelieving that her son could have committed such an offence. The relatives of an accused person are in a unique position. Many do not want to believe that their loved ones have been involved in offences, and that applies to every type of offence.

4.30 pm

The general public will stand behind Conservative Members in opposing the new clause because they think it right that the identity of the accused should be brought to their notice.

Rape is not a sexual offence. That mistake is made over and over again. It is not purely sexually motivated. Its root is to dominate the woman, and it is more connected with violence. It is a most horrible offence, but often the main motivation is to dominate or possess a woman. The sexual attack is a side issue; the main issue is physical aggression and domination. As the defendant's identity is put before the public in similar horrible offences, I do not understand why defendants should be protected in rape cases.

I fully endorse the point that was made in Committee about protecting victims. For many years I have fought to ensure that victims are protected, and I am glad to note that provisions relating to that are in the Bill. I advise Opposition Members to turn the clock back to when defendants were protected and were anonymous and consider the reasons why the law was changed to remove that anonymity. Those reasons are as valid today as they were then.

Mr. Bermingham: I did not intend to speak to the new clause until the hon. Member for Lancashire, West (Mr. Hind) failed to give way to me.

The hon. Member has not read the new clause. He has avoided the central issue of the problem, which, to a large extent, lies with the sensationalising by the press of any major crime.

Mr. Hind *indicated assent.*

Mr. Bermingham: I see the hon. Gentleman nodding in agreement. Even before charge, details are given of the person detained in custody. Details of the offence are given, and the press is awash with the gory details of the allegation. I often wonder how the accused in such sensational cases receives a fair trial.

Rape is a bestial crime if ever there was one. I disagree with the hon. Member for Lancashire, West that it has no sexual basis; it is well proven that it has. What will happen in rape cases? Often they are the most sensational and give rise to front-page headlines. What will happen to the families of an accused who is subsequently acquitted? All the damage will have been done.

Many rapes occur between family or friends—between people who know each other. By naming the defendant before the trial, one effectively names the victim, thus defeating the object of the exercise.

Sometimes, cant and dogma take over our law. I beg the Minister to think back to what was said in Committee. Over the past few days there have been several sensational cases, unconnected with rape, in which people have been named before charge as being detained. Until we find some way of protecting people accused of serious criminal offences before trial, we must keep what few shields we have left. The new clause is designed to strengthen those shields until the time comes when nobody is named before charge—at which time the screens come down on reporting restrictions—so that everybody receives a trial by court and evidence, not by newspaper and innuendo.

Mr. John Patten: This has been an excellent debate, and I congratulate the hon. Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Corbett) on the way in which he introduced the new clause.

Anonymity for rape victims is widely supported. Clause 150 rightly extends the anonymity given to rape victims to the point at which an allegation is made rather than when a man is charged. The hon. Member for Erdington was good enough to say that that is a good move. It has received all-party support and is a matter of bipartisan consent. The question whether a defendant should be granted anonymity should be considered in isolation. Although hon. Members may not entirely agree, this is a matter not of party politics but of judgment.

Why are victims in rape cases granted anonymity? The Heilbron committee, which reported in 1985, found that the public knowledge of rape was a severe deterrent, leading victims not to report offences. The hon. Member for Erdington gave the full history of that Committee's deliberations and how they led to his private Member's Bill —the hon. Gentleman has achieved more than I ever have in the House—so it would be otiose to repeat the detail he gave.

The key question is, why should suspected rapists but not other suspected criminals enjoy anonymity? Hon. Members have addressed themselves entirely to that point. Judgments have been made on either side of the argument. Surely those accused of murder are under the same pressure as those accused of rape. Murder is the most terrible of all crimes, and those accused of murder are subject to acute public scrutiny, yet I have never heard an hon. Member suggest that suspected murderers should not be named.

Mr. Bermingham: In the case of a suspected murderer, the victim's identity is known, so no further harm can be done to the victim. That distinguishes it from a rape case, in which the object is to keep the victim's identity secret so that society can attempt to protect and cosset her.

Mr. Patten: We are not doing anything that would reveal the alleged victim's identity. It may be that the murder victim's name is indeed known. Not everyone, however, accused of murder is found guilty. Those who are found not guilty can suffer the most terrible damage because of the old argument that there is no smoke without fire.

The 15th report of the Criminal Law Revision Committee, which was published in 1984, says:

> "Rape is but one of many offences where a defendant who is acquitted may nevertheless suffer damage to his reputation."

That must be true. It is not applicable only to sexual offences. My hon. Friend the Member for Banbury (Mr. Baldry) put is finger on the problem when he said that a business man or a company director who was wrongly accused of fraud, or a vicar wrongly accused of shoplifting, could be in much the same difficulty.

The hon. Member for Erdington says that the difference in a rape case is that the victim is not named—that point was also made by the hon. Member for St. Helen's, South (Mr. Bermingham)—so she can make her accusation with impunity. But we must remember that victims are not named in other areas of the criminal law. The victim of blackmail is not named. Such people are treated specially. The same applies to child victims—the subject of a debate initiated by my hon. Friend the Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Sir E. Griffiths) on the previous occasion that we considered the Bill on Report. But alleged blackmailers and alleged offenders against children do not benefit from anonymity. Their names are known. My hon. Friend the Member for Lancashire, West (Mr. Hind) was right in the point that he made about that.

Let me set at rest the mind of the hon. Member for Erdington. He feared that, should the identification of an assailant become law, that could often lead to the identification of the victim. That is not so. If he looks at clause 150, he will see that it prohibits the publication of any information that is likely to lead to the identification of the victim. Therefore, no newspaper could name the alleged assailant and say that he was the victim's boy friend or next-door neighbour, because that would indirectly identify the victim.

The terms of the new clause illustrate the difficulty of knowing where to draw the line if we once cease to regard rape as unique for these purposes. The new clauses would include all offences under the Sexual Offences Acts of 1956 and 1967, and that would bring specifically into the provision not only offences for which we have all recognised that a good case could be made, even if we did not agree across the Floor of the House about it—for example, indecent assault—but others for which anonymity provisions, especially for the defendant, seem to be highly inappropriate, to put it mildly. For example, that would include those people accused of letting premises for a brothel, living on the earnings of prostitution, controlling a prostitute, solicitation by a man, homosexual acts in public, and so on. I wonder whether the hon. Gentleman would really want to include all those potential offences. I would not wish to do so.

There is a balance to be struck between, on the one hand, encouraging victims to report offences and relieving them of their ordeal as much as possible, and, on the other hand, what my hon. Friend the Member for Banbury referred to as the principle of open justice.

[Mr. Patten]

I have listened carefully to the hon. Member for Erdington. He played a major role in the 1976 legislation, and we should all listen carefully to what he has to say. The case for imposing reporting restrictions for the benefit of rape victims is overwhelming, but in giving protection against the interests of open justice, I find the balance tipping in the other direction.

Sir Eldon Griffiths (Bury St. Edmunds): I have a lot of sympathy with what the hon. Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Corbett), not for the first time, is seeking to achieve, but there is another practical argument that the Minister might have adduced. Where some horrendous offence has taken place, whether rape or any other, the police are required to search for the potential assailant. To do so they must give wide publicity. I wish to make no comment on matters that may be coming before the courts shortly, but the House will know that identikit pictures need to be made widely available. They will identify. To that extent, it is impracticable to refuse to identify the potential accused.

4.45 pm

Mr. Patten: My hon. Friend is right. We must do nothing that inhibits the work of the police in tracking down alleged rapists and bringing them to whatever justice the courts bring to bear on them.

I am sorry to part company with the hon. Member for Erdington but, on a matter of judgment, not on a partisan matter or a party political matter, I simply do not agree with him, and I cannot advise my right hon. and hon. Friends to support the new clauses.

Mr. Corbett: I am grateful to the Minister for the way in which he has dealt with this, although he clearly arrives at a different conclusion, on what I accept is a matter of judgment. The Minister and the hon. Member for Lancashire, West (Mr. Hind) tried to liken a defendant in a rape trial to a defendant in a manslaughter or a murder trial or to a defendant in a case of causing death by reckless driving. It is a blinding glimpse of the obvious, but I repeat that in each of those instances the victim is dead, known and usually named. Therefore, that comparison does not stand up.

I disagree with much of what the hon. Member for Lancashire, West said. My hon. Friend the Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor) shouted across to him that one of his remarks could only have been made by a man. We should treat that comment with the deepest respect, because as much as we as men try to imagine how rape victims feel, we cannot do so because we are not women. We can imagine it, but I am trying to establish the case that the House should recognise that for a woman rape is a vile offence, the consequences of which last many women throughout the rest of their lives. Indeed, I know a woman who was raped 40 or 50 years ago, but was prevented from reporting it, who still bears the marks of that assault. I am sure that she is by no means alone in that.

Two hon. Members have made the general point that it would be wrong for defendants to have such protection from the courts. Under the present legislation, defendants do not have that protection from the courts, if that is the way to look at it, because where a man is charged with rape and found guilty he is named. But we are not talking about protecting defendants from the courts; as my hon. Friend the Member for St. Helens, South (Mr. Bermingham) said, we are talking about protecting defendants from trial by radio, newspaper and television. No more is that true than in rape trials, when salaciousness is played up in a bid to sell extra copies of newspapers.

I say again that that has nothing to do with the administration of justice or with helping the sales of newspapers. Indeed, one of the complaints that I have made, as a former pencil journalist, is that the coverage of our courts by the press is now so random that any claim that it once had to represent the public in order that justice could be seen to be done has long since gone out of the window. We know that from shoplifting cases. Only someone who is famous or married to someone famous will be reported. Therefore, the press does not have a leg to stand on.

I understand what the Minister is saying. Yes, defendants in rape cases are being treated differently. I have tried to persuade the House why they should be treated differently. Whether or not newspapers can, through the naming of the defendant, name the victim—some would be pushed to do so—is not really the point. The point is that, if 55 per cent. of rape victims know their attacker, as the *Woman's Own* survey showed, within the small communities in streets, towns and villages, around pubs and clubs and in the work place, if the defendant is named, that will automatically undo the extra protection that the Bill rightly offers to rape victims. None of us can want that.

I do not want to rehearse the arguments, because all hon. Members will be familiar with them, but one of the purposes of both provisions of the 1976 Act was to ensure anonymity for the victim and reduce the amount of sexual mud-slinging that went on in cross-examination because it was discovered that the woman had had an illegitimate child. One hon. Member said in as many words at one stage that a woman like that could not be raped.

Uniquely in rape cases—I think that this has to be and is sustainable—it is the complainant woman who feels very much on trial. Very often, because of the nature of the offence, it is a one-to-one thing; in essence, it is the woman's word against that of the man. That was why it was so important to try to narrow and limit the scope of the questions that could be asked about previous sexual experience, for example.

At the very least, there is a risk that, through naming the defendant, it will be easier for people to identify the complainant rape victim. It must be so, on the basis of the *Woman's Own* survey. I hope it is not so, but the effect of that will deter even more women from going to the police and making allegations of rape. That is going in completely the opposite direction from the extra protections which the Government and the Committee have written into the Bill for the victim.

I am sorry that this has to become a matter for the Division Lobbies, but we shall pursue it to a vote.

Question put, That the clause be read a Second time:

The House proceeded to a Division:

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): Hon. Members may like to know that there is doubt about the functioning of the digital clock, which I believe has been wrong by about two minutes. Therefore, the Division doors will be open for another two minutes.

The House having divided: Ayes 150, Noes 274.

Division No. 385] **[4.51 pm**

AYES

Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Battle, John
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buchan, Norman
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Cohen, Harry
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Cryer, Bob
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Dalyell, Tam
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fatchett, Derek
Fearn, Ronald
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fyfe, Maria
Galloway, George
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Haynes, Frank
Heffer, Eric S.
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Howells, Geraint
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Janner, Greville
John, Brynmor
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
Macdonald, Calum A.
McKelvey, William
McTaggart, Bob
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliott
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Quin, Ms Joyce
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Steinberg, Gerry
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wall, Pat
Wallace, James
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Frank Cook and
Mr. Robert N. Wareing.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amery, Rt Hon Julian
Amess, David
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Batiste, Spencer
Beggs, Roy
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon Alick
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Clark, Hon Alan *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Critchley, Julian
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Evennett, David
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Gardiner, George
Gill, Christopher
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon *(Bury St E')*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hayes, Jerry
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Charles
Jack, Michael
Janman, Tim
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Lawrence, Ivan
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
McCrindle, Robert
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael

McNair-Wilson, P. *(New Forest)*
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Maude, Hon Francis
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mellor, David
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morrison, Sir Charles
Morrison, Rt Hon P *(Chester)*
Moss, Malcolm
Neale, Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, John *(Oxford W)*
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Redwood, John
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(Hertfordshire N)*
Stokes, Sir John
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Waller, Gary
Walters, Sir Dennis
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Mike
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Robert Boscawen and
Mr. Tristan Garel-Jones.

Question accordingly negatived.

Royal Assent

Madam Deputy Speaker: Before we proceed further with the Criminal Justice Bill, I have to notify the House, in accordance with the Royal Assent Act 1967, that the Queen has signified her Royal Assent to the following Acts:

1. Dartford—Thurrock Crossing Act 1988
2. Consumer Arbitration Agreements Act 1988
3. Scotch Whisky Act 1988
4. Motor Vehicles (Wearing of Rear Seat Belts by Children) Act 1988
5. Dartmouth—Kingswear Floating Bridge Act 1988
6. Brighton and Preston Cemetery Act 1988
7. Associated British Ports (Barrow) Act 1988

Criminal Justice Bill *[Lords]*

As amended (in the Standing Committee), again considered.

New Clause 83

AMENDMENT OF PRESCRIBED LIMITS

'In Schedule 8 of the Transport Act 1981, in the definition of "the prescribed limit" in paragraph 12(2), for the figures "35", "80", and "107", there shall be subsituted the figures "22", "50" and "67".'.—*[Mrs. Ann Taylor.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

I note that the measures which have just been proclaimed as having received the Royal Assent include the Scotch Whisky Act 1988, followed quickly by the Brighton and Preston Cemetery Act 1988. Without wishing to make fun of a serious situation, that is apt when we consider the problems relating to drinking and driving.

New clause 83 is an important new clause which seeks to amend the prescribed limits of alcohol which are permissible in the bloodstream when someone is allowed to drive legally in this country. I emphasise the word "legally," because we are all well aware that many people take risks and drink and drive, often without realising the impact that that will have on their driving ability. That affects the safety of our roads and of many people.

Those who have studied the problem realise that drinking and driving is extremely serious, and the problem has escalated in recent years. Our actions to deal with the problem in Britain lag behind those of many other countries, especially in western Europe.

Many problems are associated with drinking and driving. It is a major cause—perhaps the major cause—of avoidable deaths in this country. Figures show that between 1,400 and 1,600 people per year are killed on our roads as a direct result of people drinking and driving. We are all well aware of the grief, anguish and misery that drunken drivers cause, although many of them feel that they are capable of driving when they set out in their motor cars.

The problem of drinking and driving is always highlighted at one particular time of the year. It is good to see a representative of the Department of Transport in the Chamber, because it is the campaigns of the Department of Transport which bring the dangers of drinking and driving most before the public, usually around Christmas. I am sure that the Minister will correct me if I am wrong, but that is not necessarily the worst time for accidents involving drinking and driving. Indeed, I understand that most accidents involving drinking and driving occur at this time of the year when the evenings are light and many people go out to country pubs for a drink. People often drink more than they should until they are over the limit, and they cause accidents and frequently deaths.

The problem of drinking and driving is difficult, and it causes, as I have said, a great deal of grief and anguish. It is a problem that the House would do well to recognise and take seriously. It is because we think that the time is right to take action on this problem that we have tabled new clause 83.

The question is what we should do about the problem of drinking and driving. I do not think that anyone would dispute the fact that it is a serious problem. We can, of course, wring our hands and express regret, but the House could take a whole range of measures that would directly reduce the problem. The new clause deals with one of our suggestions of how to reduce the problem. That suggestion —amendment of the prescribed limit—would have an impact, although obviously it would have most impact if it were introduced as part of a whole range of measures. I am thinking particularly of such items as the random breath test, which I believe we shall eventually have in this country. We tabled an amendment on that, but unfortunately it was not selected.

Mr. Peter Thurnham (Bolton, North-East): Is the hon. Lady aware that random breath-testing was introduced in Australia recently and that it has led to a great reduction in drinking by people who intend to drive?

Mrs. Taylor: Australia's experience is shared by other countries that have introduced random breath-testing. I shall deal later with some of the other evidence from Australia. There is increasing evidence from many countries, both in Europe and beyond, which suggests that, if we had random breath tests and tightened up a range of matters, there would be safer roads and fewer lives lost as a result of drinking and driving.

The random breath test would be a contribution, as would a revision of the penalties involved and more action to help those people who have a drink problem, but who, unfortunately, believe that they are capable of driving. Home Office Ministers should consider the defence that is sometimes advanced—called the hip-flask defence—whereby those who are charged have a drink after the offence has been committed and use that as a means of getting themselves acquitted.

All those measures have a part to play, but I want to concentrate my remarks, to keep in order, on the amendment to limit the prescribed amount of alcohol in a person's bloodstream when he or she is driving. We are all aware that, 20 years ago, when the original drinking and driving legislation was introduced, there was an outcry from some people that it was an infringement of liberty and that we should let people drink and drive and use their own judgment of their ability to drive and when they had to exercise restraint. That outcry faded very quickly, and the breathalyser is now generally accepted as being right and a constructive measure in road safety.

Unfortunately, the initial impact of the breathalyser has worn off for some people. That is one of the reasons why so many people are now drinking and driving above the limit and why it is a major problem in this country. It is a major problem for the victims and their families and for the Health Service and the police. We therefore need to do more. It is interesting to see how the number of people charged with drinking and driving has increased over the years, which substantiates the argument that the initial impact of the breathalyser has worn off.

Mr. Joseph Ashton (Bassetlaw): Can my hon. Friend say whether the figure has increased in line with the number of drivers? Is she aware that there are now three times more drivers and three times more cars on the road than there were when the legislation was introduced, yet there are not three times more convictions?

Mrs. Taylor: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that intervention. Since the introduction of the breath test 20 years ago, there has been a fivefold increase in convictions in England and Wales, and findings of guilty for those who drink and drive, per 100,000 vehicles, which takes into account my hon. Friend's point about more vehicles on the road, have increased from 225 in 1969 to 545 in 1984. That shows that the fivefold increase in convictions has been the result of people becoming more lax in their attitudes to drinking and driving. All the evidence about people's reaction time when they are drinking and driving shows that it is extremely unwise to drink and drive, that reaction time is increased, that concentration and attention are reduced, that people are slower to process information and that their visual functions are impaired.

The Minister for Roads and Traffic (Mr. Peter Bottomley) *indicated assent.*

Mrs. Taylor: I am glad to see the Minister agreeing with all those points. All the evidence from all the countries, including this country, shows that drivers have a poorer performance when alcohol has been consumed. Although many drivers may be confident about their driving ability when they have been drinking, it is false confidence. That is one of the problems related to alcohol consumption.

5.15 pm

Mr. Hind: The hon. Lady has a good point, but does she not think that we should be considering other factors in relation to this matter? First, perhaps we should consider more severe sentences for those people convicted of such offences. Secondly, we should consider whether getting into a car while over the limit for driving is a reckless act in itself and, therefore, we should be looking to charge people with reckless driving. Thirdly, to assist in that, we should consider whether the police should have the power to conduct random breath tests whenever they wish to do so.

Mrs. Taylor: I am not sure whether the hon. Gentleman has been in the Chamber during the whole of my speech, but I made those three points earlier. I agree that we must consider the sentencing of people who are found guilty and the charges made against people. Many hon. Members agree that there is a strong case for random breath tests, which I would support because it would be a constructive measure.

Sir Ian Lloyd (Havant): I have followed the hon. Lady's comments with great interest. I had hoped that, having read the speech that I made on the Adjournment some months ago, when I described in great detail what is now possible, she would be admitting, welcoming and asking the Government to endorse a new possibility. The problem can be dealt with by technology. It does not require law. It requires a willingness to recognise, as has occurred in Australia, that the breathalyser ignition lock and various associated attachments could make it impossible for anyone to drink and drive, provided that it became a law of this country that every new car coming into use after a certain date should be fitted with a breathalyser ignition lock.

Mrs. Taylor: The hon. Gentleman makes an interesting suggestion. That would be one way of preventing those people who have been drinking to excess from driving. However, I believe that we have a greater responsibility. We must stop people drinking and then wanting to drive. We must ensure that people recognise their responsibilities and the dangers inherent in drinking and driving. Unfortunately, many people underestimate the impact of drinking on their driving ability.

I mentioned a moment ago some of the many difficulties that result from drinking and the way in which a driver's reaction is impaired. Many people do not realise that impairment starts at a very low level. The present level of 80 mg is rather high when compared with many other countries. All the evidence shows that concentration is impaired at as low a level as 30 mg of alcohol in the blood. Therefore, we should carefully consider reducing the present legal limit.

It is a simple fact that, at the present level of 80 mg, the average person is four times more likely to have an accident than if he or she had not been drinking. At 50 mg, the average person is still twice as likely to have an accident than if he or she had not been drinking at all.

Mr. Ashton: A short while ago my hon. Friend said that only 500 drivers out of every 100,000 are convicted of drink-driving. That is half of 1 per cent. On my hon. Friend's figures—not on mine—the original rate was 200 for every 100,000, which is 0·2 of 1 per cent. Surely my hon. Friend is taking a sledgehammer to crack a nut.

Mrs. Taylor: I do not know whether my hon. Friend recalls the figures that I produced, but they showed a fivefold increase in convictions since the breathalyser was introduced. I hope that my hon. Friend will not be complacent about the impact of drinking on driving. I am sure that he would not want to encourage motorists to drink and drive. It is the attitude of those who think that they are capable of drinking and driving that leads to so many of the serious accidents that occur. We all have a responsibility to ensure that motorists do not drink and drive, and that if they feel a need to drink they should minimise their drinking to the smallest level possible.

Sir Neil Macfarlane (Sutton and Cheam): Many of my hon. Friends and I have sympathy with what the hon. Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor) is saying, and many of her sentiments will be echoed throughout the country. Part of the problem is that the courts are not severe enough on those who are prepared to take the risk and do drink and drive. My hon. Friend the Member for Lancashire, West (Mr. Hind) referred to this indirectly in his comments about reckless driving. The 1957 legislation bore upon this and eliminated some of the potential convictions.

Mrs. Taylor: I agree with the hon. Gentleman. That was one of the reasons why we tabled a new clause that called for the introduction of random breath tests. Unfortunately, it was not selected for debate. We see the proposal in new clause 83 as one of the measures that should be introduced. We would also support the introduction of random breath tests because a lowering of "the prescribed limit" and random testing, when taken together, could have a significant impact on the number of deaths that occur through drinking and driving.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): I am listening carefully to the exposition of my hon. Friend the Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor). Sympathetic comments have been made by some Conservative Members, who want to see improved road safety and a reduction in drinking and driving. Many of them, however, found themselves in what might be called the brewers' lobby when the Licensing Bill, as it then was, was proceeding through the House. They voted for longer opening hours, to provide a greater opportunity to drink more and then to drive.

Mrs. Taylor: My hon. Friend makes a valid point. It was one that we raised when the Licensing Bill was passing through the House some months ago. We felt that the Government were creating a serious problem by legislating to increase pub opening hours before doing anything to tackle a range of problems associated with alcohol abuse, of which drinking and driving is one. If my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) considers the evidence in Scotland, where there has been all-day opening for some time, he will find that the peak time for drink-related road accidents starts in the late afternoon, at about 5 o'clock. Many of us are worried that that trend might be found in this country when the new licensing laws come into operation.

I shall return to the main issues raised by the new clause rather than get sidetracked on to some of the important but slightly wider issues that arise from it. I shall mention some of the difficulties that arise from the present limit of 80 mg when breathalyser tests are carried out. At 80 mg, the average person is four times more likely to have an accident than if he had not consumed alcohol. There are particular problems for certain groups in the population. Many countries have undertaken a great deal of research and obtained a considerable amount of information about the problems that arise for those of certain ages.

The House may be interested to know that drivers over the age of 55 years have an increased risk of having an accident while driving even if they have consumed only very small amounts of alcohol. Other research shows that 18 to 24-year-olds especially have a much higher increased rate of accidents when they have been drinking and driving. I hope that the Minister will consider introducing an even lower limit than the 50 mg that we are suggesting for learner drivers and new drivers. The mixture of motorists new to driving and new to drinking alcohol can be lethal. Young drivers, especially young men, who are drinking and driving and trying to improve their standing among their peer group in terms of the macho image, which, unfortunately, is so popular now, are in a particularly dangerous position.

Mr. Andrew Rowe (Mid-Kent): I have listened with great attention to the most recent argument advanced by the hon. Member, but I wonder whether it is not part of a wider one. Should not the size and maximum speed of cars be related to the experience of those driving them? The hon. Lady's figures do not, as she has presented them, differentiate clearly between the weight that we should put on experience and the weight that we should place on our experience in the consumption of alcohol.

Mrs. Taylor: I do not wish to follow the hon. Gentleman down that path. He has raised some interesting issues, but I do not think that they are especially pertinent to the new clause. They go somewhat wider than the clause. I agree that there is a range of road safety matters that we should be considering. Many countries have already revised their limits, and these are in line with the suggestion that is set out in new clause 83. Australia, Finland, Greece, the Netherlands, Iceland, Japan, Norway, Portugal, Sweden and parts of the United States have accepted that a limit of 50 mg is right and that it can be introduced with public acceptance. It is recognised that it is adequate for the police to monitor and enforce.

I believe that the time has come for us to revise the breath test laws. There is sufficient public concern and acceptance of the introduction of random breath tests and of a reduction in the amount of alcohol that can be permitted when someone is proposing to drive, but reducing the amount of alcohol that is allowed to be consumed by motorists is only one development. We must ensure also that there is enforcement of the limit, and of the right limit.

That is why I hope that the Government are considering carefully the introduction of random breath tests and the other measures that I have outlined. I believe that it is only a matter of time before we have random breath tests and a reduction of the limit. I hope that the House will not delay any longer, because with every delay we shall lose more lives. We should act now. The House should accept the new clause, which sets out a constructive suggestion which would help to save lives on our roads.

Sir Bernard Braine (Castle Point): I rise to support the new clause, which was moved so persuasively by the hon. Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor). I give it my full support, but I have one reservation, which concerns its effective enforcement. First, however, I shall deal with the reasons why I believe that it should be accepted. This is one of the occasions—they are all too few—when we can take a view across party lines. We are all in close touch with our constituents and I feel that there are many Opposition Members who will agree with a great deal of what I have to say. I hope too, that I shall be persuasive enough to ensure that many of my hon. Friends will agree with me as well.

The reason for my concern can be expressed quite simply. The international scientific consensus is that a blood alcohol level of 50 mg is the maximum compatible with the safety of other road users. Almost exactly 30 years ago an article appeared in the *British Medical Journal* reporting the results of a series of experiments to test the effect of small doses of alcohol on driving skill. The conclusion of the article was:

> "performance begins to deteriorate with very low blood alcohol concentrations, certainly of the order of 20-30mg per cent. and that the deterioration is progressive and linearly related to blood alcohol level. There is, in the study, no evidence of a threshold effect."

The key words were:

> "with alcohol there is no threshold, behaviour begins to deteriorate as soon as it is in the blood."

Some people may argue that, on that basis, the legal alcohol limit for driving should be reduced to 30 mg, or even to zero. I myself have great sympathy with that view. The absence of a clear threshold means that the choice of any blood alcohol level must to some degree be arbitrary. It involves accepting a level of consumption that has already impaired the capacity to drive safely. Therefore, no legal limit can be a safe limit, but some legal limits are considerably more unsafe than others. I hope that the Government will consider further whether even a 50 mg limit may be too high, especially for the young and inexperienced driver.

5.30 pm

On 13 January 1981, in the debate on the Transport Bill, I referred to the suggestion made by Miss Barbara Sabey, then of the Transport and Road Research Laboratory, that there should be a differential lower limit of 30 mg for young drivers. Since then, such legislation has been introduced in Australia. I hope that the Department of Transport keeps a watching brief on developments there and will be able to inform the House of the effects. It is sad that, despite so many warnings over the years—it has not happened just recently—from experts outside, here and elsewhere in the world and from parliamentarians on both sides of the House, we are still pressing the obvious, without any satisfaction.

One specific reason for reducing the present limit is that the introduction of evidential breath testing actually resulted in the legal limit in effect being raised to a level above 80 mg. The normal practice of not prosecuting drivers whose blood alcohol level is 40 micrograms per 100 ml of breath means that, in practice, the legal alcohol limit is now over 90 mg. There is, therefore, a compelling case for reducing the legal limit simply to take account of that factor, let alone the known effects of even small quantities of alcohol in impairing driving performance.

The argument normally put forward against lowering the limit is that the majority of those convicted of drinking and driving are found to be, not slightly above the present limit, but two or three times over it. Thus the majority of offenders do not make a slight, innocent error in calculating their blood alcohol level: they make no attempt to remain within the limit. There is little reason, therefore, to suppose that a lower limit would make any difference to them.

That argument is not, by any means, wholly convincing, because it overlooks the substantial change in public attitudes towards drinking and driving that appears to be taking place, as we know from our local newspapers. All of us have conversed with our constituents at our weekly surgeries and know that they are worried that we do not appear to be acting in the face of the mayhem on the roads caused by drinking drivers. Many people are increasingly inclined to see a contradiction between the message of the Government's anti-drink drive campaign that "One drink can kill" and a legal limit that still permits the consumption of large quantities of alcohol.

A reduction of the legal limit to 50 mg would therefore be an acknowledgment of the shift in public attitudes and a move in the right direction. For that reason alone, I would support the new clause. Such a reduction would be far more consistent with the message of the Government's campaign. If that is not grasped by Ministers, I for one cannot take their campaign seriously.

The difficulty about enforcement cannot be ignored, and that is the weakness of the new clause. If we do not succeed in enforcing effectively the present 80 mg limit, there is a danger that a lower limit will result in even greater difficulties. In the words of one of the early authorities on this subject, the Blennerhassett committee:

> "to reduce"

the limit to 50mg

> "would be of doubtful benefit while police resources remain severely limited; there are real disadvantages in enlarging the category of potential offenders when it is certain that many over the present limit avoid detection."

The majority of those who drink and drive are playing the percentage game. They know that their chance of

[Sir Bernard Braine]

detection on any journey is so small as to be negligible. No less a body than the National Audit Office pointed that out just two weeks ago. Countries such as Finland, Norway and Sweden and most of the states of Australia which are tackling drinking and driving successfully have a 50mg limit, but they also have random breath testing to ensure that the limit is enforced.

I do not believe that a 50mg limit, any more than an 80mg limit, could be enforced primarily by an education and publicity campaign. My hon. Friend the Minister for Roads and Traffic has campaigned vigorously in this direction and one cannot fail to admire him for that, but he has recently claimed that his campaign is having a greater effect than would random testing. That is a bold claim and is wholly at variance with experience in this as well as in other countries. The Government's interdepartmental review of road safety pointed out that education and publicity campaigns have not been shown to be effective in reducing the number of casualties. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will make available to the House the evidence on which he bases his claim.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I shall certainly do that. The interdepartmental review took place before the last year and a half of the campaign, and drink driving above the legal limit has halved among young men, who are the primary target group. That is a greater reduction than the drop claimed in Finland and Australia. It is worth remembering that 20,000 people were last year discovered to be above the legal limit in Sweden, which has one seventh of our population. That suggests that there is more drink driving there than here.

Sir Bernard Braine: After all the intensive efforts that have been made, I should be surprised if there had not been some results. As my hon. Friend chose to intervene at this point, I would point out that I asked for this information in a letter to him. In his reply, he perhaps absent-mindedly omitted to provide it. Of course, the proper place to provide it is on the Floor of the House of Commons. However, I take comfort from the fact that he has promised to provide that information. I suspect, however, that the evidence to which he refers is no more than a bit of market research data, derived from interviews with extremely small samples of the population, and is not, therefore, a measure of the real frequency of drinking and driving.

These days one cannot open up a newspaper after the weekend without seeing what is happening in the towns and villages of our peaceful countryside. Mobs of drunken youths, many of them arriving and leaving in their cars, are causing unprecedented disturbances. *[Interruption.]* It is no use my hon. Friend the Minister shaking his head. The evidence is there in the newspapers and in what chief officers of police have been saying. I hope that this matter will be taken seriously. I assure my hon. Friend that it is taken seriously in the country as a whole, and this is reflected in Members' postbags, certainly in mine. Market research is a doubtful means of finding out something entirely different—the willingness of people to admit that they drink and drive.

We have had anti-drink driving campaigns in Britain for decades.

Mr. Ashton: They do not work.

Sir Bernard Braine: The hon. Gentleman should say that to people who have lost dear ones in road accidents. Death and injuries are happening all the time. An improvement is certainly welcome, but the casualties still occur. Hon. Members and Ministers in this responsible Parliament should not forget that the toll goes on and that our efforts should not cease until it is reduced much further.

The slogan "If you drink don't drive, and if you drive don't drink" must be at least 50 years old. I was chairman of the National Council on Alcoholism for about nine years and that slogan was well known and greatly flourished at that time. Yet, in spite of it, the carnage on our roads has continued. Ironically, the main effect of the present campaign may well have been to firm up public opinion in favour of a lower legal limit and an effective system of enforcing that limit.

Despite the harsh words that I used about my hon. Friend the Minister, I admire a great deal of what he is trying to do and the energy that he puts into it. However, if he wants his campaign to succeed, he must accept something along the lines of the new clause. He must accept random breath testing, and he must demonstrate to the nation as a whole that he means serious business. I shortly hope to raise this and other matters with the Lord Privy Seal and Leader of the House of Lords.

I shall listen intently, therefore, to the Minister's reply. I should like him to give an assurance that the Government have an open mind on this question, are receptive to change, and are prepared to consider a lowering of the limit and effective enforcement of that lower limit. No hon. Member can have constituents who have not lost a loved one or a friend or a neighbour due to the recklessness of those who drink and drive. The nation is looking to the House to take effective action. If we fail to do so, it will not lightly forgive those responsible. I commend the new clause to the House on the understanding that the nettle of enforcement—that is the key—is firmly grasped.

Mr. Ashton: It is difficult to defend drunken driving, and I do not intend to do so. No hon. Member has any pity for someone who drinks and drives and causes an accident. However, we should get away from some of the extremism in the debate and look at the matter rationally. I shall begin by giving a few statistics. They are not my statistics, but come from reputable newspapers such as this week's *Sunday Times*.

Britain does not have an alcohol problem. A tiny section of the population, mainly teenagers in the open air marching down the streets to a football match or on the Costa Brava, at the Notting Hill carnival or in New Year's Eve celebrations, can be seen drinking from cans of lager and showing off, vandalising and wrecking the neighbourhood. That is where the problem with alcohol lies. The problem is not with the average middle-aged bloke who has a couple of pints in the pub and then goes home for his Sunday lunch or who goes home at half-past 10 during the week.

Britain's record on alcohol consumption is good. We are 20th in the world league table; and that statistic is taken from this week's *Sunday Times*. I do not want to bore the House but I shall read out the league table. France is at the top, followed by East Germany, Portugal, Hungary, Spain, West Germany, Austria, Belgium, Switzerland, Czechoslovakia, Denmark, Italy, Australia —which hon. Members have mentioned many times—

Argentina, Bulgaria, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Canada and the USA. All those countries have a greater alcohol consumption per head of population than Britain.

5.45 pm

Statistics show that the consumption of alcohol in Britain is going down every year. Last year it went down another 1·5 per cent. Britain drinks only half the amount that it consumed 50 years ago. However, there is much more hysteria now, more media attention and publicity campaigns and more effective protests by the temperance lobby. That is why there is a cry of wolf against the average person having a drink in a pub.

In 1968, when the legislation was introduced, there were far fewer cars on the road. There are now three times as many cars and three times as many drivers as when the breathalyser was brought in, but there are about the same number of accidents caused by drivers over the limit. There has been a great improvement not just in terms of drink and driving accidents but in terms of all accidents. The standard of driving is much higher and the cars are of much better quality. There are not as many 20-year-old cars on the road as there were in 1968, and roads are better, and better lit. As I say, in terms of drunken accidents or other accidents, the statistics are far better than they were in 1968. The number of positive tests has dropped by two thirds.

I am wary of statistics, because I often hear them trotted out about accidents involving drink and then find that many of them are caused by drunken pedestrians. They are the people who stagger out of a pub and walk into the middle of the road. A perfectly sober motorist is unable to avoid such a person, the pedestrian is knocked down, and that becomes a drink-related accident and goes into the statistics.

I shared a flat with the late Frank McElhone who was a Member of this House. He drove home from the pictures in Glasgow one night where he had been with his wife. It was New Year's Eve and as usual a drunk shouted, "Hello, Jimmy," and walked into the middle of the road and was knocked down. Frank had to go to be breathalysed, and was very upset. It was quite right that he was breathalysed, but it went on to the statistics as a drink-related accident. Far too often, people deliberately confuse the statistics. The present system is working well. I do not defend drunken drivers and have no lack of sympathy for people who have had relatives or friends injured in a drunk driving accident. Later in my speech, I shall look at how to prevent such accidents.

In my constituency we had a massive experience of random breath testing, as did the whole of Nottinghamshire in 1986 and, I think, 1985 when we had a chief constable, Mr. McLaughlin, who was a teetotaller and took on himself a one-man crusade to introduce random breath testing. I think that in doing that he broke the law, but nobody could stop him because there is no democratic control over chief constables.

In 1986 in Nottinghamshire, Mr. McLaughlin tested 4,733 people in about 10 days around Christmas. In the county of Derbyshire, 528 people were tested. South Yorkshire next door tested 652 people and in Cleveland 54 people were tested. When all these people had been tested it was found that 3 per cent. of them were over the limit. The percentage was exactly the same in Derbyshire or anywhere else. Mr. McLaughlin tested 10 times as many people as the other counties.

My constituents reacted with intense anger and uproar about the way in which the tests had been carried out. People were tested while they were filling their cars with petrol. A policeman would come up and say, "I suspect that you are over the limit." That used to happen at 5 o'clock, when people were on their way home from work. There were allegations that policemen had been given quotas and had been told—perhaps not by the chief constable but by others down the ladder—that they were expected to breath-test 35 motorists every day. People driving home from work when the pubs were shut were doing no harm at all but were faced with road blocks and were told by the police that they were conducting a test on tyres or windscreen wipers. When a motorist had demonstrated the windscreen wipers, he was given a breathalyser bag to blow into.

Such things caused an enormous protest, especially from people who did not drink. They were incensed that they had been stopped on their way home from work or stopped at a petrol station and forced into random breath testing. The other unfair aspect was that it depended on which county one lived in.

What is random? Does one stop one in 10 or one in 20, or is it up to the chief superintendent, who may feel liverish that morning, or may think that statistics are down and need bolstering? Perhaps the police will go out on odd days of the week and check every car with an odd number or every car with an even number. What is random? It depends on whether the chief constable is a teetotaller. It is the same with hon. Members, whose views are influenced by whether they are anti-drink. They are entitled to their opinion, but they should make it clear that they are anti-drink rather than against the present limits.

Mr. Alfred Morris (Manchester, Wythenshawe): I remind the House that, when Mrs. Barbara Castle introduced the Act in 1986, I assisted her in taking it through the House. The House was given an assurance that there would be no random testing under that legislation. We must accept that, whatever one's views of random testing, a change in the law is needed if it is to be authorised.

Mr. Ashton: Testing can be carried out only when a moving traffic offence has been committed. That was not the case in Nottinghamshire during those two Christmases. There was certainly a massive amount of testing—4,000 tests in 10 days.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: I hope that my hon. Friend will press the Minister on the specific point about whether random breath testing is legal at present. The Minister for Public Transport implied that random testing was possible, but Home Office Ministers have always insisted that a driver can be stopped at random for a purpose, but that there cannot be random testing. The Minister for Public Transport was slightly misleading the House.

Mr. Ashton: My hon. Friend illustrates the problems of this difficult matter well. If we accept the new clause, far more people will appear in court. There will be far more wrangles and extended arguments, and loopholes will be found. Matters will be far worse than at present.

Mr. Denis Howell (Birmingham, Smallheath): Does my hon. Friend accept the fundamental proposition that the civil liberties of the people of this country should prevent them from being apprehended and inquired into in

[Mr. Denis Howell]

circumstances that are an affront to their dignity, if there is no evidence available to the police officer to cause him to apprehend them?

Mr. Ashton: My right hon. Friend is right. Such an action would irritate and annoy the public to such an extent that any affection that they might have for the police would be quickly alienated.

Lowering the levels would have a great effect on rural constituencies such as mine. My constituency covers 300 square miles, with 50 towns, villages and parish councils. My constituents cannot be told to use public transport; there is no public transport. Many of the villages do not have a bus service after 6.30 in the evening. If people want to go for a casual drink, they have to go in their car or walk a mile along an unlit road with no pavement, which they do not want to do, especially in winter.

If the levels are lowered, many of the smaller clubs, such as miners' institutes and labour clubs, will close. There is no question about that. They will close because the average 50-year-old bloke who takes his wife out does not have a lot of money on which to get drunk. Even poor people in such areas have to have a car because there are no buses. Their night out means going down to a working man's club for a game of darts, two pints of bitter and a shandy, and when they drive home the only thing they meet on the road is a rabbit. There is nothing else to be seen on the road.

If the new clause is accepted, those people would sit indoors watching television with a can of lager. The new clause would have a great effect on the social fabric of rural areas. The institutes and the working men's clubs—where mums and dads go on Saturday nights to have a game of bingo—are the backbone of the community. Club members lay on the pensioners' treats at Christmas and organise a couple of bags of coal for them. I went to a function at one of these clubs last week. At the club, there were 259 widows from one pit in my constituency. They would never have gone out or done anything or got any attention if it were not for the miners' institute. It is only the Friday and Saturday nights that keep the institutes going.

In rural areas, there is little recorded drunken driving. The drink-driving accidents that occur, as the Minister said, involve 21 or 22-year-old yobboes driving old bangers, and not the people who keep the clubs going.

I understand why hon. Members want to prevent death on the roads. I should be more enamoured of the arguments of my hon. Friend the Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor) and of the right hon. Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine) if they covered all death on the road, and not just drunken driving. As the Minister knows, one of the biggest killers is weight and speed, not drinking and driving. Heavy lorries on motorways, particularly in fog, may plough into a line of cars and kill 60 or 70 people at a stroke. That causes far more damage than the average drink-driver. Why do we not have weighbridges and police to divert lorries off the M1 for compulsory weighing to establish whether they are carrying a weight too heavy for their brakes?

If hon. Members tied in their campaign with death on the roads from causes such as that, rather than hounding all those who have a drink, I should have more sympathy with their arguments. But they do not. They adopt the King Herod principle and say that the way to stop death on the roads is to stop all drinking. They might as well abolish all motor cars. They might as well say that to stop women being raped we should have a curfew and that women should not be allowed out after 6 o'clock at night. My hon. Friend the Member for Dewsbury tabled a very good new clause dealing with rape. If we had rape legislation equivalent to this new clause, there would be a tremendous public outcry.

People who go two or three times over the limit and kill others must be punished far more severely. That is the way to solve the problem. The Government should bring in legislation providing that anyone who kills someone while they are over the limit is charged with manslaughter and spends 10 or 15 years in prison. That would produce a far bigger decrease in the number of people over the limits. Word would get round that drivers who were over the limit would not just be fined £500, lose their licence for six months and pay more insurance, but would go to prison like anyone else who takes a life. I would support that 100 per cent. Collective punishment—the argument that the way to catch the culprit is to stop everyone—does not work. It builds up public resentment.

I accept that there is too much of a gamble. I accept that at the moment people weigh up the odds of getting stopped on the way home, work out that there is a 40:1 chance and think, "I am only one pint over. I will take the chance." They take that chance knowing that, if they get caught, they will only have to pay a £500 fine and lose their licence for six months. If they knew that they would have to go to prison and that the crime was classed with other crimes of violence such as grievous bodily harm and manslaughter and attracted the same penalties, they would adopt the same attitude to drink-driving as to those crimes. That would be a far better proposal.

We are at risk of setting a dangerous parliamentary precedent. The proposal should be dealt with in private Member's legislation. If we vote for the new clause, it will reach the statute book with less than an hour's debate. There has been no consultation with our constituents and none of the argy-bargy of listening to lobby groups. The new clause will not have been considered and wrangled over in Committee, as the Abortion (Amendment) Bill was. It will become law, it will have been bounced through and the reaction in the headlines tomorrow will rightly be one of outrage. It would be undemocratic to do so. A controversial subject such as this should be debated in Parliament over several weeks, not one hour. That is what the House is about. It would be a retrograde step to approve the new clause.

6 pm

Sir Ian Lloyd: I agree with so much of what the hon. Member for Bassetlaw (Mr. Ashton) said that I am able to keep my remarks briefer than I intended. Obviously, there is general agreement about the objective. No hon. Member would disagree with that. We wish to reduce the consequences of drunken driving, however and wherever they occur. That is obviously a matter of the gravest common sense. However, there is disagreement about the subsidiary objectives and the methods to achieve them. We must start thinking much more fundamentally about that point.

The hon. Gentleman was right to say that, if we go too far and too quickly down this road, we shall pose a major challenge to the social fabric and social behaviour patterns. Surely we do not have to recall the experience of prohibition in the United States to realise that the most powerful legislature can make an awful damned fool of itself if it passes laws that are effectively unenforceable because they require too radical, too drastic and too far-reaching a change in social behaviour, and require it too quickly.

Apart from the merits of the alcohol limit, it has been clear to me for a long time that there is a paradox, an inherent inconsistency between the law as it stands, which prescribes a limit that may or may not be too high—it is probably about right, but there is room for argument—and the suggestion that no one should drink and drive.That is an absolutist view. As the hon. Gentleman pointed out, we shall achieve that only by eliminating driving or by eliminating drinking. That is not realistic.

The country spends on alcohol just under what it spends on the National Health Service. As the hon. Gentleman pointed out, it spends half that sum on drinking alcohol in 2·5 million public houses. The vast majority of those who consume alcohol in such places get to and from them by car. That will not be changed by Government, and it will not be changed by law. Even the proper objective of eliminating drunken hooligan youths causing mayhem in villages and towns cannot be achieved by law, but it can be eliminated if no cars can be started by drunken drivers.

The technology is now available. It has been effectively demonstrated in Australia, where limits are lower, and it has been used for drivers on probation in California. The technology is not all that expensive. Obviously, it cannot be brought in overnight, and it will probably be difficult to apply it to existing vehicles, but if the House is serious and it wants to eliminate drunken driving, there is only one way to do it, and that is to fit every vehicle with a breathalyser ignition lock. That would create one problem. In any society there are always individuals who will say, "I shall get around that. I shall fiddle with the sealed box. I shall break the seals and tamper with the electronics in such a way that, even though the car has a breathalyser ignition lock, I can override its commands."

That would pose the same kind of problem as going through the green customs channel when one should go through the red channel. Obviously, the penalties must be infinitely higher. It will not eliminate the need for occasional or systematic checks of drivers' alcohol intake, but the police would be entitled to assume that every vehicle beyond a certain age and which was so equipped could not be driven by a drunken driver. In such cases, the penalties for so doing could properly be five or 10 times those for drivers of any other vehicle. The problem can be taken care of.

The essence of this extremely difficult and important matter is that we shall not achieve our objective by any changes in the law that have as their basic assumption—my hon. Friend the Minister takes it as his basic assumption—total abstinence on the part of every driver on every possible occasion. That is a counsel of perfection. Human societies do not achieve perfection. For heaven's sake, when technology comes rushing in with new devices that enable us to achieve our objectives without draconian laws and draconian enforcement, let us use them.

Mr. Roland Boyes (Houghton and Washington): My speech will be quite brief, as I made the case for lowering the blood alcohol limit when I presented a private Member's Bill earlier this year. That Bill was supported by all political parties.

Tomorrow, Parliament will receive a lobby group. That is not exceptional—Parliament receives many lobby groups. But tomorrow's lobby will be the most emotional for some considerable time. It is organised by the Campaign Against Drinking and Driving, a group that supports the families of people who are killed or injured by drunken, irresponsible drivers. I invite my hon. Friend the Member Bassetlaw (Mr. Ashton) and other hon. Members to attend the meeting in the Grand Committee Room at half past 2 tomorrow afternoon.

My hon. Friend is a forceful speaker, and he made his points strongly. He said that, when random checks were made in several counties, 3 per cent. of drivers were found to be over the limit. Three per cent. is one car in every 30. If one stands beside fast-moving traffic, 30 cars will pass by every minute. If one in 30 drivers is over the limit, people on motorways or fast-moving dual carriageways are at significant risk. Three per cent. is a huge figure.

Mr. Ashton: It was 3 per cent. who were over the limit, not 3 per cent. who were involved in accidents. That is a different figure.

Mr. Boyes: I concede that 3 per cent. of all drivers were over the limit. If one is over the present limit, one's chances of being in an accident are high. I shall be even more wary if, every time I drive my car, one driver out of the 30 drivers that pass me is over the legal limit. If that is the case, a large number of people are breaking the law.

My hon. Friend referred to non-drinkers being incensed. He knows full well that I am a non-drinker. He went on to suggest that non-drinkers are against alcohol. Living in the north-east of England and being a member of two dozen workmen's clubs, many of which I visit regularly——

Mr. Ashton: Not any longer.

Mr. Boyes: My hon. Friend says, "Not any longer." I have introduced two private Member's Bills, one on random breath testing and one on lowering the blood alcohol limit. On each occasion, the response was favourable, because the people I represent—the working people in the north-east—have more wit. They understand the family consequences of some drunken slob killing somebody.

Mr. Ashton: Send the driver to gaol.

Mr. Boyes: The victim does not go to gaol. It is too late to send people to gaol when they have wiped out a family or a part of a family.

Mr. Ashton: My hon. Friend said that the reaction of the public was favourable. Is he aware that Barbara Castle said exactly the same when she introduced the original Bill, but in the following month at a Leicester by-election the Labour party was slaughtered and lost a seat as a result of public reaction? The silent majority are those who do not write letters. My hon. Friend would find a different reaction from people in his club if the amendment were passed.

Mr. Boyes: My hon. Friend said that he was suspicious of data and market research; I am dubious and suspicious about that little piece of evidence. He said that people

[Mr. Boyes]

would react but, obviously, he has not been reading the recent opinion polls, especially those on random breath tests. The latest shows that more than 80 per cent. of the public wished random breath testing to be introduced.

Even in the correspondence column of the *Spectator,* I have praised what the Minister for Roads and Traffic is doing. In fact, I praise anybody, especially the Government, who does anything about drinking and driving and alcohol abuse. All hon. Members should welcome that. I cannot understand why my hon. Friend has a blind spot. On everything else he is going in the right direction, but he runs into a brick wall whenever random breath tests are mentioned.

Mr. Ashton *rose*——

Mr. Boyes: Will my hon. Friend give me a second or two? He had a long crack at his speech. The Whip is looking at me and we all know that that means that I must end my speech.

I have never lived in a city, but when the canny and sensible folk in the north-east go out in fours, three of them will drink and one will not—*[Interruption.]* I notice that the heckling is coming from my hon. Friends.

I wish that the Government would do more to promote non-alcoholic drinks, because that would solve part of the problem. People could spend an evening in a pub, club, hotel or wherever and drink as many non-alcoholic beers as they wished. I am not an expert on these matters, but my friends who drink non-alcoholic beers tell me that they are as enjoyable as alcoholic ones. [HON. MEMBERS: "Not true."] I still advocate them, and I ask the Minister to push them very strongly.

The Campaign Against Drinking and Driving press release states that at half past 2 tomorrow:

> "A representative group of victim families, from as far afield as Manchester and Newcastle"—

and, I understand, Northern Ireland—

> "will be pleading with M.P.s to work for the introduction of an effective system of random breath testing before another 500 innocent victims are killed on our roads by drinking drivers.
>
> Each will carry a white flower for the dead victim(s) in their family who has been killed in circumstances which they regard as a form of murder."

One family coming tomorrow will be carrying three white flowers. Just think what that actually means—some arrogant, selfish individual killed three members of one family. It is all right for my hon. Friend and other hon. Members to say, "They should have sent him to jail," but that is not the solution. I do not want more people in jail. I want people to drive cars without alcohol in their systems. That will stop people being killed on our roads.

Reference has been made to the cost of the alcohol industry. The latest paper that I have received states that drink-related accidents are costing the NHS—the taxpayer—about £400 million a year. Therefore, not only are people being killed, but a heavy strain and cost is being placed on the Health Service.

6.15 pm

I support lower alcohol limits. I do not have time to read the letters that I received each time that I introduced my ten-minute Bills, but they are tragic and bring tears to my eyes, even when I re-read them. Many people are being killed on our roads. In fact, three people will be killed today, three more people tomorrow and three more the day after. On every day of this year three people will be killed on the roads because some other people will drive with too much alcohol in their blood, thus impairing their driving.

I support the proposal to reduce the blood alcohol limit. My advice to youngsters, new drivers and even experienced drivers—in fact, to everyone, and I am prepared to say it to my constituents broadly and loudly—is "if you go out with your car, do not drink alcohol." That must be the message.

Sir Neil Macfarlane: I do not wish to detain the House for very long, because I know that my hon. Friends want to make progress. The hon. Member for Houghton and Washington (Mr. Boyes) gave the House a powerful reminder of the dilemma that we face. Of course, the comments of hon. Members underline the dissent on both sides of the House.

I have a general sympathy for the aims and objectives of the new clause that the hon. Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor) so articulately moved. Many people outside this House will echo her remarks. During the past few months there has been some disquiet about which Government Department is in charge. In recent years I had some loose connection with this problem in another area. While I commend my hon. Friend the Minister for Roads and Traffic for his annual campaign, as I did not support the Licensing Bill I cannot help but feel that that campaign should be prolonged over a 12-month period, not just over four, six or eight weeks.

However commendable the hon. Lady's proposal, I am not convinced that it is legislatively absolutely right. I shall listen closely to what my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department has to say. If our right hon. and noble Friend the Minister of State is to be believed, and from what I saw a few months ago on television, the Home Office is not entirely seduced by the argument on random breath testing. Our right hon. and noble Friend made it clear to the annual meeting of police officers that he would not encourage further conflict between the motoring fraternity and the police. If that lead is taken, this problem will be kicked into touch quite a long way.

We have a problem with the relevant influence of the Department of Transport and the Home Office. Even if we accept only one quarter of what we read in the newspapers and see on television—not just in recent weeks or months, but the pattern during the past two or three years—no one doubts that alcohol abuse and alcohol and liquor consumption are problems.

I shall listen closely to what my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary has to say about the package that our right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Home Affairs intends to introduce. We will be sitting on a powder keg if some serious action is not taken.

Mr. Ivan Lawrence (Burton): Drunken driving is an appalling offence, particularly when it leads to death. Everyone has a burning desire to stop it and to toughen the various penalties that exist, but there is a danger of over-reaction.

What we are discussing is whether we have the balance right regarding our drink-driving laws, whether there should be a tightening up, and, if so, which direction that should take. It is not immediately apparent to me that there are millions or even thousands of people who believe that the way in which to improve the situation is to reduce the level of alcohol that drivers can consume before they are not permitted to drive. I have received hardly any letters suggesting that that particular solution to the problem has the public's favour. If the changes in the law do not meet with public approval and support, they will do far more harm than good.

We have been discussing random breath-testing, and I believe that something should be done. As the right hon. and learned Member for Aberavon (Mr. Morris) has said, it is perfectly true that it is unlawful to breath-test at random. However, it is not unlawful to stop a driver at random and then to breath-test if there is a suspicion of alcohol in the breath. It seems to me that the end is the same. The public are disturbed by the fact that there is no lawful random breath-testing yet that is sometimes what the police seem to be enforcing. The matter must be clarified.

Random breath-testing does take place. We are aware of police forces that carry it out and, as it were, say, "We are doing it; now take action against us." I believe that it should be open to the police to target campaigns when they choose in order to stop people getting into their cars after they have been drinking to excess. If that means that such campaigns would take place outside public houses or clubs, that would benefit society, provided that the police do it with good sense and provided that is what the law specifically allows. The confusion about whether random breath tests are allowed disturbs people and distracts one from the true argument. We should have a law that is clear to everyone and reduces the number of drivers who drive under the influence of drink.

The courts have in recent years tightened up on drink-driving offences. The hon. Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor) said that we must get rid of the hip flask defence, which enables a person to argue that he has taken a drink after he has got into a car and driven. The hon. Lady is behind the times. Such a defence was stopped seven years ago. The appeal courts are tightening up on the rules determining the degree of a person's blame while driving under the influence of drink.

It is iniquitous that a driver under the influence of drink who kills somebody should be able to "cop a plea" of careless driving and receive a fine, together with disqualification. No wonder the public are appalled at that. I hope that the Government will take on board the new North committee proposals, which are designed to ensure that such a practice does not happen in the future, and that a drunken driver who kills receives a substantial sentence. It should no longer be possible for a court to accept pleas of guilty to a lesser charge. I hope that the fact that the Crown prosecution service has replaced the police as the prosecuting unit will have some effect.

There are areas in which we can, with public acceptability, reduce the incidence of drink-driving. We must ask, however, whether the new clause will help. I know that my hon. Friend the Minister will provide some facts and statistics that are somewhat different from the picture that is generally thought to exist. We are reducing the amount of drinking that goes on and there are fewer people driving vehicles under the influence of drink. Whenever there is a party or a gathering nowadays there are couples where one partner touches no drink and drives home. That habit is gaining momentum in our society.

There is a danger that we will over-react and tilt the balance in the wrong direction. We could stop people dying on the roads by banning the motor car. As a result 20,000 fewer deaths would occur. We could stop people dying from smoking by banning cigarettes—2,000 deaths a year would be avoided. We could stop people being killed by shotguns or any other firearm, accidentally or deliberately, by banning firearms. We could stop women being raped at night if we had a curfew on our women.

Do we want to restrict movement in our society and alter the social fabric by implementing restrictions that are so extreme that they interfere with the broadly pleasant and happy life that our people enjoy? If we go too far to restrict the liberties of the individual and if we do not put some brake on the trend to do so, we may find ourselves living in a Britain where nobody wants to enjoy themselves and where few will want to stay.

I believe that my hon. Friend the Minister should be cautious. We should do whatever we can, of course, to restrict and put an end to drinking and driving, if that is possible, but such restrictions must be acceptable to the public. I believe that the proposals in the new clause are years ahead of their time. I do not detect the public calling out for a further reduction in the level of drinking that takes place. Such a reduction would destroy a part of our rural life. The village pub may be several miles from some villagers and they would be unable to get to and from it unless they had a vehicle. Such village pubs are of value to our society and we would do well to try to maintain them and the rural way of life that they represent.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): In common with my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton (Mr. Lawrence), I am in favour of people living a broadly pleasant and happy life, but they can do so only if they manage to stay alive. Drink-driving wipes out far too many people.

I disagreed with the original proposals introduced by Lady Castle. I believe that the driver of a vehicle should not drink at all. My hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton has said that such a custom has grown, but I believe that it should be the law of the land, as it is in many other countries. There should be a non-drinker in every vehicle. Given that that suggestion does not form part of the new clause, I believe that that new clause is the next best thing.

I believe that it is exceedingly important that the Chancellor of the Exchequer should provide incentives for the supply of soft or low alcohol drinks. At the moment such drinks are as expensive or more expensive than the full-bodied beer, which Opposition Members appear to rate so highly. I plead with the Minister to make provision for a non-drinking driver in every vehicle but, in lieu of that, the new clause is the next best thing.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Douglas Hogg): There has been much discussion about random breath testing, and I believe it would be helpful to remind the House of the law. The position is governed by section 159 of the Road Traffic Act 1972. That Act enables the police to stop, at random, any motorist they choose. Having stopped a motorist, a policeman may require him to take the test if any of the ordinary three criteria exist: suspicion that the driver has alcohol in the blood, has committed a moving traffic offence, or has been involved in an accident. There is no

[Mr. Douglas Hogg]

statutory power to require random tests, but there is a statutory power to stop at random and then, if the three ordinary criteria exist, the test may be required. That seems a sensible approach.

6.30 pm

My hon. Friend the Member for Havant (Sir I. Lloyd) made a powerful argument in favour of some forms of technology. I know that he has a particular device in mind. This matter was addressed at some length by Dr. North in his recently published report, and I refer my hon. Friend to paragraph 350 on page 44. There are serious problems with all the devices known to and identified by Dr. North in that report, but Dr. North recommends that the Government should keep in close contact with technological developments. I entirely agree, although I am somewhat cautious about the idea that one can resolve this problem by means of technological devices.

The hon. Member for Bassetlaw (Mr. Ashton), in a powerful speech, commended caution in making major changes in the law on Report. I agree with him. This would be a major change, and it would have been arrived at without the benefit of discussion in Committee. Therefore, I find myself strongly supporting the hon. Gentleman's argument.

Turning to the major issue of whether we should lower the threshold——

Sir Eldon Griffiths: I accept my hon. Friend's general point, but I hope that he will apply it to his own right hon. and hon. Friends. He will know that only a few days before this debate the Government introduced on Report entirely new matter dealing with DNA. My hon. Friend was wrong to do that; but he is right to say that substantial changes should not be made without Committee stages on the Floor of the House.

Mr. Hogg: As a general proposition it is desirable not to introduce major changes on Report. However, when changes are introduced on Report they often reflect detailed discussion in Committee, although they were not the subject of specific amendments there. I am only asserting a general proposition. Of course I accept that there will be exceptions to it. I shall not rise to the bait that my hon. Friend has so seductively put before me.

The threshold is the subject of the new clause. I do not think that drinking and driving mix. The conclusion to which I have come, and to which I now try to adhere in my own life, is that one cannot safely drive if one has been drinking. That is the only message that can properly be expressed. At the same time, I do not yet think it right to incorporate that view in statute.

The essential question is the point at which to set the threshold. We are divided between two propositions—50 and 80 mg——

Mr. Boyes: The Minister has said that it was not yet right. When will it be? How will he determine when it is right—when another 10,000, 20,000 or 50,000 people have been killed by drunken drivers?

Mr. Hogg: I cannot answer that question, because the law must both reflect and lead public opinion in matters of this sort. The time may come when public opinion will favour a level of alcohol concentration so low as to amount to a no-drinking rule. I put it like that because the body produces natural alcohol levels, so a certain level must be allowed for. That time, however, has not yet come and I cannot see it coming in the near future. It may come. I do not close down the range of possibilities.

The hon. Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor) suggested that our level of 80 mg is on the high side compared with other countries. I think that she is mistaken. It is true that a number of countries have a lower level, but many countries have the same one. I use the 1985 figures because they are the latest ones known to me. Countries which have a level similar to our own include Australia, Belgium, Denmark, France, the Federal Republic of Germany, Luxembourg, Spain and Switzerland.

What should we be trying to do? We need to secure a greater compliance with the law rather than to reduce the threshold. The 1986 figures show that there were about 303,000 roadside tests, of which 68 per cent. were negative. I am glad to say that the proportion of negative tests has been rising substantially. In 1983, for example, it was 58 per cent.; in 1984, it was 59 per cent.; in 1985, it was 62 per cent.; and in 1986, 68 per cent. That shows, not conclusively but encouragingly, that drivers are now getting the message that drinking and driving do not mix.

We are achieving success in this area by a process of education and persuasion. We should continue with that, rather than reduce the statutory threshold.

Sir Ian Lloyd: It would be interesting to elucidate this point. When a breathalyser test—positive or negative—is given by the police, are the police obliged to record which of the three reasons entitled them to give the test?

Mr. Hogg: I do not know the answer to that off hand. I note that the hon. Member for St. Helens, South (Mr. Bermingham) thinks they do not. He may well be right. If my hon. Friend will forgive me, I shall have to write to him with an answer.

Dr. Lewis Moonie (Kirkcaldy): I thank the Minister for giving way, especially as I have not been here for most of the debate.

The argument is surely not about what other countries do, or what public opinion will accept, or whether there are other means of stopping people drinking and driving; it should be about whether the level of 50 mg is significantly safer than 80 mg. The Minister should be aware, as I am, that 80 mg in the blood is a level at which it is unsafe to drive. It impairs performance significantly. Both levels impair performance, but 50 mg does so significantly less.

Mr. Hogg: The figure of 80 mg was fixed after careful research as being the point at which the risk increased sharply. I am not trying to pretend that people are not a little safer at 50 mg: they probably are. Nevertheless, 80 mg represented a considered assessment. We must take a balanced view and determine what we are trying to do. I believe that we should seek to achieve better compliance with the law before making statutory changes of the sort that have been canvassed tonight.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: I shall be brief, because we want to discuss many other things tonight. I want to answer some of the points that have been raised.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bassetlaw (Mr. Ashton) suggested that all who want a tightening up of the laws against drinking and driving are against drink, but that is not so. Many people enjoy a drink and regard themselves as social and responsible drinkers, but understand from the available evidence that drinking and driving do not mix and that we have a responsibility to ensure that they do not.

My hon. Friend the Member for Houghton and Washington (Mr. Boyes) mentioned the lobby that will take place tomorrow when families of victims of drunken drivers will lobby Members for stiff penalties and for tighter laws on drinking and driving. I hope that hon. Members will listen to those families and that this evening they will consider the anguish that has been caused and the avoidable deaths that have been caused. In few other areas are so many people killed in a way that is avoidable. We cannot dispute the statistics, which show that every year 1,500 or 1,600 people are killed as a result of drinking and driving.

Some Conservative Members, including the hon. and learned Member for Burton (Mr. Lawrence) and the Minister, talked about getting the balance right. There is little balance for the victims of drunken drivers. Their lives, and often the lives of their families, have been destroyed.

My hon. Friend the Member for Kirkcaldy (Dr. Moonie), who came in late because he had been detained at a meeting, made an important point to the Minister. Although the debate has been widened to include many aspects of drinking and driving such as random breath tests, because the new clause must be seen in the context of the existing breathalyser laws, the basic point is whether the permitted blood alcohol level should be 50 or 80 mg. All the evidence that has been presented by hon. Members on both sides of the House proves that there is a significantly higher risk of accidents if people are allowed to drive with a blood alcohol level of 80 mg.

Mr. Bermingham: Does my hon. Friend agree that the Minister said that the level of 80 mg was fixed in about 1967, based on the research then available? Since then considerably more research has been done and we know more about the subject. It is apparent that the danger risk level of 80 mg is far too high and that the appropriate level would be about 50 mg.

Mrs. Taylor: My hon. Friend is right. The updated evidence from Australia and other countries supports that proposition. There is now general agreement on the matter.

In an intervention, the Under-Secretary of State for Transport said that he spends much of his time and his Department spends much money campaigning against drinking and driving. He believes that it has had some effect. That may be the case, but the £2·5 million spent by the Department of Transport recognises the problem and I hope that he will persuade his hon. Friends in government that we should go further. We should campaign, not simply to discourage people from drinking and driving, but to ensure that there is a proper limit, and we suggest that 50 mg should be that limit.

The matter gives rise to controversy among hon. Members on both sides of the House and it provokes strong feelings. The Licensing Act that the Government have just pushed through Parliament will allow people to drink throughout the day, and the pattern that has emerged in Scotland will be repeated here. The peak time for drink-related vehicle accidents will start earlier, as has happened in Scotland. If there is to be more drinking throughout the day, we should do more about the problems created by drinking and driving. We need more than new clause 83, but it is a step in the right direction and I hope that the House will accept it.

Question put, That the clause be read a Second time:—

The House divided: Ayes 139, Noes 281.

Division No. 386] **[6.43 pm**

AYES

Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashdown, Paddy
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Battle, John
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boyes, Roland
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buchan, Norman
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Corbett, Robin
Cryer, Bob
Dalyell, Tam
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Douglas, Dick
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Fatchett, Derek
Fearn, Ronald
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fyfe, Maria
Galloway, George
George, Bruce
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Haynes, Frank
Heffer, Eric S.
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Geraint
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
John, Brynmor
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Kennedy, Charles
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Lewis, Terry
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
Macdonald, Calum A.
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
McTaggart, Bob
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Meacher, Michael
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliott
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Neill, Martin
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Robertson, George
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Sedgemore, Brian
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Spearing, Nigel
Steinberg, Gerry
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Vaz, Keith
Wall, Pat
Wallace, James
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David

Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Frank Cook and
Mr. Ken Eastham.

NOES

Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amery, Rt Hon Julian
Amess, David
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Ashton, Joe
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beggs, Roy
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon Alick
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Clark, Hon Alan *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Critchley, Julian
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh

Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Gardiner, George
Gill, Christopher
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon *(Bury St E')*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Charles
Jack, Michael
Janman, Tim
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Lawrence, Ivan
Leadbitter, Ted
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Leighton, Ron

Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
McCrindle, Robert
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New Forest)*
Madel, David
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morrison, Sir Charles
Moss, Malcolm
Neale, Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, John *(Oxford W)*
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Redwood, John
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard

Sackville, Hon Tom
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(Hertfordshire N)*
Stokes, Sir John
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Tracey, Richard
Trippier, David
Turner, Dennis
Twinn, Dr Ian
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Waller, Gary
Walters, Sir Dennis
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Mike
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Robert Boscawen and
Mr. Tristan Garel-Jones.

Question accordingly negatived.

New Clause 84

COURT'S POWER TO ORDER SUSPENSION OF PASSPORT

'(1) Where a person is convicted for an offence punishable with imprisonment the Court by or before which he is convicted may in addition to or instead of dealing with him in any other way disqualify him for holding or obtaining a United Kingdom passport, a British visitor's passport or a British Excursion Document.

(2) A person who is disqualified by an order of a court from holding or obtaining a United Kingdom passport, a British visitor's passport or a British Extension Document may appeal against such order in the same manner as against a conviction and the court making such order may if it thinks fit suspend the disqualification pending an appeal against the order.'.—*[Mr. Favell.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Mr. Tony Favell (Stockport): I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

I hope not to detain the House too long because since I tabled new clause 84 the Minister with responsibility for sport, my hon. Friend the Member for Lewisham, East (Mr. Moynihan), has announced the Government's five-point plan to combat football hooliganism. One of the proposals under consideration is to give courts the power to suspend passports in appropriate cases. Consequently, the idea has been thoroughly debated in the press, so my task made a little easier.

My hon. Friend the Minister with responsibility for sport has an extraordinarily difficult job, and he has the support of hon. Members in his task of combating football hooliganism, which we have all witnessed on television in recent weeks. The majority of those to whom I have spoken since I tabled new clause 84 have said that they are behind him in his efforts to stamp out the sort of behaviour that we have witnessed, whether or not those measures have the whole-hearted support of the football hierarchy.

Like many others, I am a keen football supporter. The fact that I regularly visit my boyhood team, Sheffield Wednesday, and also Stockport County, proves my bona fides. But the majority of football supporters are also proud of their country, and if the activities of the minority bring the country into disrepute, severe measures are warranted.

7 pm

My new clause is intended to give the courts power to suspend the passport of a convicted person in the same way that they are allowed to suspend a person's driving licence for some driving offences. If society judges that someone is not fit to drive for a set period, I see no earthly reason why a court should not decide that someone should be deprived of his British passport. The holding of a British passport is a privilege, and many would agree that it is a privilege which society has the right to withdraw.

I understand that my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department will suggest to the House that computerisation is not sufficiently advanced to enable the authorities properly to administer any such ban, certainly in the case of British visitors' passports and excursion documents. It might be a good idea if, with the leave of the House, my hon. Friend spoke early in the debate in order to set out the Government's position.

The vast majority of the British people are worried about the activities of hooligans abroad, and it would be useful if the Minister could set out the Government's attitude to the new clause and in particular, for example, say whether the Government merely intend to delay its implementation or to introduce legislation of their own, and, if so, when we can expect it. In addition, when can we expect the passport system to be properly computerised in order to enable that legislation to be put into effect?

It might also be an idea if the problems posed by Belgium allowing British people into the country solely on proof of identity were to be addressed, and if the Belgian authorities were invited to withdraw that privilege. After the appalling disaster at the Heysel stadium, it might be a good idea for that country to have better checks on who enters.

Not only would the suspension of passports reduce the likelihood of the kind of behaviour abroad in which football hooligans indulge; it would also reduce the kind of behaviour that we have seen in tourist resorts abroad, in particular in Spain. Many will consider it an act of punishment to have a British passport withdrawn. If somebody who has indulged in violent behaviour is told that they will not be able to go abroad on holiday, so much the better. That would be a suitable punishment, as well as ensuring that our name abroad is not besmirched.

I have no doubt that the new clause, aimed at the mindless hooligan, will be opposed by some libertarians —the same mindless libertarians who, in the 1960s, extolled the virtues of a permissive society, of which we are now reaping the bitter harvest. The indiscipline that was then introduced into schools when freedom of expression took away the power of teachers properly to punish, as well as the lack of a proper curriculum, is now leading to the indiscipline of those teenagers.

Those libertarians have had their day. Now it is the turn of those interested in a different type of freedom. It is now the turn of those who want the freedom to enjoy our national game of football at home and abroad, free from bad language, obscene gestures and violence. The time has now come for those who do not attend football matches but live near grounds to be able to enjoy a Saturday with their families free from fear of drunken louts damaging their property or worse. The turn has now come for those who want to enjoy their annual holidays in Majorca, Benidorm or on the Costa Brava, free from shame at the activities of their countrymen who don clothes bearing the Union Jack and then drag it through the mud. I commend my new clause to the House.

Mr. Denis Howell: I am glad to be able to intervene in the debate in favour of what the hon. Member for Stockport (Mr. Favell) is suggesting, although certainly not accepting the logic at the end of his speech. It is not apparent to me that the difficulties with which we are dealing, of evil-minded people misbehaving at home or abroad, at football matches or on beaches, can necessarily be put down to the changes in society about which he talked. He was unwise to take that line.

Such a simplistic view encourages people such as me to remind the House that three years ago the Prime Minister sent for all the football authorities. The propaganda machine at No. 10 Downing street put out the fact that the Prime Minister was now in charge of matters relating to football hooliganism and all would now be dealt with satisfactorily. That, pre-eminently, has not been the case. It would be simplistic for me now to say that the Prime Minister, not the leaders of football, should be resigning for failing to carry out the promise that she made to the nation two years ago. I do not want to go that far. I want only to refute the hon. Gentleman's equally ludicrous proposition.

There is one deficiency in the new clause, and that is that it does not tell us how offenders abroad will be dealt with. As I understand it, the new clause deals exclusively

[Mr. Denis Howell]

with proceedings before British courts. It may well be that people who come before British courts are a threat to peace and order overseas and should be dealt with, but that is not immediately obvious from the new clause.

An even greater deficiency is that the new clause does not enable people who cause trouble overseas to be dealt with by the British courts or to have their passports or other documents removed, as many of us would wish, if they have committed grave offences overseas.

Mr. Favell: I recognise that the new clause deals merely with those people convicted of offences in Britain. Clearly, it would be more difficult to deal with offences that are committed abroad and, in particular, to give courts abroad power to withdraw British passports or, alternatively, for courts here to deal with offences that have been dealt with abroad. That does not mean to say that I rule that out or do not accept it. If the Government or the Opposition can find a way of dealing with that, they will have my vote.

Mr. Howell: It is good to know that the hon. Gentleman will bow to superior wisdom when it is forthcoming from the Opposition Benches or elsewhere. However, he will accept that it is illogical to suggest that, because someone has been convicted of an offence in the British courts, we should assume that he will commit an offence abroad and therefore we should withdraw his passport. It may well be that that will happen, but that is not automatically the case.

I want to ask the Minister several questions about our recent troubles. I start by reminding the House that at the same time as the Minister with responsibility for sport was in Germany having a look at the evil-doing of a few young people there—the majority of people there were well behaved, but a minority of people caused some serious disorder and it is important to understand the numbers involved—the Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs was in Spain discussing with the Spanish Government the equally abhorrent activities of some British subjects on Spanish beaches and in Spanish bars. I make that point because we are dealing with a social disease that has nothing to do with football.

This weekend in the Birmingham papers there was a headline about football hooligans going on the rampage and 50 Leicester city supporters being arrested. Last week we had people from Leamington Spa and Warwick, and it was said that that was because there was no football for them to go to. These activities have nothing to do with football, but unfortunately football is one of the ways through which these people pursue their activities.

I believe that it would be sensible to improve the computerisation of the Home Office. If the Minister tells us that these things cannot be done yet, because Home Office computers are not sufficiently sophisticated to track down the holder of a passport or a travel document, I am sure that the whole House will say that he should get on and do something about improving the computerisation. A police officer in a motor car can be in touch with the Swansea computer and ask a motorist 30 seconds later why he is driving a car that is not registered in his name. That is the sophisticated computerisation available to the police in transport matters. Surely the Home Office ought by now to be moving in that direction.

If one of the Home Office's points is that it is willing to consider this as soon as it can be put into practical effect, that is to be welcomed, and it will certainly be welcomed by me. In the meantime, however, other things ought to be happening.

One thing astonished me about the difficulties recently encountered with a few hundred people in Germany. The German police locked them up, sobered them up and let them out again. I find that quite incredible. I would like to know what sort of arrangements the Government had with the German authorities with regard to sending back here as soon as possible the people who were causing difficulties and offence in Germany.

That can be done and, indeed, was done in the course of my experience. On one occasion, having no authority, as far as I know, to do any such thing, when I was the Minister with responsibility for sport and an important match was being played on the continent, I liaised with my colleague, the Dutch Minister for Sport, and said that anybody going to the match without a ticket, hotel accommodation and proper travel supervision ought not to be allowed into his country. As a result, the Dutch authorities allowed in everybody who had a ticket and told all those who had not got tickets that they had better get back on the boat and come back here. It was a very successful operation. I do not know whether any such operation has been contemplated by the present Government.

Sir Neil Macfarlane: I think that the right hon. Gentleman and I have probably shared some similar experiences during the past couple of decades. European history over the past 20 years is littered with examples of European police forces surrounding a number of our so-called football fans, putting them in cells for the night and then getting them out of the country as quickly as possible without a conviction. That is the underlying problem. I think the right hon. Gentleman will agree that once there has been a conviction, there is the basis for some harmonisation with our European colleagues in getting that conviction endorsed on the passport.

Mr. Howell: I absolutely agree with the hon. Gentleman that it is necessary to have a conviction. If the continental police practice is to round up people on suspicion without producing a conviction, I agree that it adds to the difficulties. Perhaps we might suggest to them, now that we are all in the European Community and Ministers meet from time to time, that our practices ought to be co-ordinated as soon as possible.

7.15 pm

Mr. Ashton: Why is it necessary to have a conviction? Surely something could be written in the back of the passport indicating that the holder was detained overnight. When we had currency regulations many years ago, written in the back of one's passport was how much foreign currency one had drawn. If this was written in the passport, a ticket to travel abroad would not be issued.

Mr. Howell: I am sufficiently keen to protect civil liberties in this country not to want people to be sent away just because the police are suspicious of them. I would not endorse the idea of any such thing being entered in a passport without a conviction.

If continental police procedures are not as precise in this respect as ours, they ought to be brought into line with ours. That would enable us to reach agreement.

When Aston Villa, to which club I am addicted, played in the European cup final, I was involved in taking several thousand people to Rotterdam. We took them there and brought them back without the slightest problem from any one of them. We did it by organising the travel, hotel arrangements and stewarding arrangements in a sensible way. West Midlands police officers gave up their time. We put them in a yellow coach which could be easily identified. We took many of them over beforehand to liaise with the Rotterdam police. It was a tremendous success.

I understand that on this occasion the Home Office refused to do any such thing with the England supporters. I cannot understand why the Home Office refused to repeat what had been a very successful operation. It is quite clear that when we are playing abroad there has to be a degree of supervision, for the protection of our decent supporters and the good name of this country. I urge that example on the Government, while they are getting their computers into good order to carry out a more detailed arrangement. It is possible to take people abroad and bring them back here without difficulties, and we owe it to our European partners to do that if it is possible.

I understand that this recent operation, for some reason that escapes me, was put in the hands of the chief of police of British Transport. I read that he asked for the same facility of having policemen travelling and was refused by the Home Office. If so, it is very much to be regretted. It was obviously a contributory factor in these disorders.

Mr. David Evans (Welwyn Hatfield): Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that the public perception is that hooliganism is football's responsibility? I do not say that it is; indeed, I believe that it is not. The public perception here and abroad is that we export trouble. Unfortunately for us, some who say they are football fans and who go abroad—at the moment we have no way of identifying whether they are football fans—misbehave and bring out the worst in German, Dutch and other European hooligans. It is then hung around the necks of our people.

I believe that, until we can prove to the Europeans that we have put our house in order and are prepared to be determined, as my hon. Friend the Member for Stockport (Mr. Favell) has suggested, and until we remove people's passports and make the punishment fit the crime, every time our people go on holiday and misbehave and bring out the worst in those who live in the countries in question, the blame will be hung around the necks of the British people, and our flag, as one of my hon. Friends said the other day, will be dragged through the gutters of Europe. Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that public perception here and abroad is that we export trouble?

Mr. Howell: I have to say very gently to the hon. Gentleman that his activities as chairman of Luton Town football club in assuming that every visiting supporter is going to cause trouble have not helped us to deal with this matter. The hon. Gentleman is quite honest. As the chairman of Luton Town football club he has said, "I will not have a single decent citizen, supporting any club in the land, come to my club, Luton." That is what he is saying and the logic of carrying that further is that no decent English football supporter should be allowed to support England abroad.

That approach runs away from the problem. It should be opposed on grounds of civil liberties. It is a monstrous attack on the 99 per cent. of decent football supporters in this country. I am sorry that the hon. Gentleman went down that road, but I am glad that Luton Town football club is moving back to a more civilised position in believing that supporters of two clubs can come together to enjoy the game—I hesitate to say, "having a drink and then driving off," in view of the debate that we have just had. Nevertheless, they could enjoy a good social occasion——

Mr. Favell *rose*——

Mr. David Evans *rose*——

Mr. Howell: I give way to the hon. Member for Welwyn Hatfield (Mr. Evans), which is only fair because I am disagreeing with him.

Mr. Evans: I advise the right hon. Gentleman that Luton Town football club allowed away fans for about 100 years, but in the last year that we had away fans we had 113 arrests and six stabbings. However, in the last two seasons, when it has been a members-only club, we have not had a single arrest or stabbing inside or outside the ground. I do not believe that people's liberty, privacy and right to carry on their ordinary business in and around a football ground on a Saturday afternoon should be restricted by the hooligan elements of any away supporters.

Mr. Howell: I am glad to tell the House that Aston Villa football club in my constituency has not had any stabbings for several years and it allows visiting supporters. I do not understand the hon. Gentleman's logic. I am sorry if there have been any such difficulties at Luton, but we do not solve the difficulties by trying to abolish people's right to attend a football match.

I should like to return to the question of computers and those difficulties with which I have already dealt. I hope that the Minister will say that he at least does not object to that matter, because in previous debates in the House, Ministers have said that they find removing the passports of people who are convicted and who are known to have caused trouble objectionable in principle. There is no logic in that argument. The courts of this land remove passports from people every day of the week and do so before people have been found guilty of anything. Many such people have only been charged, but they are required to surrender their passports as a condition of bail. Therefore, there can be no objection in principle to taking away somebody's passport.

One of the propaganda myths that was put out from No. 10 and by the Minister with responsibility for sport was that that cannot be done because we are now in the European Community and everybody has a right to travel within Europe. I am a president of the European Movement and am as strong a supporter of the Community as anyone in the House. I want to protect our European partners from the evildoers that we might be exporting to them. It is up to us to find a sensible way of doing that, and I suggest that one way would be the removal of passports.

I should like to make another point in this short debate, which I am grateful to the hon. Member for Stockport for initiating. It has now been suggested that the Minister with responsibility for sport will present a Bill to the Cabinet.

[Mr. Howell]

We are told in the weekend press that he has been invited to attend the Cabinet meeting on Thursday to defend his proposals. One of his two proposals is that we should have compulsory membership cards and that nobody should be allowed to go to a football match in this land unless he is a registered member of a football club. The Minister even threatened to extend that to rugby and boxing. If it were extended to boxing, we would not have boxing matches such as that on Saturday at Luton Town football ground. I hope that it was profitable. I do not know——

Mr. David Evans: Do not believe everything that appears in the press.

Mr. Howell: I do know that if the Minister with responsibility for sport had his way and if one had to be registered in a membership scheme before attending a boxing match, whatever the attendance at the boxing match at Luton Town football ground on Saturday, it would have been halved.

Membership schemes are nonsense. They are totally impractical, and I hope that Home Office Ministers realise that. It is impractical to say that people cannot attend football matches without being registered on a membership scheme. What could one do in a place such as Wembley where the cup final is held and where about 100,000 tickets are sold? How can it be right for a son to say to his father who comes to stay with him for Christmas, "I am sorry, Dad. I can't take you to the football match because I haven't registered you as a member of the local club."? If such schemes come about, there will be a tremendous amount of deception, and the effect on football as a whole will be serious.

The idea is grossly offensive. When the Minister responsible for sport gives us the statistics—that is, unless a Home Office Minister can give them—we should ask how many thousands of matches were played in this country in the past year and at how many of those matches there were serious problems of any sort. The answer would be minuscule in terms of percentages. That being the case, it is quite wrong to impose a membership scheme. The best way forward is that suggested by the hon. Member for Stockport: to identify the culprits, stop them going to football matches and remove their passports.

Mr. Ashton *rose*——

Mr. Howell: I have another point to make, but I shall give way to my hon. Friend.

Mr. Ashton: I should like to give my right hon. Friend the figures because he is making an excellent case. There were over 4,000 first-class professional games last season and at only eight was there any trouble inside the ground.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Order. The debate is almost widening out into a general debate on football hooliganism. I am sure that the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Small Heath (Mr. Howell) will now address himself to the narrower point with which the new clause deals.

Mr. Howell: This is the Second Reading of the new clause and although I always bow to your ruling, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it seems to me that on a Second Reading we can deal not only with what is in the new clause but what is left out of it.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: No. I advise the right hon. Gentleman and the House that there is a difference between a Second Reading debate and the Second Reading of a new clause. I am sure that the right hon. Gentleman will now address himself to the content of the new clause.

Mr. Howell: I bow to your ruling, Mr. Deputy Speaker, as I always do, and am now coming to my last point. However, I am sorry if that is our procedure. If it is, I think that we should change it. It is clear to me that a new clause, which is being added to a Bill, should receive the same Second Reading treatment as is given to the Bill itself. I am sorry that I did not fully appreciate the position.

I come now to my last point which is germane to this issue. The Home Secretary and the Minister responsible for sport are now threatening English football and saying that they will have to consider whether English teams should be allowed to play again in international competitions abroad. They are doing that because they do not have this new clause, or anything like it to deal with the offenders. You will see, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that this point is extremely pertinent to the proposal. It is monstrous to suggest that the English football team should be prevented from playing in international matches. That would totally destroy any international respect that we have. It would also destroy the standards of excellence that every sport must have if it is to inspire other people to attain such standards at all levels.

In advance of the attendance of the Minister with responsibility for sport at the Cabinet meeting on Thursday, I should like to convey to him the thoughts of Opposition Members and, indeed, all involved in football. I suggest that if football is to be treated in that way, the Government should not do it by intimidating the football authorities. They will need to introduce a Bill. It is a monstrous proposal that any sport should be prevented by the Government from competing internationally. It would be monstrous in social terms and outrageous, as it would be an admission by the Government that they are unable to control the disease with which they have been dealing during their 10 years in office, apparently so unsuccessfully. I hope that we hear no more of that nonsense and that we return to the practical issue of identifying and dealing with offenders, taking out court orders to prevent them from going to football matches and removing passports or travel documents from those wanting to go abroad.

7.30 pm

Mr. Lawrence: We all agree that football hooliganism is a disgrace to us here at home and a shame to Britain when it takes place abroad. I have received more letters and representations about it than I received about capital punishment.

The right hon. Member for Birmingham, Small Heath (Mr. Howell) says that football hooliganism has nothing to do with football. It is a little difficult to accept that statement, as it clearly has a great deal to do with football. Football triggers off that violence. A great deal of violence might well happen elsewhere if there were not football matches, but a great deal of it would not happen but for football matches. It does not advance the matter further, therefore, to say consistently that it has absolutely nothing to do with football.

Mr. Denis Howell: In that case, how does the hon. and learned Gentleman think that the rampaging Leicester city supporters in Warwick and Leamington last week could be said to have anything to do with football, when we are in the closed season?

Mr. Lawrence: They were Leicester city supporters. It is difficult to think with what else they could have anything to do, if not a football club.

We can deal with hooliganism here in Britain by banning drink from football grounds, by reducing the availability of alcohol outside football grounds on football days, by better policing and better control by means of video cameras and crowd separation—all of which we are now doing—and by membership-only admission. The right hon. Gentleman says that that is madness and that it cannot work, but we have living proof of the success of a membership scheme with an outstanding club. Clearly, that can be extended in the future.

Mr. David Evans: My hon. and learned Friend may be interested to know that, since we had a membership scheme at Luton and crime at the ground disappeared, there has been no increase in crime in Hertfordshire or Bedfordshire on Saturday afternoons.

Mr. Lawrence: That underlines my point, and shows that there is mileage in that membership scheme. It is of course true that it requires some deprivation of freedom, that it is infuriating, and that it might mean that some of our children cannot go to football matches. Unfortunately, that is the price that must be paid for football matches to which people can go without fear and trepidation.

We also have the power of the courts in this country to award stiffer sentences for football hooliganism. We can deal with football hooliganism in Britain, but we cannot deal with it abroad. It is a great shame when people go abroad, say that they are the representatives of Britain and then smash their way around the towns and countryside of our friends and the countries with which we want to live in peace, contentment and happiness. That is the disgrace and shame, and we can do nothing about that.

Most of us would like to see the offenders abroad arrested, imprisoned and the key thrown away, but that is not happening. The Germans do not appear keen to arrest, charge and imprison those offenders. Our shame is therefore heightened by the press publicity that those people court. We have seen the most atrocious, boasting representation of the British flag in all its offensive horror.

My hon. Friend the Member for Stockport (Mr. Favell) has introduced his proposal in that context. If we could do something to stop the thugs travelling abroad and disgracing Britain by this measure, if it is practicable and enforceable, everyone would agree that it would be a sensible step forward. I appreciate that we can sometimes go to other European countries without a passport: that is a problem. There is no point in taking away someone's passport if he or she does not need it to go to a certain country.

That is where the agreement with other countries comes in. There is no reason why those countries should not agree to require, if not a passport, a document, to be shown to them. If a person does not have that document or passport, he or she could be refused entry. That is the very measure proposed by my hon. Friend. It is not a deterrent measure here, but it is a deterrent measure abroad, because people would not be so freely allowed to travel abroad to cause their mayhem.

I recognise that that would represent a limitation of that individual's civil liberties. Such liberties are vital and could so easily be lost. We must defend them. However, in this case, we are dealing with people who have been convicted of violent crime and who would thereby forfeit their rights to full civil liberties. We are more entitled to make them forfeit their right to a passport or a travel document when they have been convicted than we are to make them forfeit their right to it while they are on bail and innocent until proved guilty.

I agree with the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Small Heath: there is no great principle here. Besides, those people have a choice not to do evil and to preserve their liberties, or to engage in deliberate thuggery and thereby forfeit the rights which they are entitled to enjoy only if they conduct themselves as decent, law-abiding representatives of Britain. I do not think that the civil liberties argument is all that convincing.

My hon. Friend the Minister may say that we are not yet ready, that the technology is not yet good enough, that there are not sufficient data banks and that we have not yet produced the document that would allow that to be enforced. He may be right, but that is no reason why we should not give the Secretary of State power, by regulation, to introduce that prohibition as soon as the technology catches up.

If technology in that area is moving as fast as in every other area, we would probably implement such a power through regulation a great deal sooner than we have implemented other powers, not just in legislation generally, but particularly in Home Office legislation. I would be disappointed if my hon. Friend the Minister were so shy on this occasion as to say that we are not yet ready, and therefore that we should not do it.

If we add the new clause, or something like it in the other place, to the Bill, the Government will be seen to be taking a step to deal with this sad and humiliating problem. It would certainly delight a number of my electors in Burton, which has a good football team—alas, it has not yet reached league status, although we are hopeful. It would certainly do more than any other measure to check the movement of football hooliganism from Britain abroad, which brings so much shame to this country.

Mr. Alex Carlile (Montgomery): I congratulate the hon. Member for Stockport (Mr. Favell) on giving us the opportunity to discuss ways in which we might deal with football hooliganism. I do not agree with his solution. I consider it to be impracticable. Also, it fails to address the meat or the nub of the problem.

I was first taken to a football match when I was six years old. I watched the team in the town in which I was brought up, Burnley, beating the team of which the hon. Member for Welwyn and Hatfield (Mr. Evans) is now chairman. That was in 1954. From about the age of eight onwards, I was allowed to go and watch football matches, walking to and from the ground on my own and watching the match on my own. No one had any fears that I might be molested or injured. That was at a time when the team which I followed, Burnley, was far and away the best team in the English league and was winning the first division.

[Mr. Alex Carlile]

Much has changed since those days. I took two of my daughters to watch, alas, a fourth division match between Burnley and Wigan Athletic a couple of years ago. Although the crowd was down from the 25,000 of the 1950s to about 2,000 in the 1980s, it was nothing like as pleasant a scene when it came to the behaviour of those in the ground.

There is no doubt that great thuggery has come to, or at least near, our football grounds. It is thuggery equalled only by the thuggishness of the headline writers of some of the popular newspapers. Those hooligans who travel abroad and cause mayhem in the bars of Dusseldorf and other European cities take comfort whenever they see a headline in *The Sun* or the *Star* which extols their thuggishness. The headline writers should realise that, when they use intemperate language and give banner headlines to what has happened, it is in a perverted way encouraging the hooligans to indulge themselves in further hooliganism.

I do not accept the thesis that football is responsible for football hooliganism. When I used to go as a young boy to Turf Moor to watch Burnley football club, hooligans had already been invented. In those days, though, they were tearing up the seats in the Odeon cinema when "Jailhouse Rock" was being shown, and later "Expresso Bongo". A few years after that, those with the same temperament had given up destroying cinema seats. They had not reached football grounds, but they were buying themselves secondhand Vespas and Lambrettas and fighting on the seafronts in the riots of mods and rockers. Hooliganism is not new. It happens, however, to be the misfortune of the hon. Member for Welwyn and Hatfield and the rest of us who, in our smaller way, support football that hooliganism, for the time being, is attacking our enjoyment of the greatest national sport.

Nor is hooliganism an especially British problem. We should not beat our breasts and say, "Alas, football hooliganism is a British disease." The Dutch have football hooligans, and seriously so. The Italians have football hooligans. Although there was disgraceful behaviour at the Heysel stadium by British football supporters, Italian supporters were committing crimes there as well. There are football hooligans in France. In the past two or three weeks, we have seen the hooligans of organised, peaceful and thorough Germany provoking British hooligans.

This hooliganism does not have a great deal to do with football. At any time in society there are those who are bent towards violence, who will find violence wherever it can be obtained. We should be trying to solve the problem of how to deal with hooliganism in general. We should not be beating the football clubs for something for which they are not really to blame.

If anyone goes to the Liverpool football ground or, as I did earlier in the past season, to a match at Goodison Park, the Everton football ground—I am talking about the larger grounds—he will find the best organisation that can possibly be arranged, and little hooliganism. Even grounds where visiting supporters are permitted to attend can be organised in a way that avoids hooliganism within them. We have already heard statistics that there is little hooliganism actually at football matches.

7.45 pm

Mr. Boyes: As someone who watches football every week of his life, may I ask whether the hon. and learned Gentleman agrees that the nasty trend in football is racism? At many football matches, a black player who is a member of the opposing team will be taunted mercilessly throughout the game. I agree with the hon. and learned Gentleman's main thesis that a hooligan is a hooligan, and that we should not use the term "football hooligan". One of the problems, however, is that the National Front, with its vicious Right-wing attitudes, has latched on to many football clubs and stirred up trouble inside the ground and outside with the crowds. There are laws to deal with racists and other such people, and it would help if the police would deal with this problem urgently.

Mr. Carlile: I agree with the hon. Gentleman. He will know that many of the finest footballers in Europe—England, France, Holland and many others—are black. Those of us who enjoy football go to watch them rather than many of the home-grown players. It is outrageous that there should be racism at football matches, and it should be dealt with urgently, but that is not quite the problem that I am seeking to address.

Ms. Mildred Gordon (Bow and Poplar): Does the hon. and learned Gentleman agree that it is remarkable that, although the National Front and other Fascist groups have been organising on the football terraces for a long time, we never read any articles in the newspapers to the effect that "Fascist hooligans" have disgraced Britain? For some reason, the Fascists appear to be protected by the newspapers.

It was only after the Heysel stadium incident, when the Belgian media talked about the British Fascists, and when in Germany these hooligans raised their arms in the Hitler salute, which is illegal in Germany, that mention was made of these activities in our press. After that mention, these matters were quickly covered up. The blame is not attached to the instigators of the violence, who are deliberately spreading it.

Mr. Carlile *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I hope that the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile) will not allow himself to be diverted fron the new clause by the interventions which have been made.

Mr. Carlile: I shall not, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I merely express the hope that everyone in the House is opposed to racism at any sort of sports fixture. I hope also that the police, and the clubs, will take appropriate action.

I was saying that the problem of hooliganism is not especially British and that it does not affect football alone.

Mr. Favell: The hon. and learned Gentleman will recall that I explained that the clause was directed to anyone who indulges in violence and not only to football hooliganism. It seeks to deal with anyone who besmirches our name abroad. Against that background, will he explain why he opposes the new clause?

Mr. Carlile: I was trying to get to that, but I was diverted.

I do not believe that forbidding the people to travel is the right solution. The way to prevent hooliganism is to show hooligans that the courts are both ready and able realistically to deal with their hooliganism. It must be shown too that hooliganism can be detected effectively, and I applaud the measures that have been taken within football grounds.

There is some evidence, unfortunately, that when football hooligans are caught as a result of video detection and taken before the local magistrates court, extremely paltry penalties are imposed upon them. There are still cases of hooligans being fined for offences of personal violence at football grounds. That seems entirely inappropriate when football is a sport which we hope that we can enjoy with our families.

It is not only the British courts that have to deal with these offences. I urge the Minister to take every possible step to ensure that the courts in other countries with which we have frequent sporting relations, especially other EC countries, prosecute and sentence British hooligans. It should be permissible for the criminal record which a British subject has acquired in a foreign country to be included in his criminal record in the United Kingdom.

That would mean that, when a British court came to deal with a hooligan, it would be able to take into account the entirety of his character and antecedents, including what has happened abroad. Sometimes, foreign convictions appear on an antecedent form, but there is no means of ensuring that that happens. British courts would be substantially strengthened in sentencing the British hooligans if they could refer expressly to the fact that the hooligans had been previously convicted in some other country, and thus could justify stiffer sentences.

Forbidding travel will not have any real impact on the problem. There is a world of difference in terms of administrative problems between removing the passports of people on bail—a small numerical group—and dealing with the generality of the issue of passports. I have considerable doubts about whether the proposed system can be made to work so that it cannot be easily avoided by those bent on hooliganism.

Football is blamed for what has been happening, but in the past weeks at the matches in the European championship in Germany, there was virtually no serious hooliganism within the grounds. There was much hooliganism outside the grounds—in the bars, pubs and clubs—but there was little evidence that the people involved had been to any matches. This reinforces my point that people will be hooligans wherever their hooliganism can be paraded. That is another reason why we should take a European view of the problem and try to ensure that we have as near as possible common standards of prosecution, conviction and sentencing.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Stockport (Mr. Favell) on this imaginative new clause to cure a vile social disease. As my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton (Mr. Lawrence) said, this problem causes our country great humiliation. Indeed, I think that he said that it was a humiliating problem. The new clause seeks to deal with vandals, hooligans, muggers and one of the lower forms of criminal pestilence which I think my hon. Friend the Member for Stockport would not mind including in his description, the graffiti artist. My hon. Friend hopes to deal with such offences, whether at home or overseas.

My hon. Friend suggested that the problem can be dealt with by the removal of passports for a period. He wants to do what many of us want to do—to punish people. He wants to prevent offences from taking place and, at the same time, where possible, to keep people out of prison. Putting people in prison when that can be avoided is not only expensive but, much worse, extremely barbaric, and it leads people to a criminal career later. If we can prevent that, let us do so.

It is suggested that we withdraw passports. We want to prevent people from travelling. We live in a modern and enlightened society, and I think I can say that there is no hon. Member more modern and enlightened than me. I suggest that this intention to prevent travel, if allied to a little humiliation, could have very much the effect that my hon. Friend wants. It might even be more effective than his suggestion.

If we want to stop the wrong people from travelling to a major European fixture, to stop people from going to and disrupting the local derby and to stop people from upsetting and disturbing others and causing violence at a cup match, we should clap them in the stocks for two hours if they have committed offences before. We may take away their passports as well if we like, but if they are in the stocks every Saturday afternoon there is no way they can go to a football match.

I do not want my remarks to be taken out of context. This is not a barbaric suggestion. We live in a modern and enlightened society and there are ways of devising a form of stocks. At the same time, we can prevent those so sentenced from being subjected to having wet objects hurled at them—*[Interruption.]* I am a great fan of my hon. Friend the Minister. He is not a wet object.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Member must not be tempted by the Treasury Bench. I am sure that he realises that there is not a word about stocks in the new clause.

Mr. Marlow: Quite right, Sir. I am always tempted by the Treasury Bench. I welcome the new clause. We must find a civilised way of dealing with the problem.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The suggestion by my hon. Friend the Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) is perhaps a slight extension of the punishment in the community that my hon. Friend the Minister of State has in mind.

I have considerable sympathy with the arguments deployed by my hon. Friend the Member for Stockport (Mr. Favell). In common with every hon. Member who has spoken, I recognise that the problems that we saw abroad recently are a cause for grave concern among us all. It is right that we should pay careful attention to any proposal that might be an appropriate response to this problem. For that reason, on 16 June, when replying to a private notice question, my hon. Friend the Minister with responsibility for sport said that the Government would look carefully at the kind of proposal that is enshrined in the new clause, and we shall certainly do that.

One theme running through the debate has been the need for those countries where the offences are committed to punish and sentence the offenders to a period of imprisonment there, if that is appropriate. My hon. Friend the Minister of State shares that view. Last week, when in Lisbon attending a meeting of European Ministers of Justice, he took advantage of the opportunity to say to his colleagues that they had a duty to ensure that people who committed offences under foreign jurisdictions were dealt with under those jurisdictions and, where appropriate,

[Mr. Douglas Hogg]

imprisoned in those countries. That is an effective response to the problem of hooligans committing hooligan offences overseas.

Although I have considerable sympathy with the thinking behind the new clause, I could not recommend its incorporation into the Bill. There is a prerogative power to deny a passport, but it is used sparingly, and I think that the House would agree that it should be used sparingly. There is no doubt that the restriction on a person's ability to travel overseas is a curtailment of liberty. The House and the Government have not yet had an opportunity to reach a settled conclusion on this matter. At some stage we shall have to ask ourselves seriously whether this is a diminution of liberty that we favour. The argument is evenly balanced, and neither the Government nor the House has yet reached a final view. We must recognise that we are discussing a grave matter.

There are two problems associated with the new clause so ably moved by my hon. Friend. First, some practical questions must be asked, because they are not resolved in the drafting of the clause. I say that, not in a spirit of criticism, but simply to draw to the attention of the House the fact that these problems exist. For example, should the period of disqualification be time-limited? Should there be a right for a person disqualified from having a passport to apply to the court on the grounds of compassionate need to go abroad? Should we create an offence of applying for a passport during the period of disqualification? Should we give the court the power to impose a period of disqualification on conviction abroad by a court with foreign jurisdiction? Those practical questions have to be examined and answered, and they are not addressed in the new clause. For those reasons alone, I cannot commend the new clause to the House.

My hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton (Mr. Lawrence) fully covered the matter of enforcement. At the moment about 2 million British passports are issued each year by about 1,500 post offices. In addition, ferry companies issue a document called a "no passport excursion card". Until we have an effective database, we cannot enforce a disqualification of the kind that we are discussing.

The right hon. Member for Birmingham, Small Heath (Mr. Howell) raised the matter of computerisation. I am glad to be able to tell him that we are soon to start a computerisation programme for the passport department and I hope that it will be completed by the end of 1989. When that happens we will be in a very much better position to enforce the sort of period disqualification that my hon. Friend the Member for Stockport may have in mind.

My hon. Friend's proposition requires serious consideration, but it also raises fundamental questions that we must consider before we can come to a conclusion on the new clause. It raises practical problems which it does not seek to resolve. At the moment there are insuperable problems of enforcement. For all those reasons, I cannot commend the new clause to the House.

Mr. Favell: I have listened carefully to my hon. Friend. I urge the Government seriously to consider my suggestion. I accept that it would be a severe curtailment of liberty, but that is precisely what it is intended to be—a novel form of punishment that may well suit the crime. I accept that there are difficulties about the drafting. We shall need to think carefully about that.

I also accept that the Government are not yet ready to implement the proposals in the new clause because of the problems of computerisation. I was glad to hear that the Government expect to have the appropriate data base ready by the end of next year. Perhaps careful thought should be given to whether to introduce legislation of this kind so as to be ready for that data base. I beg to ask leave to withdraw the motion.

Motion and clause, by leave, withdrawn.

Clause 1

SCOPE OF PART I

Mr. John Patten: I beg to move amendment No. 32, in page 2, line 8, after 'procedures', insert—

'under this Part of this Act'.

8 pm

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): With this it will be convenient to consider Government amendments Nos. 33, 34 and 35.

Mr. John Patten: These are drafting amendments aimed at futher clarifying the scope of part I of the Bill, and I commend them to the House.

Amendment agreed to.

Amendments made: No. 33, in page 2, line 15, leave out from 'in' to end of line 16 and insert 'accordance with those procedures'.

No. 34, in page 2, line 24, at end insert—

'and relating to the operation of this Part of this Act'.

No. 35, in page 2, line 27, leave out from 'arrangements' to 'with' in line 28 and insert—

'relating to the operation of this Part of this Act in Particular cases (in this Part of this Act referred to as "special extradition arrangements") made'.—*[Mr. John Patten.]*

Clause 4

EXTRADITION REQUEST AND AUTHORITY TO PROCEED

Mr. John Patten: I beg to move amendment No. 60, in page 5, line 44, at end insert—

'( ) The High Court of Justiciary may, by Act of Adjournal, make rules as to the procedure for service under subsection (2) above in Scotland.'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to consider Government amendments Nos. 61, 62 and 63.

Mr. John Patten: These amendments are essential to permit rules to be made for Scottish courts under Scottish law relating to the procedure for the service of documents and extension of the period between issue of a warrant and actual extradition. I commend them to the House.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 5

ARREST FOR PURPOSES OF COMMITTAL

Mr. John Patten: I beg to move amendment No. 188, in page 6, line 11, leave out

'a metropolitan stipendiary magistrate or by'

and insert—

'(i) the chief metropolitan stipendiary magistrate or metropolitan stipendiary magistrate designated for the purposes of this Part of this Act by the Lord Chancellor; or

(ii)'

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to consider Government amendments Nos. 189, 190 and 191.

Mr. Patten: The purpose of these amendments is to embody in law the present arrangement by which extradition cases in England and Wales are dealt with at Bow street by specialist magistrates. The present references in clauses 5 and 6 to "a metropolitan stipendiary magistrate" goes wider than this. It is right for the House to recognise that Bow street magistrates court will quite rightly remain the centre for extradition committals. I know that all practitioners in extradition, such as my hon. Friend the Member for Orpington (Mr. Stanbrook), will continue to expect extradition cases to be dealt with as at present by the chief metropolitan magistrate, Sir David Hopkin, and his magisterial colleagues and for advice to continue to be given by the learned clerk at Bow street, Mrs. Ferley. For this reason the amendments replace the term "a metropolitan stipendiary magistrate" with references to

"the chief metropolitan stipendiary magistrate or metropolitan stipendiary magistrate designated for the purposes of this Part of this Act by the Lord Chancellor".

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 6

PROCEEDINGS FOR COMMITTAL

Amendment made: No. 189, in page 6, line 43, leave out 'a metropolitan stipendiary magistrate' and insert

'the chief metropolitan stipendiary magistrate or a metropolitan stipendiary magistrate designated as mentioned in section 5(1) (a) above'—*[Mr. John Patten.]*

Mr. John Patten: I beg to move amendment No. 253, in page 7, line 42, leave out from 'court' to 'unless' in line 44.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to consider Government Amendments Nos. 254, to 259, 275, 260 to 264, 276, 265 to 271 and 277.

Mr. Patten: These amendments cover quite a lot of paper but they make only technical, albeit essential, changes to the committal and appeals provisions of the Bill. I commend them to the House.

Amendment agreed to.

Amendments made: No. 254, in page 7, line 49, at end insert—

'(8A) if the court commits a person under subsection (8) above, it shall issue a certificate of the offence against the law of the United Kingdom which would be constituted by his conduct.'.—*[Mr. John Patten.]*

Clause 7

STATEMENT OF CASE BY COURT

Amendments made: No. 255, in page 8, line 17, at end insert—

'(1A) If the state seeking his surrender immediately informs the court of committal that it intends to make such an application, the court shall make an order providing for his detention, or direction that he shall not be released except on bail.

(1B) Rules of Court may specify—

(a) a period within which a state must make such an application unless the Court grants a longer period; and

(b) a period within which the court of committal must comply with such an application.'.

No. 256, in page 8, line 18, leave out

'refuses to state a case'

and insert

'of committal fails to comply with an application under subsection (1) above within the period specified in Rules of Court'.

No. 257, in page 8, line 30, at end insert—

'(4A) An order made by a metropolitan magistrate under subsection (1A) above shall cease to have effect if—

(a) the court dismisses the appeal in respect of the offence or all the offences to which it relates; and

(b) the state seeking surrender does not immediately—

(i) apply for leave to appeal to the House of Lords; or

(ii) inform the court that it intends to apply for leave.

(4B) An order made by the sheriff of Lothian and Borders under subsection (1A) above shall cease to have effect if the court dismisses the appeal in respect of the offence or all the offences to which it relates.'.

No. 258, in page 8, line 31, leave out subsection (5).

No. 259, in page 8, line 39, at end insert—

'(6A) The House of Lords may exercise any powers of the High Court under subsection (3) above and subsection (4) above shall apply to them as it applies to that Court.

(6B) Subject to subsections (4A) and (4B) above, an order under subsection (1A) above shall have effect so long as the case is pending.

(6C) For the purposes of this section cases pending (unless proceedings are discontinued) until (disregarding any power of a court to grant leave to take any step out of time) there is no step that the foreign state can take.'.

No. 275, in page 8, leave out line 40 and insert—

'(7) In the application to Scotland of this section, subsections (6) and (6A) shall be omitted and, in'.—*[Mr. John Patten.]*

Clause 9

ORDER FOR RETURN TO REQUESTING STATE

Amendments made; No. 61, in page 10, line 14, after 'as', insert—

'(a) in England and Wales,'.

No. 62, in page 10, line 15, after '1981', insert

'or

(b) in Scotland, the High Court of Justiciary by Act of Adjournal'.—*[Mr. John Patten.]*

Mr. Worthington: I beg to move amendment No. 203, in page 11, line 1, leave out 'may decide not to' and insert 'shall not'.

The intention of the amendment is to withdraw from the Home Secretary the discretion whether someone should be extradited to a country where the death penalty is still in force. We seek to say that, instead of the Home Secretary having a discretion to decide not to extradite to a country where the death penalty is still in force, he shall not extradite to such a country.

Since dealing with this issue in Committee we have had a further debate on capital punishment in the House. The views of the House on capital punishment have become even firmer and go further along the line of saying that there will not be capital punishment in Britain again. That is a statement of morality, and it seems that that theme has evoked a Pavlovian response from Conservative Members, with which we have become familiar. *[Interruption.]* If the hon. Lady has a contribution to make, I hope that she will stand up and make it.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: May I point out that whenever a survey is done, the British people show that they infinitely prefer the restoration of capital punishment for their own safety. The death penalty is never abolished. One takes it out of the calm consideration of the courthouse and puts it in the hands of the police, who must go armed because criminals go armed. No criminal went armed 20 years ago. Today, arms are a standard item of criminal equipment.

Mr. Worthington: I shall not be enticed into restaging the capital punishment debate. I seek to reflect the firm view of the House that there should not be capital punishment in this country. The arguments that have convinced the House should also apply in considering whether it is appropriate to extradite somebody to a country where capital punishment is practised. The House has decided that there is a uniqueness and repulsiveness about the death penalty and that we do not wish to see it in a civilised country.

We recognise that mistakes can be made, even in a country with good standards of justice. It is even more perilous to extradite people to countries which do not have the same standards of justice. We must not take a Pontius Pilate attitude to that and say that it is not for us to decide whether someone should receive the death penalty in another country. We have to take the stance that it is not acceptable for a citizen of our country to be extradited to another that maintains the death penalty.

Article 11 of the European convention on extradition is quite interesting in this respect. It states:

> "If the offence for which extradition is requested is punishable by death . . . and if in respect of such offence the death penalty is not provided for by the law of the requested Party . . . extradition may be refused unless the requesting Party gives such assurance as the requested Party considers sufficient that the death penalty will not be carried out."

Certainly, it is within our power to make that statement, and countries such as Austria assert that they will not extradite to countries where the death penalty is carried out, so there is no difficulty about that.

When extradition has been debated in Committee and in the other place, the issue that has constantly come up has been the problem of the United States of America. Justice in the United States is carried out by the state authorities, whereas decisions about extradition are made by sovereign bodies—the Government of the United Kingdom and the Federal Government of the United States. That is the difficulty about the arrangement. Those hon. Members who were on the Committee had hoped that by this stage the Minister would have tabled a Government amendment to confirm that those difficulties—if they are real difficulties—no longer exist.

I should like to quote the view on that issue of Professor Henkin of Columbia university in the city of New York. He makes it clear that there is no real problem. He states that article 4 of the extradition treaty of 1972 between the United States and the United Kingdom provides:

> "If the offence for which extradition is requested is punishable by death under the relevant law of the requesting Party, but the relevant law of the requested Party does not provide for the death penalty in a similar case, extradition may be refused unless the requesting Party gives assurances satisfactory to the requested Party that the death penalty will not be carried out."

Professor Henkin believes that a treaty of the United States is the supreme law of the land and is binding on the states. If a death penalty were imposed on the extradited person by a state court and not commuted by the governor of the state, the execution would be enjoined by the Federal Government on the ground that the execution would violate a treaty of the United States, which is the supreme law of the land. That is the view of Professor Henkin. It seems that the problems concerning the federal nature of the United States could be overcome. I hope that the Minister will indicate that he will accept our amendment in view of the problems which have been raised at various stages.

8.15 pm

Mr. Nicholas Bennett (Pembroke): I have listened carefully to the hon. Gentleman, although I do not share his view on capital punishment.

Will he explain the dilemma that might occur if the amendment were passed? It could result in fugitives from justice from other states—who had committed a murder, for example—going scot-free in this country if they were not sent back to the country that had jurisdiction for them.

Mr. Worthington: I am sure that a form of words could be arrived at, such as an undertaking by that state that the death penalty would not be carried out on that citizen. We are not making it a condition that all countries should adapt their law so that it is identical to ours. We are saying simply that no citizen should be extradited to a country where he is in danger of losing his life through judicial execution. Until now, the Government have not been willing to accept that condition, although they have much sympathy for our position. It is beyond our comprehension why the Government cannot come forward and state that the gist of what we are saying can be dealt with either through the European convention on extradition or by arriving at suitable treaty arrangements with particular states. We do not think that it is a difficult issue and we hope that the Government will confirm how easy it is.

Mr. John Patten: There is an awkwardness to the issue because of the federal nature of the United States. I have listened carefully to the views of the hon. Member for Clydebank and Milngavie (Mr. Worthington). I was also interested to learn of the views of Professor Henkin from Columbia university in New York, in his legal opinion, which I have not seen before.

In the United States murder is a state offence, not a federal offence, and is punishable in some states by death, but not in other states. That is the dilemma with different punishments in different states. The United States has a federal system and there can be collisions between the federal Government and state Governments. It has been possible for the United States to undertake that if a fugitive should be convicted representations will be made in the name of the United Kingdom, to the judge at the time of sentencing, that it is the wish of the United Kingdom that the death penalty should not be imposed or carried out.

I must tell the House that in all cases under our existing treaty with the United States, when people have been accused of an offence that attracts the death penalty and have been extradited to the United States, the wishes of the United Kingdom have been respected. There have been four occasions when that procedure has been followed.

Mr. Peter Archer (Warley, West): I apologise for the fact that I was not here when my hon. Friend the Member for Clydebank and Milngavie (Mr. Worthington) moved the amendment.

What is the problem about a federation? A federal Government and a state Government are perfectly capable of speaking to each other. There is no difficulty about a state Government authorising a federal Government to give an undertaking.

Mr. Patten: I shall come to that point. I am extremely glad that the right hon. and learned Gentleman is here. We have missed him thus far.

The present practice has always had the desired outcome, and we welcome that. However, I understand the views and concerns expressed by the hon. Member for Clydebank and Milngavie. We have discussed with the United States Government—the discussions have been going on until recently—what more could be done on a bilateral basis within the framework of the existing treaties.

The United States Government have confirmed that when extradition is sought for a capital offence against the laws of one state, only the state authority can decide whether assurances about the death penalty can be given. I hope that that answers the right hon. and learned Member for Warley, West (Mr. Archer).

I cannot debate that point because I am not learned in the laws of the United States, but that is what we are informed. I know that it runs counter to the opinion of Professor Henkin of Columbia university, to whom the hon. Member for Clydebank and Milngavie referred. Through the usual channels, I am advised by the Justice Department that, under United States federal law, the federal Government have no power to require any state to give an assurance or itself to give a binding assurance on behalf of the state without that state's consent. That answers the right hon. and learned Gentleman's question.

Mr. Archer: At the risk of being tiresome, that is the very point that I was making. It is in no way counter to what Professor Henkin said. It is exactly what he said. That being so, what is the problem? If a state can give authority to the federal Government to give such an undertaking, what is the difficulty?

Mr. Patten: An individual governor of an individual state, for reasons of the independence of that state, sitting in the governor's mansion, whatever state it is, may choose to say, "No. We reserve unto ourselves this state power that it is in our hands—within our state Government's competence—to preserve." That is the reality of the situation. It may not look logical from this side of the Atlantic, but that is the nature of the federal relationship in the United States.

I should like the hon. Member for Clydebank and Milngavie, the right hon. and learned Member for Warley, West and the hon. Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor) to consider the fact that the United States Government have assured us that if a state gives an assurance that the death penalty will not be imposed or carried out, the federal Government can and will give the United Kingdom a formal and binding undertaking to that effect. This is the first time that we have had such an undertaking from the United States Government. It is an advance. That does not cover all the points raised by the hon. Member for Clydebank and Milngavie, but, if such assurances are not given, we could not say that extradition could never be justified in such circumstances.

My hon. Friend the Member for Pembroke (Mr. Bennett) put his finger on the point when he intervened during the speech of the hon. Member for Clydebank and Milngavie. He said that, in certain circumstances—they would be rare; probably as rare as the number of extraditions that we have thus far had to the United States —an otherwise convicted criminal could go free in this country. I do not believe that the people of the United Kingdom would wish that to be the case. The public would find it difficult to understand if a dangerous offender were given refuge here.

I hope that, with the Bill, we are putting in place legislation that will survive the test of time. I hope also that the right hon. and learned Member for Warley, West and the hon. Members for Clydebank and Milngavie and for Dewsbury will accept that, throughout, we have used our best endeavours with the United States Government to reach a satisfactory accommodation. We have produced one step forward. I am not attempting to pull the wool over the eyes of the hon. Member for Clydebank and Milngavie—I would not dare to try to do such a thing. It does not cover all his points, but we have made a substantial advance. Thus far, the treaty has worked extremely well. I cannot commend amendment No. 203 to my hon. Friends.

Mr. Archer: I shall have one more go at the Minister on this matter—not in respect of his merits, but of his logic. All through the debates here and in another place it has been suggested that the problem lies in the federal nature of the United States constitution. It does no such thing. It is true that individual states must decide whether they have the death penalty and whether they can give an undertaking, but that has nothing to do with the federal nature of the United States constitution. As the Minister properly said, the federal Government can give any undertaking that lies within the power of a state Government, if that state Government authorises them to give that undertaking. If the state Government do not wish to authorise it, that is a different matter. That is precisely the same as if we were dealing with—*[Interruption]*. Perhaps the Minister could be allowed to concentrate. I know that he is trying to concentrate on the debate.

It is exactly the same as if we were dealing with any other Government, federal or otherwise. If the French Government, the West German Government, or any other Government hon. Members care to name decide to execute some people for whom extradition were requested and they would not give an undertaking not do so so, we would be in exactly the same position. If we were to make an exception for the United States, that exception could not be based on the federal nature of the United States constitution.

Surely, we either have a general rule that we do not extradite to any state where someone is liable to the death penalty, or we extradite to any state. To argue that, somehow or other, the federal constitution of the United States has something to do with it is simply to cast a smokescreen. If we were dealing with a state of the American union that was not prepared to give that undertaking, I should wish to deal with the matter as if we were dealing with any country that was not prepared to give such an undertaking. That is the way in which we have

[Mr. Archer]

traditionally dealt with the matter, and it is the way in which this country has earned its reputation as a haven for people who are in danger of suffering the death penalty. We simply say, "If we do not get the undertaking, we do not carry out the extradition."

Mr. Worthington: Opposition Members are not happy about the matter. We are still puzzled about why the Government cannot go the extra yard. We are simply asking for the Bill to be changed from "may" to "shall not". We do not see a problem about people going free. I am certain that if there is no problem about extradition in such cases——

Mr. Patten: There has not been a problem.

Mr. Worthington: The Minister says, "There has not been a problem." Then the receiving state—the country that wants to deal with an alleged offender—will soon give the undertaking that we seek.

Professor Henkin's view, which was not lightly given to Amnesty International, was that of an authority on United States constitutional law. He seems to be quite clearly of the view that there is no problem. According to our present treaty with the United States, extradition may be refused unless the requesting party gives satisfactory assurances to the requested party that the death penalty will not be carried out. That is a safeguard. Again, according to Professor Henkin, a treaty between this country and the United States is the supreme law, and a state cannot go against that law, or the federal agency would have to take account of it.

With considerable regret, and because we want to make progress on the Bill, but regard it as an important statement of this country's stance on execution policy, Opposition Members must divide the House. We regret that the Government did not deal with the matter more satisfactorily.

Question put, That the Amendment be made.

The House divided: Ayes 128, Noes 256.

Division No. 387] **[8.28 pm**

AYES

Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Allen, Graham
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Beckett, Margaret
Bell, Stuart
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buchan, Norman
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Cryer, Bob
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Dalyell, Tam
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Dixon, Don
Doran, Frank
Douglas, Dick
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eastham, Ken
Fatchett, Derek
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Flannery, Martin
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fyfe, Maria
Galloway, George
George, Bruce
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Graham, Thomas
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Heffer, Eric S.
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Howells, Geraint
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
John, Brynmor
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
Macdonald, Calum A.
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
McTaggart, Bob
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Neale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliott
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Neill, Martin
Patchett, Terry
Pike, Peter L.
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Randall, Stuart
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Richardson, Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Spearing, Nigel
Steinberg, Gerry
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wall, Pat
Wallace, James
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Frank Haynes and
Mr. Frank Cook.

NOES

Alexander, Richard
Allason, Rupert
Amess, David
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Batiste, Spencer
Beggs, Roy
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon Alick
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carttiss, Michael
Clark, Hon Alan *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Critchley, Julian
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian

Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gow, Ian
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Sir Eldon *(Bury St E')*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Charles
Jack, Michael
Janman, Tim
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Lawrence, Ivan
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
McCrindle, Robert
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New Forest)*
Madel, David
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morrison, Sir Charles
Moss, Malcolm
Neale, Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, John *(Oxford W)*
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raffan, Keith
Redwood, John
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanley, Rt Hon John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stokes, Sir John
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Tracey, Richard
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Waller, Gary
Walters, Sir Dennis
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Wilshire, David
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Mike
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Robert Boscawen and
Mr. Alan Howarth.

Question accordingly negatived.

Clause 18

PERSONS SERVING SENTENCES OUTSIDE COUNTRY OF CONVICTION

Mr. John Patten: I beg to move amendment No. 36, in page 14, line 23, after 'State' insert

'in the case of which the Extradition Act 1870 applies or as between which and the United Kingdom extradition procedures under this Part of this Act are available'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to discuss Government amendments Nos. 37 to 39.

Mr. Patten: These drafting amendments are designed to ensure that repatriation cases are dealt with on the basis of the relevant treaty with the requesting state. The Bill failed to make that clear, but the amendments put it right and I commend them to the House.

Amendment agreed to.

Amendments made: No. 37, in page 15, line 21, at end insert

'as they apply in the case of that state'.

No. 38, in page 15, line 21, at end insert—

'*(aa)* if it is made by some person recognised as a diplomatic representative of a foreign state as between whom and the United Kingdom extradition procedures under this Part of this Act are available, the following provisions of this Act, as they apply in the case of that state—

(i) section 1(1) to (8); and

(ii) sections 2 to 17; and'.

No. 39, in page 15, line 24, leave out from '1967' to end of line 25 and insert

'as it applies in the case of that country or dependency'.—*[Mr. John Patten.]*

Clause 20

APPLICATION TO COLONIES AND OTHER DEPENDENCIES

Amendment made: No. 40, in page 15, line 34, leave out clause 20.—*[Mr. John Patten.]*

Clause 21

SUPPRESSION OF TERRORISM

Amendment made: No. 12, in page 16, line 6, at end insert—

'(2A) The following shall be inserted after paragraph 9—

"9A. The offence of torture under section *[Torture]* of the Criminal Justice Act 1988."'.—*[Mr. John Patten.]*

Clause 22

FIRST-HAND HEARSAY

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I beg to move amendment No. 246, in page 16, line 38, leave out from beginning to 'or' in line 41.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to discuss Government amendment No. 247.

Mr. Hogg: The amendments are our response to the point made in Committee by the right hon. and learned Member for Warley, West (Mr. Archer). He said—we agree—that lack of recollection is not a good ground for admitting evidence in historic documents of a private kind, but it is a good ground for admitting in evidence historic documents of a business kind. The amendments will achieve that aim.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 23

BUSINESS ETC. DOCUMENTS

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I beg to move amendment No. 71, in page 17, line 34, leave out 'under section 28' and insert—

'in accordance with section 28 below or an order under paragraph 6 of Schedule 13 to this Act or under section'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to discuss Government amendment No. 72.

Mr. Hogg: These are drafting and technical amendments consequential upon decisions made in Committee.

Amendment agreed to.

Amendment made: No. 247, in page 17, line 41, at end insert

'or

(iii) the person who made the statement cannot reasonably be expected (having regard to the time which has elapsed since he made the statement and to all the circumstances) to have any recollection of the matters dealt with in the statement'.—*[Mr. John Patten.]*

Clause 25

STATEMENTS IN DOCUMENTS THAT APPEAR TO HAVE BEEN PREPARED FOR PURPOSES OF CRIMINAL PROCEEDINGS OR INVESTIGATIONS

Amendment made: No. 72, in page 18, line 28, leave out 'under section 28' and insert

'in accordance with section 28 below or an order under paragraph 6 of Schedule 13 to this Act or under section'.—*[Mr. John Patten.]*

Clause 30

FORM OF EVIDENCE AND GLOSSARIES

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I beg to move amendment No. 248, in page 20, line 34, at end insert

'in any case where the court gives leave for, or requires, evidence or a glossary to be so furnished'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to discuss Government amendment No. 251.

Mr. Hogg: The purpose of the amendments is to ensure that evidence can be admitted only with the leave of the judge. We believe that it is desirable that that provision should appear on the face of the Bill.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 31

EVIDENCE THROUGH CLOSED CIRCUIT TELEVISION LINKS

Mr. John Patten: I beg to move amendment No. 249, in page 20, line 36, leave out 'closed circuit'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to discuss the following amendments: No. 281, in page 20, line 36, after 'indictment'. insert

', any proceedings in a magistrates' court'.

No. 213, in page 20, line 40, leave out '14' and insert '16'.

No. 280, in page 22, line 30, leave out '14' and insert '16'.

Government amendments Nos. 250 and 252.

Mr. Patten: Amendment No. 249 and the related amendments make small but important technical changes to the clause and the schedule permitting television links to be used in some proceedings in crown courts and service orders.

The Government amendments have been grouped with amendment No. 281, tabled by my hon. Friend the Member for Chislehurst (Mr. Sims) and amendments Nos. 213 and 280, tabled by the hon. Member for Bow and Poplar (Ms. Gordon). Those amendments raise different aspects, and it may be convenient for me to comment upon them, with the leave of the House, at a later stage in the debate, after I have heard the arguments of those hon Members.

I wish to do an unusual thing and pay public tribute to a Whip, in this case the hon. Member for Newcastle-under-Lyme (Mrs. Golding). The hon Lady and my hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, North (Mr. Gale) did the House a considerable service by helpfully pointing out in Committee that the phrase, "closed television link" may not be entirely suitable for the sort of equipment that the courts may wish to use in the circumstances.

Amendment No. 249 substitutes a simpler phrase, "live television link" and I believe that that conveys the right idea of a link between sound and moving pictures, which can be transmitted by cable or satellite from the next room or from overseas. I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, North and especially grateful to the hon. Member for Newcastle-under-Lyme for their contributions.

Amendments Nos. 250 and 252 also follow up a point that emerged in Committee—this time with the help of my hon. Friend the Member for Warrington, South (Mr. Butler). My hon. Friend pointed out that subsection (5), as drafted, appeared to undermine the purpose of the clause in that it allowed court rules to be drawn up enabling the child to see all the participants in the trial. That would, of course, include the defendant, and I do not believe that any of us in this House would want that. We want to put that right; therefore, amendment No. 250 deletes subsection (5), and amendment No. 252 does the same to the schedule providing for the link in service courts.

I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Warrington, South for drawing this matter to our attention. I look forward to hearing the arguments of the hon. Member for Bow and Poplar and my hon. Friend the Member for Chislehurst on the other amendments.

8.45 pm

Ms. Gordon: Amendment No. 213 seeks to change from 14 to 16 the age under which a witness is permitted to give evidence through a television link. I do not wish to say much, because most of my remarks will be addressed to amendment No. 216, which comes later.

The age of 14 as the age when childhood is considered to have ended harks back to 50 years ago, when children left school at the age of 14 and began to undertake paid work—at least among the poorer classes—and they matured earlier. The school-leaving age is now 16, as is the age of consent. What is more important is that the years 14 to 16 years are years of puberty, when young people are especially sensitive. I believe that it is particularly important for children up to the age of 16 to have the same right as a younger child to give their evidence through a television link, instead of having to face their attacker in court.

Mr. Roger Sims (Chislehurst): As my hon. Friend the Minister has said, clause 31 makes provision for a televison link to be used for witnesses under the age of 14 to enable them to give evidence in court. That is a most welcome provision, and I do not believe that I need elaborate the case for it.

The clause as presently drafted reads:

"A person other than the accused may give evidence through a live closed circuit television link on a trial on indictment or an appeal to the criminal division of the Court of Appeal"

It therefore follows that proceedings in magistrates courts are excluded from that provision. I accept that most of the cases of the types specified in the clause are dealt with at the Crown court, but there are three considerations that I wish to put to the House.

First, cases such as indecent assault can be tried by the magistrates court and a case of indecent exposure can only be tried at a magistrates court. In both instances, a child under the age of 14 may be involved, yet he or she would not have the advantage of the video link provided for in the clause.

Secondly, all committal proceedings take place in the magistrates court. That may well involve a child giving evidence, but the child will be unable to use a video link as the clause presently stands. The child may well have to attend the court, a procedure that the child is likely to find unnerving, indeed intimidating, especially if he or she must face the person accused of the offence against them. I accept that the child's evidence may be given by deposition in committal proceedings, but that only applies if the defence agrees. There are still some cases in which the child must appear to give evidence in committal proceedings.

The third argument in favour of extending the video-link provision to magistrates courts would be for its use in care proceedings. These must take place in magistrates courts, and in such cases a child may have to give evidence that may concern allegations against, for instance, the father. The difficulties that could be created by father and child appearing in the same court are obvious. Again, the closed-circuit television would be invaluable, but its use would be precluded as the clause stands.

I accept that the number of cases under all three headings that I have given is relatively small. I accept, too, that my hon. Friend the Minister may argue that the cost of providing a video link would be disproportionate; but, if anything, that is perhaps an argument for providing a link for the exceptional cases.

My amendment is permissive. It does not state that all magistrates courts must be equipped with a video link. It would surely be sufficient for a few magistrates courts to be thus provided, so that appropriate cases could be transferred to the nearest magistrates court that had a closed-circuit television system. The inconvenience of travelling to such a court would be more than compensated for by the advantage of the link.

As the Bill stands, a television link can be used for any proceedings in a Crown court, but it can never be used in a magistrates court. I invite my hon. Friend to remove that anomaly by accepting my amendment.

Mr. John Patten: I shall deal first with the points raised by the hon. Member for Bow and Poplar (Ms. Gordon). Such relevant statutory precedents as there are tend to support 14 as the cut-off age in this context. The most important of those is the long-established dividing line which is well known to those involved in child care, and which is defined in the Children and Young Persons Act 1969 as being the line between a child and a young person. Most of us are conversant with the provisions of that Act, and I see no reason for the moment to move away from that definition. However, I understand that the hon. Lady is saving some of her arguments for a debate that may take place on amendment No. 216, so perhaps we can return to these issues later. I am not moved by the amendment.

I turn now to amendment No. 281, which was tabled by my hon. Friend the Member for Chislehurst (Mr. Sims), who is an acknowledged expert in this subject. The amendment would permit the use of a live television link, in child abuse cases and in cases in which a witness was overseas, in any proceedings in magistrates courts. The Bill, as my hon. Friend pointed out, provides for these facilities to be available only in Crown court trials, and nowhere else. We made the proposal about the Crown courts—it has been widely welcomed on both sides of the House—because there was a recognised problem. A number of documented cases, many of them brought to the attention of Ministers and others much written about in the national press and shown on national television, showed that there was a problem in the Crown courts that had to be solved, so it was incumbent upon us all to find a way of doing that.

Is the problem really so great in magistrates courts? Does it exist at all? That is open to debate. The atmosphere, as my hon. Friend the Member for Chiselhurst will know all too well, is much less formal in a magistrates court than the rather frightening atmosphere of a Crown court—frightening not only for children but for adults. There are fewer people in the court, most of them wearing ordinary clothes. That is particularly true of the informal atmosphere of a juvenile court, in which magistrates who are specially selected and trained for work with juveniles are encouraged to hold criminal and care proceedings in as informal a way as possible. There is broad consent that that is the best way to proceed.

[Mr. John Patten]

Secondly, the courtrooms are usually less daunting in appearance, although some magistrates courts can be rather awesome. I hold one of my regular advice centres in the back of Abingdon court house. That seems to induce a sense of awe in some of my constituents, which I find rather agreeable. I do not get it in other parts of my constituency.

As far as we in the Home Office are aware, there has been no suggestion thus far—with detailed examples of cases—that children are experiencing the same problems when giving evidence in magistrates courts as they have undoubtedly suffered in Crown court trials. It is very much to the credit of the magistrates that that is so. This is not a bad dictum for a Minister to have written on his wall: "No problem, therefore take no action." I try to cleave to that from time to time.

I know that the Magistrates Association is interested in the potential for using television links in magistrates courts. We have corresponded with the association. Its chairman, John Hosking, and others have taken a considerable interest in the subject. I have reflected carefully on the matter because of that interest and I have thought particularly about the remarks by my hon. Friend the Member for Chiselhurst. I am conscious that this is the second time on Report when it looks as though I shall have to disoblige my hon. Friend when he is concerned only with an enabling power. I am very sorry that that is so. I know that this will be a disappointment to him, but I hope that, on the basis of what I have said and of the fact that there have been no well documented examples of children suffering difficulties, he will be inclined not to press his amendment. We shall continue to monitor the position carefully in the Home Office.

Mr. Sims: May I have my hon. Friend's assurance that, if experience in the Crown courts with the use of the link, and in the magistrates courts without it, suggests over a period of years that there would be an advantage in extending the provision to magistrates courts, the Home Office will be prepared to consider such an extension?

Mr. John Patten: Yes, I must give that undertaking to my hon. Friend and to all Opposition Members who take an interest in these matters. Obviously, it would be of grave concern to the Home Office if things appeared to have been exacerbated by practice in the Crown courts and that there had been some effect on the magistrates courts. I am happy to give my hon. Friend the undertaking he seeks.

Amendment agreed to.

Amendment made: No. 250, in page 21, line 19, leave out subsection (5).—*[Mr. John Patten.]*

Clause 32

EVIDENCE OF PERSONS UNDER 14 IN COMMITTAL PROCEEDINGS

Ms. Gordon: I beg to move amendment No. 216, in page 22, line 13, leave out sub-paragraph (a).

Clause 32 deals with assaults, sexual offences and offences against children. It relates to proceedings in the magistrates courts and the evidence of children in committal proceedings. It provides that any statement made by or taken from a child should be admissible in testimony of any matter on which the child's oral evidence would be admissible. However, subsection (3)(a), which my amendment seeks to delete, would allow the defence to object to such an admission, in which case the child would have to come to court.

Last week, the Home Secretary said that he would set up a committee to consider using video links to give evidence. That is to be welcomed, and I hope that the remit of the committee will be extended to look into other forms of giving evidence. We all want to make it easier for children who have been attacked to come forward and give evidence against their attackers. The scope of the problem is only beginning to be realised. The first reactions of horror, followed in many cases by denial and by a feeling of impotence—not knowing how to deal with the problem on such a massive scale—is fairly new and something with which we must come to terms.

We all want to stop adults who repeatedly attack one child or many children but who are free to continue because no child can be found who could face a court appearance. Equally, we want a fair trial for defendants. But that does not mean that children and young people should be put through the trauma of facing their attackers. To a person who has never been in one, any court can be intimidating. That is even more true in the case of children.

9 pm

A child has no status in society. A child's word is often given far less weight than the word of the defendant, who may be a man of substance. The child or young person knows that and feels that he or she will not be believed —for very good reason. A defence lawyer who is doing his job on behalf of his client must try to discredit the child if that child is in court. Those are all good reasons why we should not allow the defence to force a child to come to court. Often when children come into court they whisper and cannot get the words out. For every child who whispers in a court there are dozens who never come forward. We must try to make it easier for children and young people under the age of 16 to come forward.

In the north of England there is an organisation called Childwatch run by a woman who was herself assaulted as a child. She receives about 500 calls a week, and she says that she knows rapists who have attacked child after child. The police often know the identity of a man who has made repeated attacks, but because they cannot find a child who will stand up in court, or whose parents will allow their child to come to court, the police are powerless.

Even when cases come to court, all is not plain sailing. Magistrates have been known to let out on bail rapists who have repeated their attacks. Judges have been known to talk of children's naughty habits. In 1982, a 17-year-old hitch-hiker—a very tender age, even if it is above the age of childhood—was told by a judge that she was guilty of contributory negligence, and the rapist, who was a business man, was not gaoled but fined £2,000.

In my local paper this week there is a report of a girl aged eight who was terrorised into silence by a child molester who threatened to kill her mother and sister. But after months of being subjected to sex attacks, the youngster plucked up the courage to tell. If children know that they will not have to face their attacker across a court room, more will have the courage to come forward and abuse will be prevented.

Mothers often face a dilemma. Their natural feeling is that their child's well-being comes first and that the child has been through enough already, but that leads to offenders remaining on the loose and repeat offences are high. Only a tiny percentage of offenders are apprehended, let alone brought to court.

An independent survey was carried out by Women Against Rape in 1985, to which 1,236 women responded, with 62 per cent. of 2,000 questionnaires being returned. The women were asked about their childhood. One in five had been raped or had suffered some sexual assault as a child or teenager. Some had told an adult, only to be told that they were imagining things or that they should not talk dirty. Less than one third of those who had been raped or sexually assaulted before they had reached the age of 11 had told anybody about it at the time of the attack. Some had never told anybody before replying to the survey.

To appreciate the difficulties that children face when going to court, we must consider who the defendants are likely to be. Many people assume that the defendant will be a stranger, but three quarters of rapists are known to their victims.

The Women Against Rape survey showed that one in five of all children or teenagers had been raped or sexually assaulted, and that one out of five of them—one in 25 of all children—had been assaulted by a member of their own family. To make the position more graphic, we should think of a typical classroom in which six of the children have been or soon will be assaulted and, in some cases, have been repeatedly assaulted over a period of years. This often happens as a result of the abuse of power by an adult who has control over a child or young person.

Mr. John Patten: The hon. Lady's speech is extremely interesting, but I am finding it hard to relate her remarks to committal proceedings, with which amendment No. 216 is concerned.

Ms. Gordon: I am speaking about a child having to go to court. During the committal proceedings the defence can demand that a child comes into court. The purpose of my argument, which I thought was clear, was to show that if a child knows that he will have to go to court he will be afraid to speak up, or the parent will not allow the child to go to court. Thus, attackers go unpunished and are free to continue attacks. That is the purpose of my argument, and I should like to continue it.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I am bound to say that I share the Minister's confusion. Perhaps the hon. Lady has misdirected her amendment or perhaps she does not appreciate that the argument that she is addressing does not clearly relate to the matter before the House.

Ms. Gordon: I thought that it did. I did not think that it was out of order to argue against children having to go to court but in favour of them being able to give evidence in other ways. I am seeking to delete a provision that says that the defence can demand that a child comes to court, which would lead to the child being face to face with the defendant.

The defendant is often a person who is known to or has control over the child, such as the head of a children's home or a stepfather. We should imagine the fear of a 15-year-old facing a stepfather in court, who is often aware that the family is financially dependent on him or is afraid of him.

In other European countries evidence can be taken without a child coming into court. In some states in the United States video recordings are used, as has been suggested here. In West Germany, judges usually question children alone in a private room. In Belgium, the judge questions children with two lawyers present, one for the prosecution and one for the defence. In Holland, children are questioned by a woman police officer on a written statement to the judge.

I hope that the committee that is to be set up will consider all those examples for magistrates and Crown courts here, and that the statements of several children can be taken together where the written evidence of one child is not enough to commit a defendant for trial if he has attacked several children. I hope that evidence can be taken in that way.

The state has an absolute responsibility to make it possible for children to speak out at all stages of proceedings but without wrongfully convicting anybody. The younger the child, the harder it is to say anything. The only way that we can reduce the terrible suffering of children who have to withstand sexual assaults is by investigating and introducing ways of making it possible for them to speak out without having to face their attackers.

Mr. John Patten: I have listened with care to the points made by the hon. Member for Bow and Poplar (Ms. Gordon)—both her general points, which, with your permission, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I shall not address, and the specific point about committal. Removing the right of the defence to object to the use of an earlier statement would, as a matter of principle, be a major step.

I can appreciate the hon. Lady's concern. The future of committal proceedings, including the place of oral evidence at the committal stage, is in the melting pot. The Home Office hopes shortly to publish a consultation document inviting public and professional comments on the possible shape of reform for committal proceedings overall.

I do not find the argument of principle overwhelming, but it would be a mistake to make a significant procedural change affecting committal proceedings, which is what the hon. Lady is suggesting in amendment No. 216, with all the implications for the defence, before we are clear about the future of committal proceedings.

I hope that the hon. Lady will take some encouragement from what I have said tonight. We shall not lose sight of the clear points that she has made about committal. I am grateful to her for raising them in the spirit in which she has, but I cannot advise the House to accept amendment No. 216 in advance of the much wider review of committal proceedings which many recognise is much needed.

Amendment negatived.

Clause 34

SCOPE OF PART IV

Amendments made: No. 73, in page 22, line 47, leave out 'section' and insert 'Part of this Act'.

No. 76, in page 22, line 48, at end insert—

'(1A) Subject to Rules of Court, the jurisdiction of the Court of Appeal under section 35 below shall be exercised by the criminal division of the Court, and references to the Court of Appeal in this part of this Act shall be construed as references to that division.'

No. 74, in page 23, line 1, leave out 'section' and insert 'part of this Act'.

No. 75, in page 23, line 7, leave out 'section' and insert 'Part of this Act'.

No. 77, in page 23, line 18, leave out '(7)' and insert '(6A)'.

No. 78, in page 23, line 18, at end insert—

'(6A) Subsection (1A) shall be omitted.'—*[Mr. John Patten.]*

Clause 40

POWER OF CROWN COURT TO DEAL WITH SUMMARY OFFENCE WHERE PERSON COMMITTED FOR EITHER WAY OFFENCE

Mr. John Patten: I beg to move amendment No. 86, in page 27, line 15, at end insert

'except as provided by subsection (8A) below.

(8A) If the prosecution inform the court that they would not desire to submit evidence on the charge relating to the summary offence, the Court shall dimiss it.'.

This is a technical amendment. Clause 48(8) provides that where a person committed to the Crown court under the new procedure pleads not guilty to the summary offence, the powers of the Crown court shall cease in respect of that offence. On reflection, I think that the words go further than we intended in one respect in that they appear to preclude the Crown court from hearing a prosecution submission of no evidence on the summary offence. If the prosecution does not wish to offer evidence, it is clearly desirable that the matter should be disposed of there and then. Amendment No. 86 ensures that the Crown court can do so.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 43

FIREARMS OFFENCES

Amendment made: No. 87, in page 28, line 32, leave out subsections (2) and (3) and insert—

'(2) For the third and fourth columns of the entries relating to an offence under section 2(1) (possessing, etc. shotgun without shotgun certificate) there shall be substituted—

"(a) Summary	6 months or the statutory maximum or both.
(b) On indictment	3 years or a fine; or both.".'.—*[Mr. John Patten.]*

Clause 50

STATUTORY MAXIMUM AS PENALTY ON SUMMARY CONVICTION FOR OFFENCES TRIABLE EITHER WAY UNDER SUBORDINATE LEGISLATION

Amendment made: No. 88, in page 31, line 39, leave out 'Part of this Act' and insert

'section and sections 51, 52, 54, 56 and 58 below'.—*[Mr. John Patten.]*

Clause 55

FINES UNDER SECONDARY SUBORDINATE INSTRUMENTS: SCOTLAND

Amendment made: No. 56, in page 34, line 30, after '1', insert 'on the standard scale'.—*[Mr. John Patten.]*

Clause 68

FORFEITURE-GENERAL

9.15 pm

Mr. Alex Carlile: I beg to move amendment No. 7, in page 42, line 40, at end insert

'and without regard to any restrictions of forfeiture in an enactment contained in an Act passed before the Criminal Justice Act 1988'.

I apologise for the fact that I shall be moving this amendment at not very considerable length. I thank the Minister of State and his advisers for considerable assistance in dealing with this amendment, not least in drafting it.

Clause 68 expands the forfeiture powers of the court. There are other statutory powers of forfeiture, some of which contain restrictions. It would be illogical if clause 68, which is intended to bring forfeiture powers up to date, were fettered by such restrictions. It is on those grounds that I move the amendment.

Mr. John Patten: The hon. and learned Gentleman's logic is overwhelming. Any opposition I might have had is totally crushed, and the Government accept the amendment.

Amendment agreed to.

Amendment made: No. 242, in page 42, line 46, at end insert—

'(2) At the end of section 12(4) of that Act (which authorises a court, on making a probation order in respect of an offender or discharging an offender, absolutely or conditionally, to order him to pay costs or compensation) there shall be added the words "or to make an order under section 43 below".'.—*[Mr. John Patten.]*

Clause 74

APPLICATION OF PROCEDURE FOR ENFORCING FINES

Amendment made: No. 90, in page 49, line 3, leave out from 'imprisonment' to 'which' in line 4 and insert

'or detention in a young offender institution'.—*[Mr. John Patten.]*

Clause 75

CASES IN WHICH RESTRAINT ORDERS AND CHARGING ORDERS MAY BE MADE

Amendment made: No. 92, in page 49, line 40, after 'that', insert

'there are reasonable grounds for thinking that'—*[Mr. John Patten.]*

Clause 76

RESTRAINT ORDERS

Amendment made: No. 93, in page 50, line 21, at end insert—

'(1A) Without prejudice to the generality of subsection (1) above, a restraint order may make such provision as the court thinks fit for living expenses and legal expenses.'

Clause 88

COMPENSATION

Amendments made: No. 94, in page 61, line 40, leave out from beginning to 'or' in line 41.

No. 95, in page 61, line 43, at end insert 'or convictions concerned'.

No. 96, in page 61, line 46, at end insert

'if, having regard to all the circumstances, it considers it appropriate to make such an order'.

No. 97, in page 62, line 6, leave out from beginning to 'and' in line 7.

No. 98, in page 62, line 8, leave out 'substantial'.

No. 99, in page 62, line 10, at end insert—

'(2A) The Court shall not order compensation to be paid in any case where it appears to the Court that the proceedings would have been instituted or continued even if the serious default had not occurred.'.—*[Mr. John Patten.]*

Clause 94

ENFORCEMENT OF OTHER EXTERNAL ORDERS

Amendments made: No. 100, in page 66, line 4, leave out 'and which are retained there shall nevertheless'

and insert 'shall'.

No. 101, in page 66, line 19, at end insert—

'(3A) The power to make an Order in Council under this section includes power to modify this Part of this Act in such a way as to confer power on a person to exercise a discretion.'.—*[Mr. John Patten.]*

Clause 96

DISCLOSURE OF INFORMATION SUBJECT TO CONTRACTUAL RESTRICTION UPON DISCLOSURE.

Amendment made: No. 239, in page 67, line 4, at end insert—

'(2) In subsection (1) above "constable" includes a police officer engaged on central service (as defined in section 43(5) of the Police Act 1964).'.—*[Mr. John Patten.]*

Clause 98

POWER TO INSPECT LAND REGISTER, ETC

Amendment made: No. 102, in page 68, line 48, at end insert—

'(7) This section shall cease to have effect on the day appointed under section 3(2) of the Land Registration Act 1988 for the coming into force of that Act.'.—*[Mr. John Patten.]*

Clause 107

CRIMINAL INJURIES

Amendments made: No. 107, in page 75, line 3, leave out 'in Scotland, the offence of'.

No. 108, in page 75, line 14, leave out

'in Scotland, the offence of'.

No. 109, in page 75, line 15, leave out

'or false imprisonment or, in Scotland, abduction'

and insert—

'(ja) false imprisonment;

(jb) abduction;'.—*[Mr. John Patten.]*

Clause 108

QUALIFYING INJURIES

Amendment made: No. 110, in page 75, line 36, after 'the', insert

'law of England and Wales or'.—*[Mr. John Patten.]*

Clause 109

AWARDS OF COMPENSATION

Amendments made: No. 111, in page 77, line 13, leave out subsections (2) to (5) and insert—

'(1A) The heads of compensation are those specified in subsections (1B) to (1E) below.

(1B) An award may be made under subsection (1)(a) above—

(a) for the injury; and

(b) for any loss of or damage to property of the claimant which occurred in the course of his sustaining the injury,

but compensation shall only be payable under paragraph (b) above if he relied on the property as a physical aid and for damage only if the damage impaired the utility of the property as a physical aid and shall only be for the cost of replacing it with other property of equal utility as a physical aid or carrying our repairs to restore its utility as a physical aid.

(1C) If a person dies as a result of a qualifying injury—

(a) an award of compensation for funeral expenses may be made to any person other than a public authority but shall not exceed a reasonable amount;

(b) where a claim falls to be determined in accordance with the rules of the law of England and Wales, an award of compensation for bereavement may be made to any person falling within section 1A(2) of the Fatal Accidents Act 1976;

(c) where a claim falls to be determined in accordance with the rules of the law of Scotland, an award of compensation for loss of society may be made to any person who is a member of the deceased's immediate family within the meaning of section 10(2) of the Damages (Scotland) Act 1976; and

(d) an award may be made to a dependant of the deceased (whether or not an award is made to him or to any other person under paragraph (a), (b) or (c) above) in respect of any loss of support suffered by the dependant.

(1D) Subject to subsection (1G) below, if a person who has sustained a qualifying injury dies otherwise than as a result of it, the Board may award compensation to a dependant of his in respect of any loss which he has suffered by reason—

(a) of any reduction in earnings (not being prospective earnings) by the deceased; and

(b) of any expenses and liabilities incurred by the deceased as a result of the injury.

(1E) If—

(a) a woman is awarded compensation for rape; and

(b) she has given birth to a child conceived as a result of the rape; and

(c) at the time of the award she intends to keep the child,

the Board shall award her the additional statutory sum in respect of each child so conceived that she then intends to keep.

(1F) The Board may make an interim award, but without prejudice to their powers on a final determination.

(1G) If a person who has sustained a qualifying injury dies otherwise than as a result of it, the Board may not award compensation to a dependant of his if before he died he became entitled, otherwise than on an interim award, to a payment of compensation in respect of it.

(1H) If—

(a) a deceased person was entitled to payment of conpensation for an injury; and

(b) a claim for compensation for the same injury is made by one of his dependants,

any compensation awarded to the dependant shall be reduced by the amount of the compensation to payment of which the deceased was entitled; and proportionate reductions shall be made on awards to two or more dependants.'.

No. 112, in page 77, line 38 leave out from 'Act' to end of line 42 and insert—

'"the additional statutory sum" means £5,000 or such other sum as may for the time being be specified by virtue of an order under subsection (8) below; and

"dependant"—

(a) where the appropriate law for the determination of a claim is the law of England and Wales, has the same meaning as in the Fatal Accidents Act 1976; and

(b) where it is the law of Scotland, means a relative within the meaning of the Damages (Scotland) Act 1976.

(8) The Secretary of State may by order made by statutory instrument substitute a different sum for the sum specified in subsection (7) above.

(9) A statutory instrument containing an order under subsection (8) above shall be subject to annulment in pursuance of a resolution of either House of Parliament.'—*[Mr. John Patten.]*

Clause 110

POWERS TO WITHHOLD AND REDUCE COMPENSATION

Amendments made: No. 113, in page 77, line 47 leave out 'his' and insert 'the'

No. 114, in page 78, line 5, leave out 'his' and insert 'the'.—*[Mr. John Patten.]*

Mr. Worthington: I beg to move amendment No. 208, in page 78, line 14, leave out—

'(1) Criminal convictions or unlawful conduct of the claimant'.

After that performance, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I do not know whether it is in order to suggest that we should lie down in a darkened room to recover.

The Bill proposes that the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board may, if it thinks fit, refuse an award or award less than it would otherwise have awarded, either because of the criminal convictions of, or unlawful conduct by, the claimant, or because of conduct on his part that is connected with the injury. We do not have any quarrel with the part dealing with conduct of the claimant that led to the injury—clearly one should not benefit from the consequences of illegal actions—but we have considerable reservations about the fact that an award may be reduced or not made at all if the person making the claim has criminal convictions or, even worse, in that strange phrase, has been involved "at any time" in unspecified, unlimited unlawful conduct.

If the proposal becomes law it will mean that the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board must take note of such conduct and that that must be brought to the board's attention by those servicing it. That is almost saying, "Look, when you make an award, you should take into account the behaviour of this person." I find that objectionable. Criminal injuries are events on their own. The proposal has elements of the 19th century poor law, with its definitions of the deserving poor and the undeserving poor.

In our view, there should be a sense of equality before the law. I know that we are not dealing with a court, but if one has suffered because of the criminal actions of another person or persons, that fact should be considered on its own. We should certainly not have the notion that a board, which is not a court of law, and which, in a sense, operates informally—I am not quarrelling with that in general terms—and from which there is no right of appeal at the moment, should, in closed session, be able to take into account and make judgments about a person's behaviour.

It is always difficult to imagine how a board might react to, or judge, a particular situation. Let us consider prostitution as an example. If someone has been convicted of soliciting for prostitution, I would be unhappy if, although that person might have been injured by the criminal acts of others, that person's previous behaviour were taken into account because that would be a blanket power and a vague rule. That fact should be taken into account in the Government's proposals for the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board. That proposal seems unnecessary, because it does have a validity of its own.

I should like to give in evidence the fact that the Scottish Association of Victims' Support Schemes has recently appointed a working party to look into the issue. Its work has been funded by the social work services group, which is a section of the Scottish Office. Therefore, it is a body of considerable standing and has representatives from the sheriffs' and procurator fiscals' departments. It has legal representatives and representatives from citizens advice bureaux, social work departments and the police. They are looking at the whole question of compensation for victims of crime in a Scottish context. The inquiry is not just about the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board, because there is also the issue of the compensation that might be awarded by a court. I do not quote from the publication produced by that body because throughout its extensive inquiries the point that I am raising was not raised by anybody in that forum. I repeat that it is a body with some official standing, looking at the way in which compensation is dealt with in a Scottish context.

As far as I am aware, no one thought to raise as a valid issue whether to take into account the claimant's previous criminal convictions or, even worse, the unlawful conduct of the person who had suffered when deciding whether compensation should be paid in a particular case. If someone has suffered, that should be considered on its own account as a separate issue. A measure of moral worthiness should not be brought into the matter because of previous acts that might have been committed recently or a long time ago.

We hope that the Government will accept this minor amendment to delete the requirement of the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board to take into account previous convictions or unlawful conduct, because it simply does not seem fair.

Mr. John Patten: There is quite a gap between the hon. Member for Clydebank and Milngavie (Mr. Worthington) and me on this issue. Amendment No. 208 would remove the board's discretion to take account of an applicant's criminal history or previous unlawful behaviour. That would be a significant departure from the terms of the present extra-statutory scheme that we are now putting into statutory form with the passage of the Bill through the House and the other place. For many years, that has allowed the board to reduce or withhold compensation from someone with a recent criminal history. Amendments to the earlier Bill, which fell at the election, amended the board's discretion by removing references to character and way of life, which are part of the present scheme. That, of course, is maintained in the Bill.

However, I do not believe that it would be right to further limit the board's discretion, so that it cannot take account of past criminal activities, for the following reasons. First, we should remember that the board disburses large amounts of taxpayers' money. Secondly, I do not believe that our constituents would take it kindly if we paid compensation from public funds to, for example, an habitually violent gang leader who is attacked by someone who had been injured by his gang or attacked by a member of a rival gang. To use the terms of the hon. Member for Clydebank and Milngavie, that example has a validity of its own for maintaining the scheme.

The board takes seriously the responsibility of using its discretion to reduce or withhold awards only when there is justification. The grounds upon which it exercises its discretion are clearly set out in its statement issued to all applicants and to the advisers of all applicants. To my mind, the existing wording of the measure provides the board with a valuable safeguard against having to compensate those applicants whose record renders them, in the board's view, simply undeserving of full compensation from public funds. That is a valuable safeguard, and we should retain it.

Mr. Archer: I shall surprise the Minister by agreeing with him. I cannot wholly agree with my hon. Friends and support the amendment in its present form. The Minister is correct to say that the board should have the right to take into account such matters as previous convictions and unlawful conduct, but perhaps he can understand the anxieties expressed by Opposition Members.

The Bill states that the board may take into account any previous convictions or unlawful conduct, whether or not connected with the incident or injuries, whether or not in any way contributing to the injury, or even if it takes place after the injury has been sustained. I am sure that that cannot be what the Government intend to happen and, as the Minister will understand, that is not what happens at present.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: Does my right hon. and learned Friend consider that subsection (2)(b), which talks of

> "conduct on his part connected with the injury",

might be sufficient to cover those circumstances in which a person's conduct has led him to be involved in the gangland situation described by the Minister? Surely paragraph (a) is far too wide and does not go to the relevance of the claim whereas paragraph (b), which is acceptable to us all, provides that any conduct on the part of the person connected with the injury should rule that person out for an award or lead to a lesser award. Does not that cover all the circumstances that might be relevant?

9.30 pm

Mr. Archer: As always, I find my hon. Friend's logic compelling. I would have been happy with only paragraph (b), but I have an uneasy feeling that, if paragraph (a) were deleted—as the Minister has said, it is part of the non-statutory scheme—that might give rise to misunderstandings.

I would have hoped to produce a halfway house. I do not know whether it is too late in the progress of the Bill to do that procedurally. I am sure that such a move would not defeat us. After all, the Bill will have to return to another place. Perhaps "relevant and lawful conduct" and "relevant previous convictions" would make us all happy.

The argument of my hon. Friend the Member for Clydebank and Milngavie (Mr. Worthington) has a great deal of force. We do not wish to distinguish between the good guys and dolls and the bad guys and dolls, the deserving and the undeserving. We want to distinguish between conduct that has contributed to the injury and conduct that has not.

Mr. Worthington: I thank my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Warley, West (Mr. Archer) for his valuable contribution. I hope that the Minister will take some note of it. The Minister's defence of the clause was particularly unconvincing when he came heavily to depend on precedent. It is not relevant or useful to say that, because a provision has been in previous legislation, it should continue to appear in future legislation, unless the Minister is prepared to refer to the work of the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board and to say that the provision has proved to be necessary or useful. To say that it has been in legislation and that it must stay in it is a denial of the Minister's previous academic background of high distinction. In that respect, his reply was disappointing.

My hon. Friend the Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor) and my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Warley, West dealt extremely well with the Minister's example, which turned on subsection (2)(b), which refers to

> "conduct on his part connected with the injury."

The Minister placed before us the outlandish example of a gangland leader applying to the board for compensation. Surely that would be swept up by the clause. It is an endearing thought that the modern equivalent of one of the Kray twins should approach the board. A Minister who is on the ropes always goes for the worst case possible.

We did not have in mind that which the Minister put before the House. We were thinking of much humbler figures who at some stage in their past were involved in unlawful conduct. I note that the Minister did not pick that up. I am not clear what "unlawful conduct" would be picked up by the clause that would be distinct from criminal convictions. We were thinking of someone who might in the past have had some brush with the law and who found—there is no right of appeal in this instance—that in some unexplained way a secret body had had his award reduced or set aside entirely. How is that to be explained to that person? I assume that there is no explanation. That is unsatisfactory.

A person may have suffered criminal damage, having been hurt by the act of a criminal. The only relevant issue is whether he suffered in that instance. That is the matter to be judged. An impersonal body should not be allowed to make character judgments about such people in an unspecified way. For that reason, we are unhappy with the Minister's response.

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 120, Noes 255.

Division No. 388] **[9.35 pm**

AYES

Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Allen, Graham
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashton, Joe
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Bell, Stuart
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buchan, Norman
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Cryer, Bob
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Dalyell, Tam
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Doran, Frank
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eastham, Ken
Fatchett, Derek
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Flannery, Martin

Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fyfe, Maria
Galloway, George
George, Bruce
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Graham, Thomas
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Holland, Stuart
Hood, Jimmy
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Howells, Geraint
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
John, Brynmor
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Livsey, Richard
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum A.
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliott
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
O'Neill, Martin
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Randall, Stuart
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Richardson, Jo
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Spearing, Nigel
Steinberg, Gerry
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wall, Pat
Wallace, James
Wareing, Robert N.
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Frank Haynes and
Mr. Frank Cook.

NOES

Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amess, David
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Batiste, Spencer
Beggs, Roy
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Clark, Hon Alan *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Dykes, Hugh
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gow, Ian
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Charles
Jack, Michael
Janman, Tim
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Lawrence, Ivan
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
McCrindle, Robert
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New Forest)*
Madel, David
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morrison, Sir Charles
Moss, Malcolm
Neale, Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, John *(Oxford W)*
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raffan, Keith
Redwood, John
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon John
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stokes, Sir John
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm

Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Tracey, Richard
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Waller, Gary
Walters, Sir Dennis
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Robert Boscawen and
Mr. Tony Durant.

Question accordingly negatived.

Amendment made: No. 115, in page 78, line 19, leave out from 'where' to 'shall' in line 21 and insert

'the person who sustained the injury is dead, the references to the claimant in subsections (1)(a) and (b) and (2) above'.—*[Mr. John Patten.]*

Clause 111

RIGHT OF APPEAL

Amendments made: No. 116, in page 78, line 32, at beginning insert

'If the Board have determined a claim after a hearing'.

No. 117, in page 78, line 34, leave out

'from a decision of the Board'

and insert 'if they determined it'.

No. 118, page 78, line 36, leave 'from a decision' and insert 'if they determined it'.—*[Mr. John Patten.]*

Clause 113

REIMBURSEMENT AND RECOVERY

Amendments made: No. 119, in page 79, line 15, leave out from 'Board' to end of line 16 and insert

'in a county court for an order for the repayment by the offender to the Board of the whole of the award or such part of it as the court thinks fit.'

No. 120, in page 79, line 17, leave out subsections (2) and (3).—*[Mr. John Patten.]*

Clause 114

REIMBURSEMENT AND RECOVERY IN SCOTLAND

Amendment made: No. 121, in page 80, line 6, leave out subsection (2).—*[Mr. John Patten.]*

Clause 116

ABOLITION OF PEREMPTORY CHALLENGE

9.45 pm

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I beg to move amendment No. 148, in page 80, line 33, at end insert—

'(2) In addition and without prejudice to any powers which the Crown Court may possess to order the exclusion of the public from any proceedings a judge of the Crown Court may order that the hearing of a challenge for cause shall be in camera or in the chambers.'.

This meets a point made by the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile). It enables judges to hear jury challenges for cause in private.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 122

DETENTION OF YOUNG OFFENDERS IN SCOTLAND

Amendment made: No. 149, in page 84, line 45, leave out subsection (3).—*[Mr. John Patten.]*

Clause 132

OFFENCE OF HAVING ARTICLE WITH BLADE OR POINT IN PUBLIC PLACE

Amendments made: No. 160, in page 87, line 23, leave out 'subsection (4)' and insert 'subsections (4) and (4A)'.

No. 161, in page 87, line 32, leave out from 'place' to end of line 34 and insert—

'(4A) Without prejudice to the generality of subsection (4) above, it shall be a defence for a person charged with an offence under this section to prove that he had the article with him—'—*[Mr. John Patten.]*

Clause 134

OFFENSIVE WEAPONS

Amendment made: No. 162, in page 89, line 12, at end insert—

'(7A) It shall be a defence for any person charged in respect of any conduct of his relating to a weapon to which this section applies—

(a) with an offence under subsection (1) above; or
(b) with an offence under section 50(2) or (3) of the Customs and Excise Management Act 1979,

to prove that the conduct in question was only for the purposes of making the weapon available to a museum or gallery to which this subsection applies.

(7B) If a person acting on behalf of a museum or gallery to which subsection (7A) above applies is charged with hiring or lending a weapon to which this section applies, it shall be a defence for him to prove that he had reasonable grounds for believing that the person to whom he lent or hired it would use it only for cultural, artistic or educational purposes.

(7C) Subsection (7A) above applies to a museum or gallery only if it does not distribute profits.

(7D) In this section "museum or gallery" includes any institution which has as its purpose, or one of its purposes, the preservation, display and interpretation of material of historical, artistic or scientific interest and gives the public access to it.'—*[Mr. John Patten.]*

Clause 137

TRANSFERRED CHARGES

Mr. John Patten: I beg to move amendment No. 226, in page 90, line 12, leave out from '5' to end of line 14 and insert

'(notices of transfer-procedure)—

(a) in subsection (4), for the words "without the person charged" there shall be substituted the words "in relation to a person charged without his";
(b) in subsection (5)(a), for the word "charged" there shall be substituted the words "in question";
(c) in subsection (6)—
  (i) for the words "the person charged" there shall be substituted the words "a person to whom it relates"; and
  (ii) for the words "examining justices" there shall be substituted the words "a magistrates' court";
(d) in subsection (7)—
  (i) for the word "charged" there shall be substituted the words "to whom the notice of transfer relates"; and
  (ii) for the words "examining justices" there shall be substituted the words "a magistrates' court";

[Mr. John Patten]

(e) in subsection (8)(b), for the words "whose written statement is tendered in evidence for the purposes of the notice of transfer" there shall be substituted the words "indicated in the notice of transfer as a proposed witness"; and

(f) in subsection (9)(a)—

(i) in sub-paragraph (i), for the words "the person charged" there shall be substituted the words "any person to whom the notice of transfer relates"; and

(ii) in sub-paragraph (ii), after the word "the", in the second place where it occurs, there shall be inserted the words "place specified by the notice of transfer as the".'

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): With this it will be convenient to take Government amendments Nos. 227 to 236, 273, 237, 272, and 238.

Mr. Patten: These are drafting amendments. I am sure that one or two hon. Members have specific points to make, so perhaps I may listen to what they have to say before taking the House through the amendments.

Mr. Archer: That is a very handsome offer and it would be churlish of us not to take advantage of it. My simple mind finds it difficult to take in the amendments. It is virtually impossible to follow them without a visual aid. The Criminal Justice Bill that reached the statute book as recently as last year set out a new code of procedures for fraud trials based on the careful and thoughtful report of Lord Roskill's committee. Whether or not we agree with all its recommendations, no one can dispute the thought and expertise that went into the report.

The Government had second thoughts. With this Bill, they are already seeking to make changes to the procedures in the 1987 Act. To understand such changes, we need to refer to a copy of the 1987 Act and, alongside it, a copy of clause 137 of the Bill. The Government have now had third thoughts. They are making changes not only to the Act but to the changes. We need a wider table. We need the 1987 Act, clause 137 of the Bill, and the three amendments. Perhaps the Minister had the material in his mind, but some of us need to do it like that. I shall try to keep my remarks as brief as possible.

What are the relevant provisions of the 1987 Act? It states that the prosecuting authorities or the Secretary of State may decide that a fraud case shall proceed to the Crown court, without the necessity for committal proceedings by the magistrates court. The prosecution can unilaterally dispose of the committal stage. A few years ago, that proposition would have appeared to be startling, but that provision is already on the statute book. It is in the 1987 Act. I apprehend that it would be out of order to discuss its merits today.

Then the 1987 Act provides further that, if that is done, a defendant who has been bailed to appear before a magistrates court does not have to appear, which is not surprising, because that court is no longer dealing with the matter. But section 5(6) of the 1987 Act adds the words:

"unless the notice states that it"—

it being the requirement to attend before the magistrates court—

"is to continue."

There is no explanation of why, having ordained that a case is to leapfrog the magistrates court, a prosecuting authority should want to provide in the notice that, nevertheless, the defendant must attend before the magistrates court. But again, that is already on the statute book. It is in the 1987 Act.

Clause 137 provides that if the prosecuting authority states that a case must go to the Crown court without the necessity for committal by the magistrates, but that, nevertheless, the defendant must attend before the magistrates court, the magistrate shall have power to deal with bail. We have no complaints about that. Clause 137 passed through all stages of the Bill without having previously been mentioned because we thought that the Government got it right.

Amendments Nos. 226 and 227 exhibit all the symptoms of drafting amendments, and there is nothing that I wish to say about them.

But amendment No. 228 is not an amendment to clause 137. It deals with quite a different matter. To understand it, we must again refer to the 1987 Act. If the prosecuting authority airlifts a case from the magistrates court and announces that the defendant shall go, if not directly to jail, at least directly to the Crown court, shall not pass Go and shall not collect £200, clearly there should be some judicial authority with power to examine the matter and decide whether there is enough evidence to warrant a trial at all. Section 6 of the 1987 Act so provides. A defendant may go to a judge of the Crown court and ask him to dismiss the case because there is not enough evidence properly to place him on trial. Amendment No. 228 seems to make some changes to that, although it does not actually change the provision.

Mr. John Patten *indicated assent.*

Mr. Archer: I see from the Minister that, so far, even with all the visual aids that I must use, I have understood it.

The changes are largely procedural. But having drawn our attention to the matter and, particularly, having made his generous invitation, I hope that the Minister will forgive me if I ask a few further questions.

The 1987 Act does not state what evidence or statements are to accompany the notice of transfer. Section 5(9) simply states that the Attorney-General

"shall by regulations make provision requiring . . . a statement of the evidence."

Presumably, that statement will be in the form of what we normally know as witness statements, made by witnesses to the police.

Mr. John Patten *indicated assent.*

Mr. Archer: Again I am grateful to the Minister for confirming that that is right.

Section 6 of the 1987 Act provides that an application to dismiss the charge may be made and the judge may order the person who has given a written statement to supplement it by oral evidence. If that person does not comply with the order, it will not be admissible unless the judge gives leave. That, standing alone, is a little sharp. The judge may take the evidence from the prosecution although it has disregarded his order to have the witness in court to give oral evidence and, therefore, be available for cross-examination. That is a long way from the former position, when not only could a full committal be insisted upon, but the defence could insist that a witness be in court for cross-examination. However, at least under the 1987 Act that evidence would be disregarded unless a judge specifically gave leave to admit it.

Amendment No. 228 appears to reverse that position. The proposed new section 6 provides that if a judge orders a person to give oral evidence and he fails to do so—the prosecution fails to have him there—the judge "may disregard", not "shall disregard", it; not even that it "shall be disregarded" unless the judge positively orders otherwise, but simply that he "may disregard" it.

That raises a succession of questions that I wish to put to the Minister. First, why should the defence not have the right to require, in the magistrates court or elsewhere, that oral evidence be given? Secondly—even if that is left to the discretion of the judge—if he orders that oral evidence should be given, why should that not be enforced? Thirdly, if it is not enforced, why should the statement not automatically be disregarded? Fourthly—this relates speciifically to the amendment—even if it is not automatically disregarded, why should it not be disregarded unless the judge positively orders otherwise? Those four questions each logically follow the one before, and I should be grateful if the Minister would answer them.

Mr. John Patten: That was a tour de force. I am becoming slightly nervous of the right hon. and learned Gentleman, for the first time during the passage of the Bill. During our recent debate he said that he would surprise me, and perhaps the House, by agreeing with me. A few phrases later, he began, ever so gently, to kneecap me with his arguments. He certainly did not agree with me at the end of that debate. He has now suggested that I have made a very generous offer. He has performed in such a way tonight that he could offer the Criminal Justice Bill 1988 as his subject on "Mastermind", should he ever appear on that programme. He had it absolutely right; there was no need for the visual aids and all the rest of it. He simply compared the 1987 Act with the Bill.

Amendment No. 228 replaces section 6 of the 1987 Act with a revised version that covers the same ground, but in clearer terms. It is important that the terms are as clear as possible. The proposed new section provides that, where an application to dismiss a transfer charge is to be made orally, written notice should first of all be given, which is important. That is to prevent the disruption of court listing schedules. There is also an explicit power to make court rules to cover such matters as the form of notices and other documents, time limits and the procedures to be followed. Finally, the proposed new section, which covers the same ground but in clearer language, improves the description of the documents that will accompany the notice of transfer.

The right hon. and learned Gentleman asked why we are changing the provisions under which a person charged with fraud—this is an important issue—whose case in transferred to the Crown court may apply orally or in writing to a judge for the charges to be dismissed. Amendment No. 228 does not effect the defendant's right to make such an application, orally or in writing. In drafting the rules, we realised that it would be sensible when the defendant decides to exercise his right to make an oral application that he should give notice in advance of his intention to do so. Amendment No. 228 simply allows the rules to include such a requirement.

Mr. Archer: The Minister, with his characteristic kindness, said how clearly I put the case——

It being Ten o'clock, further consideration of the Bill stood adjourned.

That, at this day's sitting, the Criminal Justice Bill *[Lords]*may be proceeded with, though opposed, until any hour.—*[Mr. Maclean.]*

Question again proposed, That the amendment be made.

Mr. Archer: The Minister, with characteristic kindness, complimented me on how I had put the case, and then proceeded to demonstrate how I had totally failed to make clear to him the point I was seeking to make.

I accept that, in most respects, amendment No. 228 is a restatement of section 6, but it does not restate it on one vital issue. Section 6 states that, if a judge makes an order that a witness shall attend to give oral evidence and he does not do so, the statement shall be disregarded unless the judge orders otherwise. Amendment No. 228 says that, if the judge makes that order and the witness does not attend, the judge may regard or disregard the statement. In a matter of evidence, what would be onus of proof is here onus of demonstration—if I may coin a phrase—and it has now been changed. That was the point I was trying to make.

Mr. John Patten: Perhaps the right hon. and learned Gentleman and I should appear on "Mastermind" together on this interesting issue.

In response to the right hon. and hon. Gentleman's question, the change that the amendments make is to give the judge discretion to disregard a written statement. I believe that it is right to give the judge such a discretion to make it clear that he is within his rights to disregard the evidence, but that he is not required to do so by the amendment.

Amendment agreed to.

Amendments made: No. 227, in page 90, line 17, leave out 'the person charged' and insert

'a person to whom the notice relates'.

No. 228, in page 90, line 25, at end insert—

'(5) The following section shall be substituted for section 6—

"*Applications for dismissal.*

6.—(1) Where notice of transfer has been given, any person to whom the notice relates, at any time before he is arraigned (and whether or not an indictment has been preferred against him), may apply orally or in writing to the Crown Court sitting at the place specified by the notice of transfer as the proposed place of trial for the charge, or any of the charges, in the case to be dismissed; and the judge shall dismiss a charge (and accordingly quash a count relating to it in any indictment preferred against the applicant) if it appears to him that the evidence against the applicant would not be sufficient for a jury properly to convict him.

(2) No oral application may be made under subsection (1) above unless the applicant has given the Crown Court sitting at the place specified by the notice of transfer as the proposed place of trial written notice of his intention to make the application.

(3) Oral evidence may be given on such an application only with the leave of the judge or by his order, and the judge shall give leave or make an order only if it appears to him, having regard to any matters stated in the application for leave, that the interests of justice require him to do so.

(4) If the judge gives leave permitting, or makes an order requiring, a person to give oral evidence, but he does not do so, the judge may disregard any document indicating the evidence that he might have given.

(5) Dismissal of the charge, or all the charges, against the applicant shall have the same effect as a refusal by examining magistrates to commit for trial,

[Mr. John Patten]

except that no further proceedings may be brought on a dismissed charge except by means of the preferment of a voluntary bill of indictment.

(6) Crown Court Rules may make provision for the purposes of this section and, without prejudice to the generality of this subsection—

(a) as to the time or stage in the proceedigs at which anything required to be done is to be done (unless the court grants leave to do it at some other time or stage);

(b) as to the contents and form of notices or other documents;

(c) as to the manner in which evidence is to be submitted; and

(d) as to persons to be served with notices or other material.".'—*[Mr. John Patten.]*

Clause 141

COMPUTER DATA ABOUT FINGERPRINTS

Amendment made: No. 163, in page 91, line 28, after 'him' insert

', not later than the end of the period of three months beginning with the day on which he asks for it,'—*[Mr. John Patten.]*

Clause 146

DECISIONS WHERE BAIL REFUSED ON PREVIOUS HEARING

Mrs. Ann Taylor: I beg to move amendment No. 278, in page 93, line 31, leave out 'but' and insert

'at the first hearing after that at which the court decided not to grant the defendant bail he may support an application for bail with any argument as to fact or law that he desires (whether or not he has advanced that argument previously). At subsequent hearings'.

This is a replacement amendment to an earlier attempt by the Opposition to tackle the same problem. I hope that the amendment will not detain the House too long because, although it is important, I believe that it is one on which we are about to make progress.

I am sure that the House will agree that there should be no doubt that any individual's liberty is a fundamental right and one that is greatly cherished in this country. I am sure that the House will agree that only in the most serious cases should a person be deprived of their liberty. For that reason, when a person has been charged with an offence, it is his right, under the Bail Act 1976, to be awarded bail unless he comes within the listed exceptions. We are talking, of course, about people who are not convicted.

Since the implementation of the divisional court's decision, which has come to be known as the Nottingham justices' decision, many difficulties have arisen for those applying for bail. It has often become difficult for people to retain their liberty. The court's ruling that only in circumstances in which new information was available should it consider reversing the decision of a previous court, has acted as an effective block to many people being awarded bail. A study carried out by two American lawyers, Brink and Stone, for the Vera institute, as part of their work on bail for the Home Office, found that some courts have adopted a rigid view of that decision. In many cases, if a defendent's request for bail at the first hearing was denied, he was never permitted a second opportunity to re-present the facts.

The practical impact of this has been twofold. First, defendents have not applied for bail at initial hearings, so as not to risk losing their only chance of success. The Brink and Stone study found that, in many areas, more than half the defendants remanded in custody on their first appearance had not asked for bail. Secondly, bail has been refused in cases in which it would have been appropriate to grant it because the lawyers have not had enough time to gather all the relevant facts. There can be no doubt that there have been cases in which defendents have been denied bail in one court when another magistrate would have granted it to them.

The sum total of all this has been to help to swell the number of prisoners on remand, and the impact of that on our prisons and on pressure on police cells has been evident recently.

We raised that issue in Committee. When we tried to persuade the Minister to reverse the Nottingham justices' decision, his attitude was that the Government did not think it right to allow individuals to shop around for a more sympathetic bench. That is to deny the nature of bail decisions, which are essentially subjective.

The Government attempted partly to deal with this problem by restating in clause 146 the courts' obligation to consider bail on every occasion, but we believe that that fails because it also restates that courts need not hear arguments of fact and of law that they have previously considered. As my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Warley, West (Mr. Archer) said in Committee, it is difficult for the court or for lawyers to establish exactly what facts have already been presented to the court. The records of the court do not include notes of the facts that were relied on when a previous request for bail was made—and those involved in the process may be completely different. The magistrate, the clerk and even the defendant's lawyer may have changed.

Our amendment is an attempt at least to improve the present position. It proposes to oblige the courts to consider fact and law on the first two applications for bail. That would allow a solicitor to ask for bail on the first application without the fear that the client might lose any chance of bail should he not succeed, even if he had not had the opportunity to gather together all the facts. I understand that some courts—Newcastle-upon-Tyne is a case in point—already operate this procedure. It was the practice of the Nottingham magistrates at the time of the Nottingham justices' decision. Lord Justice Donaldson, as he then was, acknowledged that there were often further matters to be considered at a second hearing which had not been available at the first.

Not only will our amendent go some way to improving matters but it will bring practice into line with the original intention. I understand from our discussions with the Minister that we may be pushing against an open door tonight; he has said that he has reconsidered the matter since Committee, and we are grateful to his officials for their help with the technical wording of the amendment. Perhaps the Government do listen on occasion, and if the Minister accepts the amendment we shall welcome that.

Mr. John Patten: We had some lengthy and interesting debates in Committee. I have carefully considered the points made by the hon. Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor) and her hon. Friends and I am persuaded by them. So, with arms suitably folded on this occasion, I shall say that I accept the amendment.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 147

REMANDS IN CUSTODY FOR MORE THAN EIGHT DAYS

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones (Ynys Môn): I beg to move amendment No. 202, in page 94, line 12, after 'of', insert 'up to'.

The amendment deals with time limits on remand hearings. The matter was canvassed at some length in Committee when we considered the principle and content of the Government's proposals. In general, the Opposition parties do not accept a move which means that prisoners can be remanded for 28 days after the initial remand hearing. We had an insight into the Government's thinking on the issue when the Minister responded to the debate in Committee. He sought to argue that it was not the best use of prison officers' time to turn up every eight days to attend remand hearings, and that they could be employed usefully in other prison duties. In fairness to the Minister, he also claimed that it would encourage the courts to take a more active role in case management.

This is the classic confrontation between, on the one hand, civil liberties and the interests of prisoners and their families, which we often forget on these occasions, and administrative convenience, on the other.

That is not to say that Opposition Members do not recognise the problems of the present system. As we have heard in Committee and on Report, there are far too many prisoners on remand. Cases take too long to come to trial or to be disposed of by pleas of guilty. Valuable court time is taken up by the weekly ritual of remand hearings, but I do not understand why individual prisoners should have to pay the price in the curtailment of basic civil liberties.

The present position on remand hearings is set out in section 128 of the Magistrates' Courts Act 1980. Under its provisions, an accused may be remanded by way of detention at a police station for up to three days, or up to eight days if in custody either in prison or in a remand centre. However, there are provisions for the period to be extended if the accused consents and is represented by a solicitor or counsel and the provisions are fully explained to him.

Many prisoners opt for the eight-day remand rather than for a longer period because it is easier for solicitors to obtain instructions from their clients if they attend court every eight days, and arrangements can be made for prisoners to see their families. The point about obtaining instructions is important and it is one on which I sought to convince the Minister in Committee. I think that, in part, he conceded the point. Many remand centres are some distance from local courts. From my area it takes about two and a half or three hours by car to visit the local remand centre. The legal aid authorities do not allow travelling time for solicitors or counsel to see their clients in remand centres, so they are obliged to instruct agents. But that is always second best, because the accused wants to see his lawyer, and agents do not always take as detailed instructions as they should.

The principle of access to justice is at stake. If 28-day remands become the norm—that will undoubtedly happen—after the first hearing solicitors and clients will encounter difficulties in taking full and detailed instructions, especially in rural areas, because they will be unable to make arrangements to see their clients who are on remand. Therefore, access to justice will be denied.

10.15 pm

Mr. Alex Carlile: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that his remarks have greater force when one considers that many prisoners from London are being held on remand in police cells in places such as Cornwall, Durham, and all over the country, to which their solicitors cannot possibly travel to take instructions

Mr. Jones: I am grateful to the hon. and learned Gentleman for making that point. It advances our argument and shows why we are concerned about this problem.

Mr. David Ashby (Leicestershire, North-West): Has the hon. Gentleman considered the disgraceful conditions in Lincoln prison for those who wish to take instructions from their clients? Prison officers breathe over one's shoulder, listen to every word and do not give anyone a chance to take proper instructions.

Mr. Jones: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for making that point so well. On many occasions, my hon. Friend the Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley) has made clear to Home Office Ministers the problems that solicitors and their clients encounter at Risley remand centre.

There are problems with solicitors and clients meeting to take full instructions, but, given the distances involved, families also find it difficult to visit their relatives who are on remand. When prisoners are taken to court every eight days, their families can visit them.

The issue of bail applications was canvassed at length in Committee. Clause 147 makes it clear that the accused's right to apply for bail at any time will not be affected. The Minister made that point clear in Committee. What does that mean in practice? Practitioners know that there will be practical problems in making bail applications in cases where there has been a 28-day remand. Difficulties are encountered in some parts of the country in bringing prisoners to court. We fully understand and appreciate prison officers' problems, but facilities should be available to enable prisoners to attend court. If the clause is passed unamended, we can foresee further problems arising.

How does a prisoner give instructions to his legal advisers if he has been on remand for 28 days but wishes to make a bail application because of changed circumstances from the previous bail application or the first remand hearing? His legal adviser will not be at the end of a telephone or easily available for consultation. Those problems were canvassed in Committee, but the answers that we received were not convincing. I look forward to hearing the Minister's reply.

In Committee we were prepared to make a number of constructive proposals about how the Government could overcome the difficulties facing the prison service and the courts. It is clear that the prison authorities must be given greater resources and better remand facilities. The Government could introduce legislation to ensure that cases are heard in magistrates courts by a certain date. A time limit should be set from the time that a person is charged to the disposal of the case. That would concentrate minds wonderfully and the current backlog of cases would be cleared. We have not only the problem of the number of prisoners on remand but the delay in the number of cases coming to court for disposal. That

[Mr. Jones]

increases the applications that legal advisers have to make. Remand hearings are held needlessly because of delays in bringing forward cases for trial or disposal.

My fear, which was expressed in Committee, is that 28-day remands will increase those delays. At least now the prisoner can make weekly complaints about delays, and during those applications magistrates can put pressure on the Crown prosecution service. We fully appreciate the problems that that service has had in recent months, but the Minister tells us that the situation is improving so cases should be brought on much quicker. However, if 28-day remands become the norm, it will remove those opportunities for pressure to be put on the service and the court can effectively put aside a case for a month at a time.

There is general agreement about the problem of the number of prisoners on remand awaiting trial, but we disagree fundamentally with the Government on the solution. An amendment in Committee sought for the first remand application to be followed by a second application in eight days, moving on to 28-day remands, but the Government refused to accept that amendment.

Amendment No. 202 is different because it gives magistrates discretion whether to go on to 28-day remands. In other words, it gives the courts an opportunity to set remand hearings during a period of up to 28 days. Therefore, as I have said, it would give magistrates discretion whether to remand for the full period or for a lesser period. If the magistrates felt that 28 days was too long, they could set the remand at a lesser period.

That is a fair compromise. We have made it clear that we do not like the principle, but we believe that it is better to amend the Bill at this stage and for the Government to accept a compromise amendment, and I urge the Minister to do so.

Mr. John Patten: I have listened with great care to the hon. Member for Ynys Môn (Mr. Jones). I know how concerned he is about equal access to justice, the geography of justice and the problems of rural areas. However, I would seek to persuade him and the hon. Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor) not to divide the House on this issue. Perhaps to roll the pitch, in the previous debate on amendment No. 278, I showed the Government's willingness to listen by accepting an amendment tabled by the official Opposition. I hope that the hon. Gentleman and the hon. Lady will consider what I have to say in the light of that.

Clause 147 already achieves what the hon. Gentleman has sought to emphasise in his amendment. Let me rapidly explain why I think that the amendment might confuse the courts by the following example. A defendant, perhaps from Ynys Môn, is before the court. He or she has been remanded in custody on at least one previous occasion. The court hears any representations from the prosecution or the defence in the normal way. Having done that, the court then goes on to ask itself when it should be possible for the next stage in the proceedings to begin.

Let us say that no further progress would be possible for six or eight weeks, for various reasons. There is no point in bringing the defendant back to court, unless his circumstances have changed in the meantime, within the maximum period of 28 days. After the maximum period of 28 days, the court considers the total period that the defendant will have spent in custody, and it is important that the court does that. If, having done so, it still thinks that a custodial remand is the right course, it can remand the defendant for 28 days. The defendant can apply for bail if his circumstances change at any time.

But let us suppose that his circumstances do not change, or for some reason he does not come to the court within the 28 days, and simply returns to the court at the end of the allotted time. Only two weeks now remain in my six-week example before the next stage in the proceedings can be expected, the six weeks then being up. If the parties agree that matters can be taken earlier, all well and good. If one asks for more time, the court will want to inquire closely into the reasons for the delay.

But suppose, happily enough, the preparations for the progress of the trial are exactly on course and the case will be ready for hearing in exactly two weeks' time. Then the court will remand the defendant for that two-week period. I can assure the House that clause 147 expressly forbids the court to remand for any longer period in those circumstances. What is crucial here is the requirement on the court to set a date by which it expects to make progress, a date when the proceedings will next move on. The court is required to take positive control over the progress of the case, and I know that that is welcomed by the hon. Member for Ynys Môn.

I want to say three things to the hon. Gentleman and the hon. Lady that I hope will help to reassure them.

We intend to test these new arrangements by way of experiment in a number of selected areas. If the prophets of doom, those who say that things will go badly wrong, prove right, the Government will not wish to extend the experiments any further. The Government would be totally wrong to do so, because the whole point is to make things better for the defendant and to save wasted appearances and productions in court.

Perhaps most tellingly, I remind the House that the clause 147 arrangements which are before the House can be brought into force only by order subject to the affirmative resolution procedure. That means that that procedure will have to go through another place and through this House to see whether experiments take place and whether any subsequent extension on a regional or national basis should occur.

Mr. Alex Carlile: I am most grateful to the Minister. Would he also add that steps will be taken to ensure that a complete change is made in the arrangements for instructions being taken by lawyers from their clients in prison? As we have heard from the hon. Member for Leicestershire, North-West (Mr. Ashby), who has considerable experience of these things, and from the hon. Member for Ynys Môn (Mr. Jones), and as many other hon. Members know, it is virtually impossible to hold proper conferences in some prisons and other custodial establishments because of the staffing and time constraints placed upon solicitors and counsel.

It sounds to me as though the hon. Gentleman is not aware that, for example, one is not allowed to hold more than, say, five hours maximum of conference on any one day with an individual client in a remand centre such as Risley because of the timetabling of the establishment's meals, and so on. In a complicated case, that means that there have to be repeated visits by solicitors and counsel, which are extremely expensive for the public purse and extremely disturbing and delaying for the prisoner.

Mr. Patten: Of course I understand the points made by the hon. and learned Gentleman, which were also made very forcibly by my hon Friend the Member for Leicestershire, North-West (Mr. Ashley) when he intervened to discuss the position in one particular prison in Lincoln. Of course we will look seriously at the problems raised by the hon. and learned Gentleman and my hon. Friend and I shall draw them to the attention of my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary who is responsible for prison matters. I assure the hon. and learned Gentleman that the Government will have further proposals about these matters in the not-too-distant future.

On the basis of what I have said and the undertakings that I have given, particularly about procedures that will have to be followed, I hope that the hon. Member for Ynys Môn will see fit to withdraw his amendment.

10.30 pm

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: I appreciate that the Minister is trying to be as helpful as he can in these circumstances, but there is an underlying principle here. We are establishing a system in clause 147 that means effectively that, on the second remand, magistrates would have no option—if, as in his example, a case would take six weeks to come to the next stage—but to remand for 28 days.

Let us take the Minister's example. In effect, the court would be saying that, in view of the constraints for solicitors and for counsel and of the distances involved, 28 days would pass before the solicitor could take adequate instructions from his client or counsel in an appropriate case. That principle is wrong. The amendment simply seeks to state that, in appropriate cases, the magistrates may decide not to remand for the full 28 days. They may decide to remand for 15 days or 21 days, but there will always be an opportunity for solicitors to make representations for it to be less than 28 days.

We understand that the Minister is attempting to be helpful, but this is an important principle of access to justice and, for that reason, we believe that we should press the amendment to a Division.

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 135, Noes 253.

Division No. 389] **[10.30 pm**

AYES

Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Allen, Graham
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashdown, Paddy
Ashton, Joe
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Beggs, Roy
Bell, Stuart
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buchan, Norman
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cryer, Bob
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Dalyell, Tam
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Doran, Frank
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Fearn, Ronald
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Flannery, Martin
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fyfe, Maria
Galloway, George
George, Bruce
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Graham, Thomas
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Holland, Stuart
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Geraint
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
John, Brynmor
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum A.
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliott
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
O'Neill, Martin
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Randall, Stuart
Richardson, Jo
Robertson, George
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Salmond, Alex
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Steinberg, Gerry
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wall, Pat
Wallace, James
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Frank Haynes and
Mr. Frank Cook.

NOES

Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Batiste, Spencer
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David

Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Gardiner, George
Gill, Christopher
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gow, Ian
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon *(Bury St E')*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Charles
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Lawrence, Ivan
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
McCrindle, Robert
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New Forest)*
Madel, David
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mellor, David
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morrison, Sir Charles
Moss, Malcolm
Neale, Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, John *(Oxford W)*
Pawsey, James
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Redwood, John
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Tracey, Richard
Trippier, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Waller, Gary
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Mike

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Robert Boscawen and
Mr. Tristan Garel-Jones.

Question accordingly negatived.

Clause 151

JUDICIAL REVIEW OF ORDERS UNDER SS.4 AND 11 OF CONTEMPT OF COURT ACT 1981 RELATING TO TRIALS ON INDICTMENT

Amendment made: No. 9, in page 96, line 8, leave out clause 151.—*[Mr. John Patten]*

Clause 152

SUMMARY OFFENCE OF POSSESSION OF INDECENT PHOTOGRAPH OF A CHILD

Mr. Bermingham: I beg to move amendment No. 195, in page 96, line 14, after 'any', insert 'grossly'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take the following amendments: No. 199, in page 96, line 24, at end insert—

'(3) A photograph of a child shall be deemed to be grossly indecent for the purposes of this Act where its production appears to the court to have involved the exploitation for sexual purposes of a child.'.

No. 200, in clause 153, page 96, line 33, at end insert 'grossly'.

No. 201, in clause 153, page 97, line 1, at end insert—

'(3) A photograph of a child shall be deemed to be grossly indecent for the purposes of this Act where its production appears to the court to have involved the exploitation for sexual purposes of a child.'.

Mr. Bermingham: Clause 152 refers to indecency. If those who possess indecent photographs—*[Interruption.]* I hope that one or two Conservative Members will listen——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. It would help the House and the hon. Member if the conversations on both sides of the House took place outside the Chamber.

Mr. Bermingham: I am grateful to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because the issue is important. It affects young children and, in turn, the way in which we conduct business in our courts. In the 1970s, indecency was discussed in the English courts, especially in regard to obscenity. A circus developed. Experts said that something was, or was not, indecent. Eventually, the Court of Appeal said that that sort of caper had to stop. We are afraid that, because of the way in which clause 152 is drafted, that circus will develop again.

The word "indecency" is loose. The amendments merely insert the word "grossly". We must remember that for a photograph to be taken of a child in indecent positions—these are indelicate matters about which to talk —there must be a victim. These photographs are not constructed. *[Interruption.]* It is lamentable that, when discussing a subject such as this, I see that the hon. Member for Leicestershire, North-West (Mr. Ashby) finds it more convenient to have a conversation than to listen to the debate. Perhaps I can attract his attention.

This is a grave matter. We must not permit loose wording in statutes which would allow people to seek to avoid that which we seek to legislate against—the exploitation of children. I hope that the Government will accept this amendment and the consequent amendments which merely seek to insert the word "grossly". That word would tighten the definition and make clear to the courts that which we seek to ban or to legislate against.

10.45 pm

Mr. Geoffrey Dickens (Littleborough and Saddleworth): I shall be brief. At one time a man could have a house full of dreadful child pornography, which children have to be procured to produce and which can corrupt and entice others, and the defence was always that he had it for his own use. The Bill removes that defence and makes it a criminal offence to possess child pornography. That will protect children from being procured to produce the material, and will prevent adults from being enticed and corrupted to think about children in a sexual way. We applaud that.

The word "grossly" does not need to be added, because most courts are sensible enough to know when dealing with child pornography that such cases are indecent. Parents and courts are sick and tired of merchants peddling such stuff, to the disadvantage of Britain's children. We can rely on the good sense of our courts and public opinion.

Mr. John Patten: I know how much the Opposition support the general thrust of clauses 152 and 153, and we welcome that support. I also know of the Opposition's continuing anxiety about the interpretation of the words used in the drafting of the clauses, and I know how strongly the whole House feels about the exploitation of children.

My hon. Friend the Member for Littleborough and Saddleworth (Mr. Dickens) summed up the feeling of the House when he spoke about his contempt for pornography. I agree with my hon. Friend that the word "grossly" may be otiose or unnecessary. I shall explain to the hon. Member for St. Helens, South (Mr. Bermingham) why that is so, because I know that he wishes to improve matters for children and to provide better justice for them.

Over many years our courts have become used to interpreting the words "obscene" and "indecent". The hon. Gentleman reminded us of the distasteful circus that used to exist in some judicial circles. Experts, literary critics and others used to be called to say whether this or that was indecent or obscene. That was an industry not just in the 1970s but in the 1960s. One of my distinguished constituents, lamentably deceased, was Sir Basil Blackwell. He was the only man ever to stand up in a court and say that he had been corrupted by something that he had read. It was brave of him to do that.

The introduction into law of the word "gross" or grossly" to qualify indecent would lead to the reinvention of the circus that we have talked about, because it is a new concept. For a decade we have had a law dealing with indecent photographs, films and videos, and there is no evidence that it has caused the courts any problems. We have searched through the cases to establish whether there has ever been discussion in court of difficulties of interpretation of the word "indecent". There has certainly never been any suggestion that an individual member of a family has ever been prosecuted or persecuted in any way for taking innocent snapshots of his children.

Mr. Norman Buchan (Paisley, South): In that case, why did the Government support the private Members' Bill dealing with indecency, which used the word "grossly" to define the word offensive?

Mr. Patten: The Government believe that, for the purposes of the Bill, the tests of indecency and obscenity, which are well known to the courts with reference to pornography, are the right tests to apply.

I believe that the Bill substantially advances the cause of children's justice by making the simple possession of indecent photographs a criminal offence and by placing on the accused the burden of proof of showing why he is in possession of photographs that are judged by the courts to be indecent. I entirely appreciate what the hon. Member for St. Helen's, South has said and the spirit in which he made his remarks, but I do not think that his amendment would improve matters, given that the courts have great experience of the interpretation of the word "indecent". On those grounds, I would ask the hon. Gentleman not to press the amendment.

Mr. Bermingham: I have listened to the Minister's remarks with care, because I think that he and I are ad idem in what we seek to do. The difference between us is that I am perhaps more cautious than he is. My caution is based on the experience of the courtroom and the arguments that apply there, and I find that clause 152 lacks clarity in part.

I do not propose to press the amendment to a Division. I shall merely put down a marker. I greatly fear that with the passage of time, and given the lamentable views of certain persons in this country, we may find that the word "indecency" is not enough to protect children from exploitation by those who seek to make a commercial profit from despicable merchandise. That is why I sought to tighten the law and make it more difficult for those who seek to defend the possession of nauseating material. The Government are not with me on this issue; so be it. The warning shot has been fired, and we may have to return to the matter at a later date.

I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Amendment made: No. 164, in page 96, line 15, after 'child' insert

'(meaning in this section a person under the age of 16)'—*[Mr. John Patten.]*

Clause 153

POSSESSION OF INDECENT PHOTOGRAPHS OF CHILDREN: SCOTLAND

Amendments made: No. 57, in page 96, line 34, after 'child', insert '(meaning in this section a person under the age of 16)'.—*[Mr. John Patten.]*

Clause 160

NORTHERN IRELAND

Amendments made: No. 79, in page 101, line 7, leave out '(including Schedule 2)'.

No. 229, in page 101, line 11, leave out '(2) and (4)'.—*[Mr. John Patten.]*

Clause 163

COMMENCEMENT

Mr. John Patten: I beg to move amendment No. 165, in page 102, line 5, leave out from 'relates' to end of line 7 and insert—

'(a) to the addition of two subsections at the end of section 8 of the Drug Trafficking Offences Act 1986;
(b) to the insertion of a new subsection in section 24 of that Act; and
(c) to the substitution of two new sections for section 26 of that Act;'

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): With this it will be convenient to take Government amendments Nos. 166, 66, 67 and 169 to 172.

Mr. Patten: The amendments cover a lot of paper, but in substance they are drafting amendments.

Amendment agreed to.

Amendments made: No. 68, in page 102, line 12, at end insert—

'section *[Body samples—Northern Ireland];*'

No. 230, page 102, line 12, at end insert—

'section 136; section 137;'.

No. 231, in page 102, line 17, at end insert—

'section 112A(1) of the Land Registration Act 1925;'.

No. 166, in page 102, line 22, at end insert—

'section 67(6) of the Criminal Justice Act 1967;'.

No. 66, in page 102, line 24, at end insert

'sections 171 and 368 of and Schedule 1 to the Criminal Procedure (Scotland) Act 1975;'.

No. 67, in page 102, line 26, at end insert

'section 52(7) of the Civic Government (Scotland) Act 1982;'.

No. 169, page 102, line 26, at end insert

'the Criminal Justice Act 1982;'

No. 232, in page 102, line 28, after '1985' insert—

'the Criminal Justice Act 1987;
the Criminal Justice (Scotland) Act 1987;'.

No. 233, in page 102, line 31, at end insert—

'the Criminal Justice Act 1987;'.

No. 13, in page 102, line 42, at end insert—

'section *[Torture];*
section *[Prosecution for torture];*
section *[Extradition under 1870 Act];*
section *[Extradition under Part I];*
section *[Application to Channel Islands, Isle of Man and colonies];*'.

No. 170, in page 102, line 42, at end insert—'section 68;'.

No. 171, in page 103, line 7, at end insert

'Schedule 3 to the Criminal Justice Act 1967;'.

No. 172, in page 103, line 15, at end insert—

'(7) Section 154 above shall come into force—
(a) on the day appointed under section 23(2) of the Video Recording Act 1984 for the coming into force of the provisions of that Act not in force at the passing of this Act; or
(b) on the passing of this Act,
whichever is the later.'.—*[Mr. John Patten.]*

Clause 164

EXTENT

Amendments made: No. 41, in page 103, line 17, leave out 'and 20' and insert,

'*[Application of general extradition arrangements to Colonies]* and *[Special extradition arrangements—Colonies]*'.

No. 80, in page 103, line 19, leave out '(including Schedule 1)'.

No. 54, in page 103, line 28, at end insert 'section 93;'

No. 176, in page 103, line 31, after 'to' insert '113 and'.

No. 14, in page 103, line 32, at end insert—

'section *[Torture];*
section *[Extradition under 1870 Act];*
section *[Extradition under Part I];*'.

No. 59, in page 103, line 36, at end insert, 'section 162'.

No. 81, in page 103, line 42, leave out '(including Schedule 3)'.

No. 15, in page 104, line 1, at end insert—

'section *[Torture];*
section *[Prosecution for torture];*
section *[Extradition under 1870 Act];*
section *[Extradition under Part I];*'.

No. 10, in page 104, line 6, at end insert—

'section *[Crown Court proceedings—orders restricting or preventing reports or restricting public access];*'

No. 175, in page 104, line 8, at end insert, 'section 162;'

No. 82, in page 104, line 15, leave out

'(including Part II of Schedule 5]'.

No. 55 in page 104, line 19, at end insert—

'((4A) Section [Enforcement of Northern Ireland orders in Scotland] above extends only to Scotland and Northern Ireland.'.

No. 69, in page 104, line 20, after '138 (c)', insert

'*[Body samples—Northern Ireland]*'.

No. 83, in page 104, line 26, leave out

', including Schedule 13 to this Act'.—*[Mr. John Patten.]*

Amendment made: No. 196—New schedule—

'BODY SAMPLES—NORTHERN IRELAND

Scope of Schedule

1. This Schedule applies—
(a) to an offence (whether at common law or under any enactment) specified in paragraph 2 below;
(b) to an offence specified in paragraph 3 below;
(c) to an offence not mentioned in either of those paragraphs—
(i) for which a person of 21 years of age or over and of full capacity (not previously convicted) may be sentenced to imprisonment for a term of five years; and
(ii) which is serious for the purposes of this Schedule.

2. The offences mentioned in paragraph 1(a) above are—
(a) treason;
(b) murder;
(c) manslaughter;
(d) rape;
(e) kidnapping;
(f) incest with girl under the age of 14;
(g) buggery with—
(i) a boy under the age of 16; or
(ii) a person who has not consented; and
(h) indecent assault which constitutes an act of gross indecency.

3. The offences mentioned in paragraph 1(b) above are—
(a) causing an explosion likely to endanger life or property contrary to section 2 of the Explosive Substances Act 1883;
(b) intercourse with a girl under the age of 14 contrary to section 4 of the Criminal Law Amendment Act 1885;
(c) causing death by reckless driving contrary to Article 139 (1) of the Road Traffic (Northern Ireland) Order 1981;

- (d) the following offences against the Firearms (Northern Ireland) Order 1981—
    - (i) possession of firearm with intent to injure contrary to Article 17;
    - (ii) use of firearm or imitation firearm to resist arrest contrary to Article 18(1); and
    - (iii) carrying firearm with criminal intent contrary to Article 19;
- (e) hostage-taking contrary to section 1 of the Taking of Hostages Act 1982;
- (f) hi-jacking contrary to section 1 of the Aviation Security Act 1982; and
- (g) torture contrary to section *[Torture]* above.

4.—(1) Subject to sub-paragraph (2) below, an offence not mentioned in paragraph 2 or 3 above is serious for the purposes of this Schedule only if its commission—

- (a) has led to any of the consequences mentioned in sub-paragraph (3) below; or
- (b) is intended or is likely to lead to any of those consequences.

(2) An offence which consists of making a threat is serious for the purposes of this Schedule if carrying out the threat would be likely to lead to any of the consequences specified in sub-paragraph (3) below.

(3) The consequences mentioned in sub-paragraphs (1) and (2) above are—

- (a) serious harm to the security of the State or to public order;
- (b) serious interference with the administration of justice or with the investigation of offences or of a particular offence;
- (c) the death of any person;
- (d) serious injury to any person;
- (e) substantial financial gain to any person; and
- (f) serious financial loss to any person.

(4) Loss is serious for the purposes of this Schedule if, having regard to all the circumstances, it is serious for the person who suffers it.

(5) In this paragraph "injury" includes any disease and any impairment of a person's physical or mental condition.

5. A person arrested under section 12(1)(b) of the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1984 is to be treated for the purposes of this Schedule as having been arrested on suspicion of involvement in an offence to which this Schedule applies and any reference in the following provisions of this Schedule to such an offence includes a reference to being or having been concerned in the commission, preparation or instigation of acts of terrorism to which Part IV of that Act applies.

Interpretation

6.—(1) In this Schedule—

"appropriate consent" means—

- (a) in relation to a person who has attained the age of 17 years, the consent of that person;
- (b) in relation to a person who has not attained that age but has attained the age of 14 years, the consent of that person and his parent or guardian; and
- (c) in relation to a person who has not attained the age of 14 years, the consent of his parent or guardian;

"intimate sample" means a sample of blood, semen or any other tissue fluid, urine or pubic hair, or a swab taken from any of a person's body orifices except his mouth;

"non-intimate sample" means—

- (a) a sample of hair other than pubic hair;
- (b) a sample taken from a nail or from under a nail;
- (c) a sample of saliva;
- (d) a swab taken from a person's mouth;
- (e) a swab taken from any other part of a person's body except a body orifice other than his mouth;
- (f) a footprint or a similar impression of any part of a person's body other than a part of his hand;

"parent or guardian" means in the case of a child or young person in the care of the Department of Health and Social Services for Northern Ireland or a Health and Social Services Board, that Department or Board; and

"the terrorism provisions" means—

- (a) section 12(1) of the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1984; and
- (b) any provision conferring a power of arrest or detention and contained in an order under section 13 of that Act.

(2) A person is in police detention for the purposes of this Schedule if—

- (a) he has been taken to a police station after being arrested for an offence; or
- (b) he is arrested at a police station after attending voluntarily at the station or accompanying a constable to it,

and is detained there or is detained elsewhere in the charge of a constable, except that a person who is at a court after being charged is not in police detention for those purposes.

Intimate samples

7.—(1) An intimate sample may be taken from a person in police detention only—

- (a) if a police officer of at least the rank of superintendent authorises it to be taken; and
- (b) if the appropriate consent is given.

(2) An officer may only give an authorisation if he has reasonable grounds—

- (a) for suspecting the involvement of the person from whom the sample is to be taken in an offence to which this Schedule applies; and
- (b) for believing that the sample will tend to confirm or disprove his involvement.

(3) An officer may give an authorisation under sub-paragraph (1) above orally or in writing but, if he gives it orally, he shall confirm it in writing as soon as is practicable.

(4) The appropriate consent must be given in writing.

(5) Where—

- (a) an authorisation has been given; and
- (b) it is proposed that an intimate sample shall be taken in pursuance of the authorisation,

an officer shall inform the person from whom the sample is to be taken—

- (i) of the giving of the authorisation; and
- (ii) of the grounds for giving it.

(6) The duty imposed by sub-paragraph (5)(ii) above includes a duty to state the nature of the offence in which it is suspected that the person from whom the sample is to be taken has been involved.

(7) If an intimate sample is taken from a person—

- (a) the authorisation by virtue of which it was taken;
- (b) the grounds for giving the authorisation; and
- (c) the fact that the appropriate consent was given,

shall be recorded in writing as soon as is practicable after the sample is taken.

(8) An intimate sample, other than a sample of urine, may only be taken from a person by a registered medical practitioner.

(9) Where the appropriate consent to the taking of an intimate sample from a person was refused without good cause, in any proceedings against that person for an offence—

- (a) the court, in determining—
    - (i) whether to commit that person for trial; or
    - (ii) whether there is a case to answer; and
- (b) the court or jury, in determining whether that person is guilty of the offence charged,

may draw such inferences from the refusal as appear proper; and the refusal may, on the basis of such inferences, be treated as, or as capable of amounting to, corroboration of any evidence against the person in relation to which the refusal is material.

(10) Nothing in this paragraph affects Articles 141 to 152 of the Road Traffic (Northern Ireland) Order 1981.

Other Samples

8.—(1) Except as provided by this paragraph, a non-intimate sample may not be taken from a person without the appropriate consent.

(2) Consent to the taking of a non-intimate sample must be given in writing.

(3) A non-intimate sample may be taken from a person without the appropriate consent if—

(a) he is in police detention or is being held in custody by the police on the authority of a court; and

(b) an officer of at least the rank of superintendent authorises it to be taken without the appropriate consent.

(4) An officer may only give an authorisation under sub-paragraph (3) above if he has reasonable grounds—

(a) for suspecting the involvement of the person from whom the sample is to be taken in an offence to which this Schedule applies; and

(b) for believing that the sample will tend to confirm or disapprove his involvement.

(5) An officer may give an authorisation under sub-paragraph (3) above orally or in writing but, if he gives it orally, he shall confirm it in writing as soon as is practicable.

(6) Where—

(a) an authorisation has been given; and

(b) it is proposed that a non-intimate sample shall be taken in pursuance of the authorisation,

an officer shall inform the person from whom the sample is to be taken—

(i) of the giving of the authorisation; and

(ii) of the grounds for giving it.

(7) The duty imposed by sub-paragraph (6)(ii) above includes a duty to state the nature of the offence in which it is suspected that the person from whom the sample is to be taken has been involved.

(8) If a non-intimate sample is taken from a person by virtue of subsection (3) above—

(a) the authorisation by virtue of which it was taken; and

(b) the grounds for giving the authorisation,

shall be recorded in writing as soon as is practicable after the sample is taken.

Destruction of samples

9.—(1) If—

(a) a sample is taken from a person in connection with the investigation of an offence; and

(b) he is cleared of that offence.

it must be destroyed as soon as is practicable after the conclusion of the proceedings.

(2) If—

(a) a sample is taken from a person in connection with such an investigation; and

(b) it is decided that he shall not be prosecuted for the offence and he has not admitted it and been dealt with by way of being cautioned by a constable,

it must be destroyed as soon as is practicable after that decision is taken.

(3) If—

(a) a sample is taken from a person in connection with the investigation of an offence; and

(b) that person is not suspected of having committed the offence,

it must be destroyed as soon as it has fulfilled the purpose for which it was taken.

(4) Proceedings which are discontinued are to be treated as concluded for the purposes of this paragraph.

(5) Nothing in this paragraph—

(a) affects any power conferred by paragraph 18(2) of Schedule 2 to the Immigration Act 1971; or

(b) applies to a person arrested or detained under the terrorism provisions.—*[Mr. John Patten.]*

Schedule 1

AMENDMENTS OF EXTRADITION ACT 1870, BACKING OF WARRANTS (REPUBLIC OF IRELAND) ACT 1965 AND FUGITIVE OFFENDERS ACT 1967

Amendments made: No. 190, in page 106, line 30, at end insert—

'(2A) In section 26, in the definition of "police magistrate", for the words from "a" to the end there shall be substituted the words "the chief metropolitan stipendiary magistrate or a metropolitan stipendiary magistrate designated by the Lord Chancellor for the purposes of this Act and the Acts that may be cited together with it as the Extradition Acts 1870 to 1935".'

No. 260, in line 47, at end insert—

'(1A) If the chief officer or chief constable immediately informs the court that he intends to make such an application, the court shall make an order providing for the detention of the person in question, or directing that he shall not be released except on bail.

(1B) Rules of Court may specify—

(a) a period within which the chief officer or chief constable must make such an application unless the Court grants a longer period; and

(b) a period within which the court must comply with such an application.'.

No. 261, in line 48, leave out

'refuses to state a case'

and insert

'fails to comply with an application under subsection (1) above within the period specified in Rules of Court'.

No. 262, in page 107, leave out lines 6 to 14 and insert—

'(4) An order made by a court in England and Wales or Northern Ireland under subsection (1A) above shall cease to have effect if—

(a) the High Court dismisses the appeal; and

(b) the chief officer or chief constable does not immediately—

(i) apply for leave to appeal to the House of Lords; or

(ii) inform the court that he intends to apply for leave.

(5) An order made by a court in Scotland under subsection (1A) above shall cease to have effect if the court dismisses the appeal.'

No. 263, in line 20, at end insert—

'(6A) The House of Lords may exercise any powers of the High Court under subsection (3) above and subsection (4) above shall apply to them as it applies to that Court.

(6B) Subject to subsections (4) and (5) above, an order under subsection (1A) above shall have effect so long as the case is pending.

(6C) For the purposes of this section a case is pending (unless proceedings are discontinued) until (disregarding any power of a court to grant leave to take any step out of time) there is no step that the chief officer or chief constable can take.'

No. 264, in line 26, after 'Court', insert

', other than the reference in subsection (6A) above,'.

No. 276, leave out line 29 and insert—

'(c) subsections (6) and (6A) shall be omitted; and, in'.

No. 63, in page 109, line 27, at end insert—

'(2B) The High Court of Justiciary may, by Act of Adjournal, make rules as to the procedure for service under subsection (2) above in Scotland.'.

No. 191, in line 32, leave out

'In subsection (5) of section 7 (proceedings for committal) for the words'

and insert—

'In subsection (1)(a) of section 6 (arrest for purposes of committal) for the words "a metropolitan stipendiary magistrate or by" there shall be substituted the words—

"(i) the chief metropolitan stipendiary magistrate or a metropolitan stipendiary magistrate designated for the purposes of this Act by the Lord Chancellor; or

(ii)".

8A.—(1) In subsection (1) of section 7 (proceedings for committal) for the words "a metropolitan stipendiary magistrate" there shall be substituted the words "the chief metropolitan stipendiary magistrate or a metropolitan stipendiary magistrate designated as mentioned in section 6(1)(a) above".

(2) For the words in subsection (5) of that section'.

No. 265, in line 33, leave out from second 'court' to 'unless' in line 35.

No. 266, in line 41, at end insert—

'(5A) If the court commits a person under subsection (5) above, it shall issue a certificate of the offence against the law of the United Kingdom which would be constituted by his conduct.'.

No. 267, in page 110, line 11, at end insert—

'(1A) If the country seeking his return immediately informs the court of committal that it intends to make such an application, the court shall make an order providing for his detention, or directing that he shall not be released except on bail.

(1B) Rules of Court may specify—

- (a) a period within which a country must make such an application unless the Court grants a longer period; and
- (b) a period within which the Court of committal must comply with such an application.'.

No. 268, in line 12, leave out

'refuses to state a case'

and insert

'of committal fails to comply with an application under subsection (1) above within the period specified in Rules of Court'.

No. 269, in line 26, at end insert—

'(4A) An order made by a metropolitan magistrate under subsection (1A) above shall cease to have effect if—

- (a) the court dismisses the appeal in respect of the offence or all the offences to which it relates; and
- (b) the country seeking return does not immediately—
  - (i) apply for leave to appeal to the House of Lords; or
  - (ii) inform the court that it intends to apply for leave.

(4B) An order made by the sheriff of Lothian and Borders under subsection (1A) above shall cease to have effect if the court dismisses the appeal in respect of the offence or all of the offences to which it relates.'.

No. 270, leave out lines 27 to 32.

No. 271, in line 37, at end insert—

'(6A) The House of Lords may exercise any powers of the High Court under subsection (3) above and subsection (4) above shall apply to them as it applies to that Court.

(6B) Subject to subsections (4A) and (4B) above, an order under subsection (1A) above shall have effect so long as the case is pending.

(6C) For the purposes of this section a case is pending (unless proceedings are discontinued) until (disregarding any power of a court to grant leave to take any step out of time) there is no step that the Commonwealth country can take.'.

No. 277, in line 38, leave out from beginning to 'but' in line 39 and insert—

'(7) In the application to Scotland of this section, subsections (6) and (6A) shall be omitted, and,'.—*[Mr. John Patten.]*

Schedule 3

QUESTIONS AS TO SENTENCING—SUPPLEMENTARY

Amendments made: No. 84, in page 112, line 36, leave out paragraph 1.

No. 85, in page 114, line 2, leave out sub-paragraph (a). —*[Mr. John Patten.]*

Schedule 5

DRUG TRAFFICKING AMENDMENTS

Amendments made: No. 103A, in page 118, line 21, at end insert—

'11A. In section 19 (Compensation)—

- (a) in paragraph (b)(i) of subsection (1), the words "(and no conviction for any drug trafficking offence is substituted)" shall cease to have effect;
- (b) at the end of that subsection there shall be added the words "if, having regard to all the circumstances, it considers it appropriate to make such an order";
- (c) in subsection (2)—
  - (i) the words "and that, but for that default, the proceedings would not have been instituted or continued,"; and
  - (ii) in paragraph (b), the word "substantial", shall cease to have effect; and
- (d) the following subsection shall be inserted after that subsection—

"(2A) The Court shall not order compensation to be paid in any case where it appears to the Court that the proceedings would have been instituted or continued even if the serious default had not occurred.".'.

No. 240, in line 21, at end insert—

'11A. The following subsection shall be inserted after subsection (5) of section 24 (assisting another to retain the benefit of drug trafficking)—

"(5A) In this section 'constable' includes a police officer engaged on central service (as defined in section 43(5) of the Police Act 1964).".'.

No. 104, in line 54, leave out

'and which are retained there shall nevertheless'

and insert 'shall'.

No. 105, in page 119, line 12, at end insert—

'(3A) The power to make an Order in Council under this section includes power to modify this Act in such a way as to confer power on a person to exercise a discretion.'.—*[Mr. John Patten.]*

Schedule 6

THE CRIMINAL INJURIES COMPENSATION BOARD

Amendments made: No. 123, in page 120, line 36, leave out from 'Scotland' to end of line 37 and insert

', a Solicitor practising in England and Wales or Scotland or a person who holds or has held judicial office in England and Wales or Scotland.'

No. 124, in page 121, line 12, after 'practices' insert 'or has practised'.

No. 125, in line 13, after 'Wales' insert

'or who holds or has held judicial office there'.

No. 126, in line 14, after 'practises' insert 'or has practised'.

No. 127, in line 15, after 'Scotland' and insert

'or who holds or has held judicial office there'.

No. 128, in line 44, leave out paragraph 8.

No. 129, in page 122, line 34, after 'financial' insert 'and'—*[Mr. John Patten.]*

Schedule 7

COMPENSATION

Amendments made: No. 130, in page 122, line 44, leave out paragraphs 2 and 3 and insert—

'2. Unless the circumstances appear to them to be exceptional—

- (a) in a case where the Board have not previously awarded compensation in respect of an injury they shall not determine a claim in respect of it which is made after the end of three years from the date of the incident giving rise to the injury; and
- (b) in a case where they have previously awarded compensation in respect of an injury, they shall not determine any further claim in respect of it which is made after the end of three years beginning with the date of the notice under paragraph 5B(2) below relating to the award, or latest award, of compensation in respect of the injury.'

No. 131, in page 123, line 5, leave out 'the' and insert 'an'.

No. 132, in line 9, leave out 'the claim is' and insert 'a claim is made'.

No. 133, in line 10, leave out 'it may be entertained' and insert 'the Board shall determine the claim'.

No. 134, in line 11, leave out from beginning to 'Where' in line 13 and insert—

'Procedure

5.—(1) The Secretary of State shall make rules of procedure in relation to claims for compensation.

(2) Without prejudice to the generality of sub-paragraph (1) above rules under this paragraph may in particular—

- (a) specify matters which may be dealt with or which must be dealt with—
  - (i) by members of the Board's staff; or
  - (ii) by a member or members of the Board;
- (b) make provision—
  - (i) for the determination of a claim without a hearing;
  - (ii) for the reconsideration without a hearing of a previous determination without a hearing; and
  - (iii) for the extent to which a previous determination may be altered on such a reconsideration:
- (c) make provision as to circumstances in which a claim is to be or may be determined by a decision at a hearing on specified issues and as to the procedure for settling the issues which are to be considered;
- (d) make provision about the conduct of hearings and in particular about the calling of witnesses, the admissibility of, and weight to be given to, hearsay and opinion evidence and the order of proceedings;
- (e) make provision as to the confidentiality of information disclosed in connection with a claim; and
- (f) make such incidental or supplementary provision as appears to the Secretary of State to be appropriate.

(3) Rules under this paragraph may make different provision for different descriptions of cases.

(4) Rules under this paragraph shall be made by statutory instrument.

(5) A statutory instrument containing any such rules shall be subject to annulment in pursuance of a resolution of either House of Parliament.

Applications for Reconsideration of Claims

5A.—(1)'

No. 135, in line 29, after 'determined', insert 'without a hearing'.

No. 136, in line 33, after 'determined', insert 'without a hearing'.

No. 137, in line 35, at end insert—

'Payment of compensation

5B.—(1) Except in prescribed cases, compensation, whether on an interim or a final award, shall be paid in a lump sum.

(2) It shall be the duty of the board to give a claimant written notice of the amount of an award.

(3) A claimant shall not be entitled to a payment unless the board have received from him written notice to the effect that he has received a notice under sub-paragraph (2) above and accepts the amount of compensation specified in the notice as the proper amount.'.

No. 283, in line 47, leave out '1977' and insert '1988'.

No. 138, in page 124, line 5, leave out paragraph 7 and insert—

'7. Subject to the provisions of this Part of this Act, a claim for compensation under any of the heads specified in section 109 above is to be determined, and the amount of any compensation which falls to be assessed under any of those heads is to be assessed, in accordance with the rules of the law of England and Wales or the law of Scotland (including rules contained in Acts of Parliament but not including rules allowing a plaintiff or pursuer aggravated damages or interest) in accordance with which a claim in tort or delict arising out of the same facts for damages under a corresponding head would fall to be determined.'.

No. 139, in line 7, leave out from beginning to 'no' in line 28 and insert—

'Private medical treatment

8. In assessing compensation'.

No. 140, in line 34, leave out from beginning to end of page 125, line 25.

No. 284, in page 125, line 42, leave out

'compensation for rape under paragraph 9 above or'.

No. 285, in page 126, line 5, leave out '1977' and insert '1988'.

No. 268, in line 34, leave out

'compensation for rape under paragraph 9 above or'.

No. 141, in page 127, leave out lines 25 to 40.

No. 142, leave out lines 41 to 45 and insert—

'Miscellaneous rules

19.—(1) The Secretary of State may by rules—'.

No. 143, in line 46, leave out from 'forms' to end of line 48.

No. 144, in page 128, line 3, leave out paragraphs (c) to (e).

No. 145, in line 17, leave out paragraphs (g) and (h).

No. 146, in line 20, at end insert—

'(ga) specify cases in which compensation is not to be paid as a lump sum and how it is to be paid in any such case;'.

No. 147, in line 24, at end insert

'and

(j) make such incidental or supplementary provision as appears to the Secretary of State to be appropriate.

(1A) Rules under this paragraph may make different provision for different descriptions of cases.'.—*[Mr. John Patten.]*

Schedule 8

HOUSING ACTION TRUSTS: LAND

Amendments made: No. 150, in page 128, line 33, leave out from beginning to 'for' in line 37 and insert—

'1. In any enactment for a reference to a detention centre or to a youth custody centre or to both there shall be substituted a reference to a young offender institution.

1A. In any enactment except—

- (a) section 21 of the Firearms Act 1968;
- (b) Schedule 1 to the Juries Act 1974;
- (c) section 5 of the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974; and
- (d) section 17(3) of the Criminal Justice Act 1982,'.

No. 151, in line 40, leave out paragraphs 2 and 3.—*[Mr. John Patten.]*

Schedule 10

REGISTRATION OF TITLE AND RELATED MATTERS

Amendments made: No. 152, in page 133, line 37, leave out

'but without prejudice to section 12B(1) below,'.

No. 153, in line 53, at end insert—

'(3A) Any power to include a requirement in a supervision order which is exercisable in relation to a person by virtue of this section or the following provisions of this Act may be exercised in relation to him whether or not any other such power is exercised.'.

No. 154, in page 135, line 29, leave out

'but without prejudice to section 12B(1) of this Act'.—*[Mr. John Patten.]*

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I beg to move amendment No. 155, in page 135, line 36, at end insert—

'(1a) The Court shall not include such a requirement in a supervision order unless it has consulted the local education authority with regard to its proposal to include the requirement and is satisfied that in the view of the local education authority arrangements exist for the child or young person to whom the supervision order will relate to receive efficient full-time education suitable to his age, ability and aptitude and to any special educational need he may have.'

This amendment arises from an undertaking that was given by my hon. Friend in Committee. The Bill restores magistrates' power to include in a supervision order imposed on a juvenile offender a requirement to attend school regularly. The amendment requires the court, before exercising the power to consult the local education authority, to be satisfied that, in the authority's view, suitable arrangements exist for the child's education.

Mrs. Llin Golding (Newcastle-under-Lyme): I congratulate the Minister on conceding the arguments put forward by myself and my hon. Friends in Committee on the Government's proposal to make school attendance part of a supervision order. As the Minister rightly said, the Government have conceded that, before that is done, the court should consult the local education authority about the order. They also conceded that the court should be satisfied that arrangements exist for an efficient full-time education suitable to the supervised person's

"age, ability and aptitude and to any special educational need he may have."

Having won that small victory, we now ask that the Government also concede that, before a young person is put under such an order, it is reasonable that evidence of truancy be produced. It is surely not unreasonable that a written record of school attendance be supplied to the court. Does the Minister agree that if the offence took place when the supervised person should have been at school, a written record should be required before the supervision order is made, as there are many reasons for truancy? In fact, in Committee the Minister said that the relationship between poor school attendance and offending among young juveniles was not straightforward. Therefore, would it not be more appropriate for powers to be taken under the Education Act 1944 to enforce school attendance requirements when the truancy is not related to the offence? Would it not be advisable for an expert report to be given to the court stating that the measures that the supervised person was required to comply with were appropriate?

As the Minister conceded in Committee that juveniles were not straightforward and that the wrong supervision order could exacerbate rather than ease the position, I hope that he will accept the amendment and again concede that my hon. Friends are correct.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The hon. Lady knows that I always like to meet her suggestions, which I have done on many occasions—but, sadly, not on this occasion. She is seeking to confine the effect of the amendment and, indeed, the clause to those cases where the relevant offence was committed during school time. I cannot accept that there is any justification for such a restrictive approach and I cannot commend it to the House.

Amendment agreed to.

Schedule 12

ASSESSORS OF COMPENSATION FOR MISCARRIAGES OF JUSTICE

Amendments made: No. 156, in page 140, line 18, after 'practises' insert 'or has practised'.

No. 157, in line 19, after after 'Ireland' insert

'or who holds or has held judicial office in any of those parts of the United Kingdom'.

No. 158, in line 21, after 'practises' insert 'or has practised'.

No. 159, in line 22, after 'Scotland' insert

'or who holds or has held judicial office there'.—*[Mr. John Patten.]*

Schedule 13

EVIDENCE BEFORE COURTS-MARTIAL ETC.

Amendments made: No. 251, in page 142, line 9, at end insert

'in any case where the court gives leave for, or requires, evidence or a glossary to be so furnished'.

No. 252, in line 42, leave out sub-paragraph (6).—*[Mr. John Patten.]*

Schedule 14

MINOR AND CONSEQUENTIAL AMENDMENTS

Amendments made: No. 234, in page 143, line 26, at end insert—

'This paragraph shall cease to have effect on the day appointed under section 3(2) of the Land Registration Act 1988 for the coming into force of that Act.'.

Manuscript amendment No. 235, in page 143, line 33, at end insert—

'Administration of Justice (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1933 (c. 36.)

9A. The following paragraph shall be substituted for paragraph (iA) of the proviso to subsection (2) of section 2 of the Administration of Justice (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1933 (procedures for indictment of offenders)—

"(iA) in a case which paragraph (aa) above applies, the bill of indictment may include, either in substitution for or in addition to any count charging an offence specified in the notice of transfer, any counts founded on material that accompanied the copy of that notice which, in pursuance of regulations under section 5(9) of the Criminal Justice Act 1987, was given to the person charged, being counts which may lawfully be joined in the same indictment;".'

No. 16, in page 144, line 23, at end insert—

'13A. In paragraphs 1(a) and 2(a) of the Schedule, after the word 'rape,' there shall be inserted the word ', torture'.'

No. 181, in line 27, leave out from '5" to "local' and insert "1" to "central'.

No. 244, in page 146, line 29, leave out paragraphs 27 and insert—

'27. The following shall be substituted for the words in section 31 from the beginning of subsection (1) to "powers" in subsection (2)—

"(1) There may be exercised by a single judge in the same manner as by the Court of Appeal and subject to the same provisions—

(a) the powers of the Court of Appeal under this Part of this Act specified in subsection (2) below;
(b) the power to give directions under section 4(4) of the Sexual Offences (Amendments) Act 1976; and
(c) the powers to make orders for the payment of costs under sections 16 to 18 of the Prosecution of Offences Act 1985 in proceedings under this Part of this Act.

(2) The powers mentioned in subsection (1)(a) above".'.

No. 274, in line 33, at end insert—

'27A. The following subsection shall be inserted after subsection (2A) of that section—

"(2B) The power of the Court of Appeal to grant leave to appeal under section [Crown Court proceedings—orders restricting or preventing reports or restricting public access] of the Criminal Justice Act 1988 may be exercised by a single judge in the same manner as it may be exercised by the Court.".'.

No. 245, in line 34, leave out paragraph 28 and insert—

'28. The following shall be substituted in the first subsection of section 44 for the words from the beginning to "judge", in the first place where it occurs—

"(1) There may be exercised by a single judge—

(a) the powers of the Court of Appeal under this Part of this Act—
  (i) to extend the time for making an application for leave to appeal;
  (ii) to make an order for or in relation to bail; and
  (iii) to give leave for a person to be present at the hearing of any proceedings preliminary or incidental to an appeal; and
(b) their powers to make orders for the payment of costs under sections 16 and 17 of the Prosecution of Offences Act 1985 in proceedings under this Part of this Act.".'.

No. 185, in page 147, leave out line 44.

No. 241, in line 47, leave out 'shall also' and insert 'also to'.

No. 236, in page 148, line 13, at end insert—

'Legal Aid Act 1974 (c. 4)

39A. In section 28(7A) of the Legal Aid Act 1974 for the words "the person charged" there shall be substituted "a person to whom the notice relates".'.

No. 42, in page 149, line 18, at end insert—

'Internationally Protected Persons Act 1978 (c.17)

49A. The following sections shall be substituted for section 3 of the Internationally Protected Persons Act 1978—

"Extradition under 1870 Act.

3.—(1) An offence under section 1(3)(a) of this Act shall be deemed to be included in the list of extradition crimes in Schedule 1 to the Extradition Act 1870.

(2) For the purposes of that Act any act, wherever committed, which is any of the following offences—
(a) an offence mentioned in paragraph (a) of subsection (1) of section 1 of this Act which is committed against a protected person within the meaning of that section;
(b) an offence mentioned in paragraph (b) of that subsection which is committed in connection with such an attack as is so mentioned;
(c) an attempt to commit an offence mentioned in the preceding paragraphs; or
(d) an offence under section 1(3) of this Act,

and an offence against the law of any State in the case of which the Extradition Act 1870 is applied by an Order in Council under section 2 of that Act shall be deemed to be an offence committed within the jurisdiction of that State.

Extradition under Part I of Criminal Justice Act 1988

3A.—(1) Where—
(a) no such arrangement as is mentioned in section 2 of the Extradition Act 1870 has been made with a State which is a party to the Convention mentioned in the title to this Act; and
(b) general extradition arrangements have not been made with that State under Part I of the Criminal Justice Act 1988

Her Majesty may by Order in council direct that the provisions of the Criminal Justice Act 1988 specified in subsection (2) below shall apply as between the United Kingdom and that State, subject to the limitations, restrictions, exceptions and qualifications, if any, contained in the Order, as if the Convention constituted general extradition arrangements made with that State under Part I of that Act, but only in respect of the following offences—
  (i) an offence mentioned in section 3(2)(a) of (b) above;
  (ii) an attempt to commit such an offence;
  (iii) counselling, procuring, commanding, aiding or abetting such an offence;
  (iv) being accessory before or after the fact to such an offence; and
  (v) an offence under section 1(3) of this Act.

(2) The provisions of the Criminal Justice Act 1988 mentioned in subsection (1) above are—
(a) section 1(1) to (8);
(b) sections 3 to 10; and
(c) sections 12 to 18.

(3) An Order in Council under this section may not provide that a court determining whether a person arrested for an offence mentioned in subsection (1) above shall not be under a duty to determine whether the evidence would be sufficient to warrant his trial if the offence had taken place within the jurisdiction of the court.

(4) For the purposes of the provisions of that Act specified in subsection (2) above, in their application by virtue of an Order in Council under this section as between the United Kingdom and any other State, any act or omission, wherever it takes place, which is—
(a) an offence mentioned in subsection (1) above; and
(b) an offence against the law of that State,

shall be deemed to be an offence committed within the territory of that State."

49B. The following subsections shall be substituted for section 4(1) of that Act—

"(1) Sections 17 and 22 of the Extradition Act 1870 shall extend to section 3 above.

(1A) Sections 19, *(Application of general extradition arrangements to colonies)* and *(Special extradition arrangements—colonies)* of the Criminal Justice Act 1988 shall extend to section 3A above.".'.

No. 243, in page 152, line 25, at end insert—

'71A. The following subsection shall be inserted after section 45(3)—

"(3A) The power of the Court of Appeal to grant leave to appeal under section [Crown Court proceedings—orders restricting or preventing reports or restricting public access] of the Criminal Justice Act 1988 may be exercised by a single judge in the same manner as it may be exercised by the Court.".'.

No. 43, in line 35, at end insert—

'CIVIL AVIATION ACT 1982 (c. 16)

73A. The following sections shall be inserted after section 93 of the Civil Aviation Act 1982—

"Extradition under Part I of Criminal Justice Act 1988

93A.—(1) Where—
(a) no such arrangement as is mentioned in section 2 of the Extradition Act 1870 has been made with a Convention country; and
(b) general extradition arrangements have not been made with that country under Part I of the Criminal Justice Act 1988.

Her Majesty may by Order in Council direct that the provisions of the Criminal Justice Act 1988 specified in subsection (2) below shall apply as between the United Kingdom and that country, subject to the limitations, restrictions, exceptions and qualifications, if any, contained in the Order, as if the Convention constituted general extradition arrangements made with that country under Part I of that Act, but only in respect of the following offences—
  (i) an offence committed on board an aircraft inflight registered in that country;
  (ii) an attempt to commit such an offence;
  (iii) counselling, procuring, commanding, aiding or abetting such an offence; and
  (iv) being accessory before or after the fact to such an offence.

(2) The provisions of the Criminal Justice Act 1988 mentioned in subsection (1) above are—
(a) section 1(1) to (8);
(b) sections 3 to 10; and
(c) sections 12 to 18.

(3) An Order in Council under this section may not provide that a court determining whether a person arrested for an offence mentioned in subsection (1) above shall not be under a duty to determine whether the evidence would be sufficient to warrant his trial if the offence had taken place within the jurisdiction of the court.

(4) Subsections (4) and (5) of section 92 above shall apply for the purposes of this section as they apply for the purposes of that section.

93B.—(1) Sections 17 and 22 of the Extradition Act 1870 shall extend to section 93 above.

(2) Sections 19. *(Application of general extradition arrangements to Colonies)* and *(Special extradition arrangements—Colonies)* of the Criminal Justice Act 1988 shall extend to section 93A above and to section 92(4) and (5) above as they apply for the purposes of section 93A above.".'.

No. 44, in line 42, at end insert—

'Taking of Hostages Act 1982 (c.28)

74A. The following section shall be inserted after section 3 of the Taking of Hostages Act 1982—

"Extradition under Part I of Criminal Justice Act 1988

3A.—(1) Where—

(a) No such arrangements as is mentioned in section 2 of the Extradition Act 1870 has been made with a State which is a party to the Convention; and

(b) general extradition arrangements have not been made with that State under Part I of the Criminal Justice Act 1988.

Her Majesty may by Order in Council direct that the provisions of the Criminal Justice Act 1988 specified in subsection (2) below shall apply as between the United Kingdom and that State, subject to the limitations, restrictions, exceptions and qualifications, if any, contained in the Order, as if the Convention constituted general extradition arrangements made with that State under Part I of that Act, but only in respect of the following offences—

(i) an offence under this Act;

(ii) an attempt to commit such an offence;

(iii) counselling, procuring, commanding, aiding or abetting such an offence; and

(iv) being accessory before or after the fact to such an offence.

(2) The provisions of the Criminal Justice Act 1988 mentioned in subsection (1) above are—

(a) section 1(1) to (8);

(b) sections 3 to 10; and

(c) sections 12 to 18.

(3) An Order in council under this section may not provide that a court determining whether a person arrested for an offence mentioned in subsection (1) above shall not be under a duty to determine whether the evidence would be sufficient to warrant his trial if the offence had taken place within the jurisdiction of the court.

(4) For the purposes of the provisions of the Criminal Justice Act 1988 specified in subsection (2) above, in their application by virtue of an Order in Council under this section as between the United Kingdom and any other State, any act or omission, wherever it takes place, which is—

(a) an offence mentioned in subsection (a) above; and

(b) an offence against the law of that State,

shall be deemed to be an offence committed within the territory of that State.

(5) In this section 'the Convention' means the International Convention against the Taking of Hostages opened for signature at New York on 18 December 1979."

74B. The following subsections shall be substituted for section 5(1) of that Act—

"(1) Sections 17 and 22 of the Extradition Act 1870 shall extend to section 3(1) and (4) above.

(1A) Sections 19 *(Application of general extradition arrangements to Colonies)* and *(Special extradition arrangements—Colonies)* of the Criminal Justice Act 1988 shall extend to section 3A above."

Aviation Security Act 1982 (c.36)

74C. The Aviation Security Act 1982 shall be amended as follows.

75D. In subsection (3) of section 9, after the word "above" there shall be inserted the words "and of section 9A below".

74E. The following section shall be inserted after that section—

"*Extradition under Part I of Criminal Justice Act 1968.*

9A.—(1) Where—

(a) no such arrangement as is mentioned in section 2 of the Extradition Act 1870 has been made with a State which is a party to a relevant Convention; and

(b) general extradition arrangements have not been made with that State under Part I of the Criminal Justice Act 1988,

Her majesty may by Order in council direct that the provisions of the Criminal Justice Act 1988 specified in subsection (2) below shall apply as between the United Kingdom and that State, subject to the limitations, restrictions, exceptions and qualifications, if any, contained in the Order, as if the relevant Convention constituted general extradition arrangements made with that State under Part I of the Criminal Justice Act 1988, but only in respect of the following offences—

(i) offences which are offences in pursuance of that Convention;

(ii) an attempt to commit such an offence;

(iii) counselling, procuring, commanding, aiding or abetting such an offence; and

(iv) being accessory before or after the fact to such an offence.

(2) The provisions of the Criminal Justice Act 1988 mentioned in subsection (1) above are—

(a) section 1(1) to (8);

(b) sections 3 to 10; and

(c) sections 12 to 18.

(3) An Order in Council under this section may not provide that a court dealing with a person arrested for an offence mentioned in subsection (1) above shall not be under a duty to determine whether the evidence would be sufficient to warrant his trial if the offence had taken place within the jurisdiction of the court.

(4) For the purposes of the provisions of the Criminal Justice Act 1988 specified in subsection (2) above, in their application by virtue of an Order in council under this section as between the United Kingdom and any other State any Act or omission, wherever it takes place, which falls within section 9(4) of this Act shall be deemed to be an offence committed within the territory of that State.".

74F. The following subsections shall be substituted for section 39(1) of that Act—

"(1) Sections 17 and 22 of the Extradition Act 1870 shall extend to section 9 above.

(1A) Sections 19 *(Application of general extradition arrangements to Colonies)* of the Criminal Justice Act 1988 shall extend to section 9A above and to section 9 above as amended by the Criminal Justice Act 1988.".'

No. 17, in page 153, line 5, at end insert—

'76A. At the end of part II of Schedule 1 to that Act there shall be added—

"*Criminal Justice Act 1988 (c.)*

26. Section [*Torture*] (torture).'".

No. 45, in line 23, at end insert—

'Nuclear Material (Offences) Act 1983 (c. 18)

79.—(1)

the following section shall be inserted after section 5 of the Nuclear Material (Offences) Act 1983 (extradition)—

"*Extradition under Part I of the Criminal Justice Act 1988.*

5A.—(1) Where—

(a) no such arrangement as is mentioned in section 2 of the Extradition Act 1870 has been made with a State which is a party to the Convention; and

(b) general extradition arrangements have not been made with that State under Part I of the Criminal Justice Act 1988,

Her Majesty may by Order in Council direct that the provisions of the Criminal Justice Act 1988 specified in subsection (2) below shall apply as between the United Kingdom and that State, subject to the limitations, restrictions, exceptions and qualifications, if any, contained in the Order, as if the Convention constituted general extradition arrangements made with that State under Part I of the Criminal Justice Act 1988, but only in respect of the following offences—

(i) an offence mentioned in paragraph (a), (b), (c) or (d) of subsection (1) of section 1 of this Act which is committed by doing an act in relation to or by means of nuclear material;

(ii) an offence under section 2 of this Act;

(iii) an attempt to commit an offence mentioned in paragraph (i) or (ii) above;

(iv) counselling, procuring, commanding, aiding or abetting such an offence; and

(v) being accessory before or after the fact to such an offence.

(2) The provisions of the Criminal Justice Act 1986 mentioned in subsection (1) above are—

(a) section 1(1) to (8);

(b) sections 3 to 10; and

(c) sections 12 to 18.

(3) An Order in council under this section may not provide that a court determining whether a person arrested for an offence mentioned in subsection (1) above shall not be under a duty to determine whether the evidence would be sufficient to warrant his trial if the offence had taken place within the jurisdiction of the court.

(4) For the purposes of the provisions of the Criminal Justice Act 1988 specified in subsection (2) above, in their application by virtue of an Order in council under this section as between the United Kingdom and any other State, any act wherever committed, which is—

(a) an offence mentioned in subsection (1) above; and

(b) an offence against the law of that State,

shall be deemed to be an offence committed within the territory of that State.

(5) In this section and in section 6 below "the Convention" means the Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material opened the signature at Vienna and New York on 3 March 1980.".

79B. The following subsections shall be substituted for section 7(1) of that Act—

"(1) Sections 17 and 22 of the Extradition Act 1870 shall extend to section 5 above.

(1A) Sections 19 (Application of general extradition arrangements to Colonies) and *(Special Extradition arrangements—Colonies)* of the Criminal Justice Act 1988 shall extend to section 5A above.".'

No. 177, in line 25, leave out from beginning to '(intimate' and insert—

'79A. The Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 shall be amended as follows.

79B. At the end of subsection (3)(b) of section 24 (arrest) there shall be added the words "other than an offence under section 12(1) of the Theft Act 1968".

79C. In section 55(1)'.

No. 212, in line 27, at end insert—

'80A. In section 65, in the definition of "intimate samples", for the word "orifice" there shall be substituted the word "orifices".'

No. 178, in line 28, leave out 'of that Act'.

No. 18, in line 29, at end insert—

'81A. At the end of Schedule 5 to that Act there shall be added—

"*Criminal Justice Act 1988 (c.)*

9. Section [*Torture*] (Torture).'".

No. 273, in page 155, line 3, leave out sub-paragraph (3) and insert—

'(3) the following subsection shall be substituted for subsection (2)—

"(2) An order that subsection (1) above shall not apply to reports—

(a) of an application under section 6(1) above;

(b) of a preparatory hearing;

(c) of an appeal to the Court of Appeal under section 9(11) above; or

(d) of an application for leave to appeal under that subsection may be made—

(i) in a case falling within paragraph (a), (b) or (d) above, by the judge dealing with the matter; and

(ii) in a case falling within paragraph (c) above, by the Court of Appeal.".'.

No. 237, in line 9, leave out from beginning to first 'the' in line 13.

No. 272, in line 15, at end insert—

'93A. In section 13(1), for the words "operates only so as to make for Northern Ireland provision corresponding to" there shall be substituted the words "is made only for purposes corresponding to those of".'.

No. 64, in line 18, leave out 'In subsection (5) of'.

No. 65, in page 155, line 19, leave out '(restriciton on use of a statement required under that section)' and insert '(Powers of investigation in relation to serious or complex fraud) shall be amended as follows.

(2) In subsection (1) for the words from "attend" to the end there shall be substituted the words "answer questions or otherwise furnish information with respect to any matter relevant to the investigation at a specified place and either at a specified time or forthwith.".

(3) In subsection (2)—

(a) for the words "a specified time and place" there shall be substituted the words "such place as may be specified in the notice and either forthwith or at such time as may be so specified,"; and

(b) for the word "class" there shall be substituted the word "description".

(4) In subsection (5)'.—*[Mr. John Patten.]*

Schedule 15

Repeals

Amendments made: No. 46, in page 157, line 28, at end insert—

'1969 c.12.	Genocide Act 1969.	Section 2(1)(b) and the word "and" immediately preceding it. In section 3(1), the words "and sections 16 and 17 of the Fugitive Offenders Act 1967".'.

No. 47, in line 34, column 3, at end insert—

'In section 60, subsection (1)(b) and the word "and" immediately preceding it, and in subsection (2), the words "or section 16(2) or 17 of the said Act of 1967".'.

No. 186, in line 34, column 3, at end insert—

'Section 34(1)(f).'

No. 179, in line 38, at end insert—

'1972 c.20.	Road Traffic Act 1972.	In section 100, the words "or attempting to drive".'.

No. 182, in line 42, at end insert—

'1973 c.14.	Costs in Criminal Cases Act 1973.	In Schedule 1, paragraph 3.'

No. 184, in plage 158, line 15, column 3, at end insert—

'In section 5(6), the words from the beginning to "and", in the second place where it occurs.'

No. 48, in line 38, at end insert—

'1978 c.26.	Suppression of Terrorism Act 1978.	Section 3(2)
1978 c.31.	Theft Act 1978.	In section 5(3) the words from "and" to the end.'.

No. 49, in line 39, column 3, at beginning insert—

		'In section 1(6), paragraph (b) and the word "and" immediately preceding it and the words "and sections 16 and 17 of the 1967 Act".'.

No. 50, in page 159, line 3, at end insert—

'1982 c. 16	Civil Aviation Act 1982.	Section 93(3).
1982 c. 28.	Taking of Hostages Act 1982.	In section 3, subsection (1)(b) and the word "and" immediately preceding it and subsections (3) and (5).
1982 c. 36.	Aviation Security Act 1982.	In section 9, subsection (1)(b) and the word "and" immediately preceding it, and subsections (2) and (3).'.

No. 51, in line 18, at end insert—

'1983 c. 18.	Nuclear Material (Offences) Act 1983.	In section 5, subsection (1)(b) and the word "and" immediately preceding it, and subsections (2) and (4).'.

No. 52, in line 31, at end insert—

'1985 c. 37.	Prohibition of Female Circumcision Act 1985.	Section 3(1)(b) and the word "and" immediately preceding it.'.

No. 91, in line 38, after 'it', insert

'in subsection (3), the words "or 9".'.

No. 106A, line 43, column 3, at end insert—

		'In section 19, in subsection (1) (b) (i), the words "(and no conviction for any drug trafficking offence is substituted)" and in subsection (2), in paragraph (a), the words "and that, but for that default, the proceedings would not have been instituted or continued," and in paragraph (b), the word "substantial".'.

No. 238, in page 160, line 24, column 3, at end insert—

		'In Schedule 2, paragraph 1(2).'.

No. 187, in line 27, at end insert—

'1988 c.	Coroners Act 1988.	In Schedule 3, paragraph 14.'

No. 180, in line 30, at end insert—

'1A. The repeal in the Road Traffic Act 1972 does not extend to Scotland.'—*[Mr. John Patten.]*

Title

Amendments made: No. 11, in line 11, after 'indictment' insert

'orders restricting the access of the public to the whole or any part of a trial on indictment or to any proceedings ancillary to such a trial and orders restricting the publication of any report of the whole or any part of a trial on indictment or any such ancillary proceedings.'.

No. 19, in line 17, at end insert

'torture and an offence of'.

No. 70, in line 23, after 'detention', insert

'to make provision in relation to the taking of body samples by the police in Northern Ireland'.—*[Mr. John Patten.]*

Order for Third Reading read.

11.5 pm

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Douglas Hurd): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read the Third time.

I have no intention of interrupting the breakneck speed of this legislative process, which I hope will be widely imitated in future. I wish to clarify one point that the hon. Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor) mentioned earlier. She said that an article in the *New Scientist* suggested that mouth swabs would not yield material suitable for DNA profiling. I am advised that mouth swabs can produce useful evidence. We do not accept the contention in the article that another test should be used in conjunction with it. I understand that the ICI cellmark diagnostics people say that the article does not accurately represent their views and that they accept that DNA profiles can be obtained from mouth swabs, provided that sufficient cells are available in the sample.

It has been a long journey for the Bill. I spent more time with it on the first leg of its journey during the last Parliament than I have on this part. It is therefore easier for me to say that we owe a debt of gratitude to the Standing Committee. That is partly the result of the way in which the Opposition handled the measure, and I pay tribute to the skill with which the hon. Member for Dewsbury grasped and ran with the subject.

I am grateful to my hon. Friends for their contributions and support. I know that my hon. Friend the Minister of State bore most of the burden in Committee and I congratulate him on the way that he did so—not least because he surmounted a hurdle that I did not always manage to surmount. Whenever I appeared in Committee —or, indeed, in the Committee on the Police and Criminal Evidence Bill—the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile) greeted me with a glare because I was not a lawyer and I was contributing to discussions that he thought should take place within a slightly closed circle. Clearly, my hon. Friend managed to overcome that obstacle and showed that one does not have to be a lawyer to legislate on these matters. I thank my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary, who has given much help during the Report stage, and who admirably restrained his natural belligerence on such occasions.

When the Bill first appeared, it was criticised as something of a ragbag, but that criticism has died away. On important subject after important subject—extradition, peremptory challenge, lenient sentences, video links, criminal injuries compensation, to give but a sample —the Bill represents the satisfactory end to a long argument both inside and outside the House. As the Bill has progressed, we have inserted provisions of substantial value, such as that on knives.

The other day, one of the wisest of my predecessors advised me that, whatever we did, we should not have another Criminal Justice Bill, because so many people thought it necessary or desirable to include matters that were not originally intended. I have no intention of peering

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into the future. I just believe that the House can, with confidence, give a Third Reading to a thoroughly sensible and effective piece of legislation.

11.9 pm

Mrs. Ann Taylor: I am grateful to the Home Secretary for clarifying the point that we raised earlier about DNA profiling. I hope that the information that he has given will prove accurate in practice.

I do not wish to follow the Home Secretary completely down the road of mutual congratulation, but I agree that the passage of the Criminal Justice Bill has been something of an epic—more so for some people than others. I must extend my sympathy to my hon. Friend the Member for Newcastle-under-Lyme (Mrs. Golding) who has acted as Whip on this Bill twice round. To have spent one year on the Bill is punishment enough, but to have spent two years on it—my hon. Friend has spent nearly all of her time in the House on it—is a feat in itself.

The House has spent a considerable amount of time discussing this Bill and, even on Report, we have had more than 200 Government amendments. The Home Secretary has denied that the Bill is still a ragbag, but I would call it a hotch-potch of measures. It is a mark of our discussions that a bad Bill will always remain so, no matter how much debate takes place.

On Second Reading, we ought to be positive; we welcomed those parts of the Bill that we considered constructive—the reduction in the length of prison sentences for unpaid fines, limiting custodial sentences in police cells, encouraging the use of bail hostels, creating a single detention centre for young offenders and giving the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board a statutory basis. Unfortunately, after many hours in Committee and on Report, we have little to add to that list.

Fortunately, at times, the Government displayed an unusual characteristic by listening to some of the debates and accepting some of our amendments. We welcome that, and pay tribute to Ministers for doing so. The Government accepted our proposal to ratify the United Nations convention on torture. We welcome the Minister's acceptance of our amendment this evening to lessen the worst effects of the Nottingham justices' decision. We were pleased that the Minister accepted Opposition arguments that it was inappropriate to make custody the sanction for a young person's failure to undergo psychiatric treatment. We are also pleased that education authorities should be consulted before school attendance becomes the requirement of a supervision order.

Such concessions do not amount to much in a Bill that has been universally criticised as an attack on civil liberties and for its failure to deal with the problems of our criminal justice system. Serious disquiet has been expressed in this House and in another place about the removal of the prima facie rule in extradition, which forms a large part of the Bill. Likewise, the Bill retains the removal of the right to peremptory challenge. Jury trials will be removed from some driving and criminal damage cases. The Bill advocates the increased use of documentary evidence as opposed to oral evidence, and extends the time between bail hearings from eight to 28 days—we believe that that may become the norm in future.

The Government have moved in the right direction in their attempts to provide more for the victims of crime, but even in that they have failed. The Government are putting the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board on a statutory footing but they are also setting off on a petty, penny-pinching exercise that will deny compensation for small items such as damaged clothing and deprive victims of crime of their supplementary benefit when they are awarded compensation. By those examples, which represent major parts of the Bill, the Government have shown their disregard for public and expert opinion.

The Government have ignored the views of the people who know best and who are directly affected by the changes. The Law Society, the Association of Chief Probation Officers, the National Association of Probation Officers, the Police Federation, the National Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders and the National Council for Civil Liberties, to name but a few, have all opposed major parts to the Bill. In the face of such opposition, the Government have not moved an iota on the measures.

Despite this major piece of legislation, our criminal justice system is likely to remain in crisis. The Government have done nothing to get to the source of the problems that we face. The Opposition maintain that a successful criminal justice system must begin with the premise that it seeks to provide equal rights under the law and equal access to it. At present, all that many people experience is alienation from a system that treats them inappropriately and often unfairly.

In other measures that they are introducing, the Government are now seeking to offload their responsibility for the incidence of crime by telling us that we must take more care to lock up our property and take better control of our children. Of course we must do those things, but the Government cannot escape the fact that the environment that they have created has also created a divided community in which crime breeds. The Criminal Justice Bill is a mish-mash of measures. The Government want to be seen to be doing something to respond to a public who are increasingly worried by the failure of our criminal justice system to deal with rising crime rates.

We are left with the immutable fact that the Bill will not deal with the main problems. Crime will continue to increase; prisons will continue to be overcrowded. The prison, probation and police services will find it increasingly difficult to do their jobs. Worst of all, the number of victims will continue to increase. Those are the issues the Government should be tackling, rather than eroding our civil liberties. That is why we shall vote against the Bill tonight.

11.16 pm

Sir Eldon Griffiths (Bury St. Edmunds): I congratulate my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary and his ministerial team on a Bill which, although it cannot tackle all the problems listed by the hon. Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor), goes a long way to tackling some of them well.

I have had the doubtful privilege of being involved in the Committee stages of the Criminal Justice Bill, and of the Police and Criminal Evidence Bill, in both Parliaments —and my right hon. Friend played a distinguished part. I also served on the Committees which considered the Drug

Trafficking Offences Bill, the Public Order Bill and the Firearms (Amendment) Bill, but not, I am thankful to say, on the Committee examining this Bill.

The sheer volume and complexity of the legislation that my right hon. Friend has taken through the House constitutes a distinguished record. I heard what he said about the wise advice of a predecessor who suggested that, whatever else my right hon. Friend did, he should not introduce another Criminal Justice Bill; and I make a prediction. If my right hon. Friend remains, as I hope he will, in his office for another year or so, he or his successor will be almost bound to introduce yet another Criminal Justice Bill. Some things remain to be tackled, notably in the areas of the right to silence and of the video recordings that Mr. Justice Pigot is examining. I and the hon. Member for Dewsbury made common cause on that matter.

Ultimately, we shall get on top of the crime problem not by means of legislation, but by personal responsibility and legislation. When the hon. Member for Dewsbury sought to place all the responsibility for crime and disorder in our midst on the Government, she let down herself and her party.

Finally, most of us are in the fortunate position of being able to walk away from this Bill, although no doubt their Lordships will have to put a few finishing touches to it. The police service will have to carry it out. As I said at the end of the debates on all the Bills I have mentioned, we should have a care for the additional duties that we constantly lay on the police service, and should understand that the more complex the law, the more difficult is the task that the police must undertake on behalf of us all. I wish the Bill well and congratulate my right hon. Friend on it.

11.19 pm

Mr. Alex Carlile: Although the Home Secretary believes that I glared at him during the proceedings on the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984, I assure him that during the Committee stage of this Bill I missed his jousting style, as I missed the fencing style of the former Minister of State, the hon. and learned Member for Putney (Mr. Mellor), on the Criminal Justice Bill mark I. The present Minister of State has more of a knife-thrower's style, attempting to surround us with knives so that we cannot move outside the ring that he has created. That was enjoyable, too.

The Bill contained some things that were a great disappointment to me, especially—I say this as a practitioner—the incomprehensible reasons that were given for the removal of the right of peremptory challenge. Although a significant concession was made tonight on the procedure by which the courts will deal with challenges for cause, I still believe that there will be practical difficulties in dealing with jury challenges in the future. But I hope that I shall be proved wrong.

The Bill also contains some useful changes relating to video recordings—I would like that provision to go much further—forfeiture, confiscation, indecency and offensive weapons. What it cannot claim to be, although it makes significant improvements to the law, is a strategy. I suspect that we shall hear it spoken of as part of a great master plan of law and order. Although the Minister of State issues more press releases than any Minister ever known to the House, and although the Home Secretary holds more press conferences per week than any Cabinet Minister ever known to the House, I fear that their master plan has yet to be revealed. This is not it.

11.21 pm

Mr. Ashby: Earlier this week, the Home Office told us about the amnesty on knives. The hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile) has now told us what has happened to some of those knives—the Minister of State has been surrounding the hon. and learned Gentleman with them.

I was not a member of the Committee that examined the Bill, but I followed the proceedings carefully night after night—sometimes burning the midnight oil later than those who served on the Committee. I thank Ministers and Home Office officials for their great assistance in helping me to follow the Bill.

It would be wrong to say that the Bill is a hotch-potch. It is a portmanteau. A Bill that deals with so many matters cannot always be cohesive. I disagree with the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery in one sense: I believe that the Bill will be remembered, because it is the first step in the direction of radically changing the rules of evidence. Lawyers like to think that the rules of evidence are written in stone, have been devised over the centuries and must never be changed. That is not so. It is important that we should not be stuck with these tablets of stone for ever. We should examine our rules on the way in which evidence is given and be prepared to change.

Substantial changes have been made in the Bill, including the fact that the unsworn testimony of a child will no longer require corroboration. The rules on first-hand testimony and documentary evidence have also been changed.

I regret only one part of the Bill—that relating to jury challenges—but I am grateful that the Bill did not abolish juries in fraud trials. Perhaps that is the quid pro quo. As some of my hon. Friends have said, we shall see more challenging for cause. Jury trials will be extended as a result of getting rid of the peremptory challenge. Problems with juries will arise because jurors will not have been challenged, and that is the only aspect of the Bill that I regret. We will regret removing the right to jury challenge and have to introduce a measure to restore it or to formalise challenges for cause.

11.26 pm

Mr. Bermingham: Just as Mary had "Calais" engraved on her heart as a sign of shame, so those of us who have served on two Criminal Justice Bills in quick succession fear that we may have those engraved on our hearts also as a sign of shame.

In two years of parliamentary time, a number of grave issues have been bypassed and a number of others have been pushed into law because it was expedient to do so. The hon. Member for Twickenham (Mr. Jessel) thought jury challenges were bad. Those hon. Members who were not in the previous Parliament will not appreciate the way in which such arguments prompted the Government to remove the peremptory challenge, a step that we shall learn to regret.

I fear that many Conservative Members do not understand many of these issues. *[Interruption.]* They are chattering like children pecking on the walls of nowhere. For example, the hon. Member for Darlington (Mr

[Mr. Bermingham]

Fallon), whose manners in this place are becoming increasingly bad, may live to regret the day when we set up the American system of challenging, which may be the price we pay for this measure.

I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor) on mastering the technicalities of the Bill and leading for the Opposition in a way which does credit to the procedures of the House. I also pay credit to the Minister of State who, although not a lawyer, mastered the technicalities. He has often disgreed with me on some issues covered by the Bill. That matters not, for education is a wonderful thing and it comes with time. When we reach the third Criminal Justice Bill in the lifetime of two Parliaments, perhaps we shall be able to convert him, too.

It sometimes happens—*[Interruption.]*—that hon. Members come into the Chamber late at night full of ale and chatter and do not understand what is going on. That tends to spoil our proceedings, because at the concluding stages of a Bill, when those who served on the Standing Committee are being serious, they should listen to us. We are saying, in effect, "The Bill will be passed, even though we shall vote against its Third Reading; we must look at the realities. We thank the Government for the concessions they have made. They have listened to our arguments, and perhaps next time they will listen harder." On rare occasions when members of the Opposition feel able to be nice to the Government, the least that Conservative Members should do is listen to us.

This Bill now passes into history. It passes over to the practitioners, of whom I am one, and I declare that interest. Those of us who will have to deal with the practicalities of the measure fear that we shall be left with many problems. Many members of the community will have to pay the price for the inaccuracies the Bill contains, for they will lead to appeals, to delays and to suffering. For those and other reasons, I oppose the measure.

11.29 pm

Mr. Dickens: When I hear praise from lawyers and then a few squeals, and when I hear praise from those representing the police, and then a few squeals, I think that we may have got it right on behalf of parents in Britain.

No Criminal Justice Bill has done more for parents and children than the one on which we shall be voting in a few minutes. Hon. Members will know that, together with them, I have fought and campaigned for about nine years for many of the things that are now in the Bill.

What a terrible thing the rules of corroboration were for a child—to be encouraged to tell when someone had abused him and yet to find that no one would listen, and when they did, to find that the judge directed the jury that it would be unsafe and improper to convict on his uncorroborated evidence. When the Bill becomes an Act, children in Britain will at last be listened to in a proper way like an adult and be entitled to be believed as an adult.

Then there is the video link which enables a child to give evidence in a comfortable room away from the court, where the child does not have to face the abuser or the accused across the court room, look at the judge and barristers in their wigs, or suffer the drama of the court that makes many of us turn to jelly. *[Interruption.]* Perhaps not me, but certainly many of those hon. Members who did not vote for capital punishment would have turned to jelly. Those children can now be listened to in a more sensitive way.

I hope and pray that the inquiry that the Government have promised us to look into the taking of evidence from a child in the early stages of an inquiry will decide in favour of that, because a child forgets many things by the time he gets to court.

How many times have we criticised judges for living in a different world, for not reflecting public opinion, for giving too lenient a sentence? The prosecution can now seek leave to appeal against a too-lenient sentence. It is in the Bill. If I and many other hon. Members had not been right in criticising a few of our judges, our legislators and departmental people would not have included that in the Bill. But it is there, and it will be voted through tonight.

Many hon. Members were not here a few minutes ago, but we were saying that horrible photographs or videos of children mean that a child has to be procured, sometimes snatched from the roadside. It could be the child of an hon. Member one day. Children have to be procured to produce such muck, and when they are, the material is used to corrupt other adults and to entice them to look towards a child in a sexual way.

That will now come to an end, because previously when a man was found with a house full of child pornography, his defence was that it was for his own use, and he was free. Now, if any police officer goes to a house and finds anybody in possession of child pornography, in a briefcase or in the office, he will not be protected by the words, "It is for my own use." It will now be a criminal offence to be in possession of such material for one's own use.

I have waited nine years for this. When my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary goes to the next Conservative party conference, he will be able to hold his head high because at last he has struck a blow for the parents of Britain and for the victims. I congratulate him, his Ministers and his Department.

11.35 pm

Mr. Robert Hayward (Kingswood): I would like to follow on, not from the comments of my hon. Friend the Member for Littleborough and Saddleworth (Mr. Dickens) but from a comment made by the hon. Member for St. Helens, South (Mr. Bermingham). He said that Third Reading gave an opportunity for members of the Committee to raise certain items, but it also gives those who were not on the Committee an opportunity to raise one or two points. I particularly welcome clause 34 of the Bill, which gives the prosecution the right to appeal against lenient sentences.

In my constituency, on 31 May last year, Mark Couzons was murdered in most tragic and violent circumstances. He was, by the admission of everybody who knew him, quite a lad. Some people thought badly of him; some did not. But nobody would have said that he warranted being murdered in such a way. When the case came to court in December, James Nelder was tried and found guilty of manslaughter, late on a Friday afternoon, and sentenced to two years' imprisonment. That was the sentence of the judge.

Up to now, that has been the final stage of the legal process. As a result of this Bill it will be possible for the prosecution to appeal, if it believes that it is appropriate.

There is no doubt in my mind or in the minds of my constituents that that sentence was far too lenient. It was not in the mind of the judge that it was too lenient.

It is appropriate that in cases such as this, the prosecution should have the right to consider an appeal. If there is not, the impact that such a sentence may have on the morale of the police and the community is very substantial indeed. People will have confidence in sentences if they are subject to review in these or similar circumstances. If they are not, there is a danger that the law will be brought progressively into disrepute; people will believe that they have been treated unfairly in comparison with others whom they see as receiving more lenient sentences for more violent crimes.

For that reason, and because of the experience of my constituents, I wholeheartedly endorse this Bill and welcome in particular clause 34.

Question put, That the Bill be now read the Third time:—

The House divided: Ayes 245, Noes 105.

Division No. 390] **[11.37 pm**

AYES

Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amess, David
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Batiste, Spencer
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Gardiner, George
Gill, Christopher
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gow, Ian
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon *(Bury St E')*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Janman, Tim
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Lawrence, Ivan
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
McCrindle, Robert
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New Forest)*
Madel, David
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morrison, Sir Charles
Moss, Malcolm
Neale, Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, John *(Oxford W)*
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raffan, Keith
Redwood, John
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Tracey, Richard
Trippier, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Waller, Gary
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Mike
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Robert Boscawen and
Mr. Tristan Garel-Jones.

NOES

Allen, Graham
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Bell, Stuart
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland

Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cryer, Bob
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Dalyell, Tam
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Doran, Frank
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fyfe, Maria
Galloway, George
George, Bruce
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Graham, Thomas
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Holland, Stuart
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
Macdonald, Calum A.
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliott
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
O'Neill, Martin
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Randall, Stuart
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Salmond, Alex
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Spearing, Nigel
Steinberg, Gerry
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wall, Pat
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Frank Haynes and
Mr. Frank Cook.

Bill accordingly read the Third time, and passed, with amendments.

LIAISON COMMITTEE

Ordered,

That Sir Peter Emery be added to the Liaison Committee.—*[Mr. Kenneth Carlisle.]*

PETITION

Health and Safety Executive Office, Dundee

11.48 pm

Mr. John McAllion (Dundee, East): I beg leave of the House to present a petition on behalf of 700 of my constituents and constituents of other hon. Members in Scotland who are opposed to the proposed closure of the Health and Safety Executive office in Dundee. We believe that the closure will be detrimental to the interests of the people of Dundee and people outwith Dundee as well. We ask the House to impose its influence upon the Government and to convince them not to close the office. We would be grateful if the House would take note of the objection, which I present on behalf of the people of Dundee.

To lie upon the Table.

British Prisoners of War (Wormhoudt)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. John Carlisle.]*

11.49 pm

Mr. Jeff Rooker (Birmingham, Perry Barr): I make no apology for again raising the question of the murder of British prisoners of war in May 1940 at Wormhoudt in France. The debate is essentially for the benefit of the Under-Secretary of State for the Armed Forces, not for my benefit. I understand that he will be the first Defence Minister in 48 years to speak on this matter.

The background to the massacre of the 80 or so British prisoners of war has been fairly well rehearsed in recent weeks, if not in recent years. Following my parliamentary question to the Home Secretary on 21 April, I briefly outlined certain of the circumstances on 25 May, as reported in columns 351 to 356 of *Hansard*. I need not repeat them, as I am well aware the Minister knows the background. I want to give him the opportunity to make a progress report to the House on what has been happening since the Home Secretary made his commitment on 21 April that the case would be re-examined. I hope that the Minister can answer some specific questions of which I gave him notice yesterday. I should be grateful if he would answer in detail, but if he cannot I presume that he will write to me. Because I have had no contact with the Ministry of Defence since that date, other than brief correspondence, the Minister should tell us what contact has been made with the West German authorities since April.

We are entitled to know in what year the Government were aware that Wilhelm Mohnke had returned from his Russian imprisonment. According to documents produced by the War Crimes Interrogation Unit—based on the evidence of British prisoners and later, German prisoners—he is held to be responsible for giving the order that no prisoners be taken in the barn at Wormhoudt on 28 May 1940. Mohnke was imprisoned by the Russians when we and others were looking for him.

We need to know whether the Government were at any time informed of, or involved in, any debriefing or questioning of Mohnke after his Russian imprisonment. I understand that he was debriefed by the Americans. We do not know whether they concerned themselves solely with his activities or imprisonment by the Russians several years after the end of the war, or whether they raised allegations about war crimes by Mohnke in 1940 and 1944.

We need to have it put on the record whether the Government accept that there was a massacre at Wormhoudt in May 1944 by an SS unit. To the best of my knowledge, that has never been admitted in public. Have the Government ever been requested by the West German authorities to provide any information regarding allegations of war crimes and murder involving Mohnke and personnel under his command and, if so, when? It is a matter of public record that at least twice in the 1970s the German authorities looked at some of the allegations regarding Mohnke. It is inconceivable that they did not request assistance from the British authorities. I know for certain that they did not request any help from British survivors.

We should know—I make no complaint; I have been moderate on this point—whether the Government have been asked at any time since the incident by any of the British regiments concerned to follow up the case against Mohnke. From what I have read and heard, there appears to have been silence. The Government could have done that in the normal way, which is generally behind closed doors. The public have a right to know whether that point has ever been pursued.

Another point of substance that must be raised is why the material about the Wormhoudt massacre—material that is in British hands—is still being kept secret. I shall expand briefly on this question. The Minister will forgive me for doing that, but it does not change the thrust of the question. I understand that, essentially, documents are closed for 75 years after the end of the war. That is longer than the normal 30-year rule and I have looked at some of the reasons for documents being closed for the longer period.

I understand that documents are kept closed for more than 30 years if they contain information about individuals, the disclosure of which would cause distress or embarrassment to living persons or their immediate descendants. Since 1982, when the Government produced a White Paper, Cmnd. 8531, on modern public records, they have accepted that instead of distress or embarrassment the criterion should be distress or danger. Does that criterion apply to British citizens or foreign nationals?

None of the five known survivors from the barn at Wormhoudt would be placed in any distress, danger or embarrassment by the files being made available. No descendant of any person killed at Wormhoudt, or who has now died, having been one of the few other survivors, has ever contacted me asking me to shut up and not to raise the matter. The opposite has been the case. I have been on the receiving end of requests and have quite specifically been asked by people who want to know how their father or grandfather died. Those people were not properly informed about that at the time. I accept that the people who were massacred were lost and that nobody knew about the massacre until at least late 1943.

A couple of weeks ago I was asked by a lady who is in her 50s, and through her that lady's mother who is now in her 80s, to find out how her father died in the barn. I spoke to her on the phone because I did not want to send the information in a cold way. Her father was one of two people in the barn who made the supreme sacrifice by throwing himself on top of a live grenade in order to protect his comrades. The Minister will know that I have written separately about at least three acts of supreme bravery that day which led to three British soldiers giving up their lives to protect their comrades. I have asked whether that matter can be looked at further, because the evidence about those acts of bravery is not only contained in the documents held by the Government, but is known to the five surviving eye witnesses to those events.

I stress that the release of the records would cause no danger, distress or embarrassment to any British citizen. It surely cannot be that the danger, distress and embarrassment that we are seeking to avoid is to Mr. Mohnke. The Minister must place that clearly on the record.

My next question to the Minister is whether any consideration had been given to awarding posthumous awards for bravery.

I, the House and the country would like to know whether the Government have ever acted for, or taken over, any other nation's investigation into alleged war crimes for which Mohnke is held responsible. I have seen

[Mr. Jeff Rooker]

evidence from Canada that the Government took over the investigations into alleged war crimes in 1944 in which Mohnke was involved. As my hon. and learned Friends would say, today I took further and better legal advice and found that some years ago the House repatriated the Canadian constitution. Therefore, there is no conceivable way that that could still be operated by this House. The Government certainly conducted inquiries related to Mohnke on behalf of another country.

Have the Government ever initiated contact with the West German authorities since the inception of the Federal Republic to inquire about the whereabouts and status of those men—they were all men—considered to be the perpetrators of the Wormhoudt massacre? There is abundant evidence in the British files that I have seen, and probably in the ones that are being kept closed, about the Germans concerned—some of whom were prisoners of war and others of whom were identified. It is fairly easy to check that. An enormous amount of record material from the war is still maintained, as I have discovered over the past few months.

Have the Government ever requested help from the Russian authorities? Wilhelm Mohnke was held prisoner by the Russians for several years, having been taken prisoner of war by them at the fall of the bunker of whose administration he was in charge. It is inconceivable that, having been asked by the allied powers whether they knew about him the Russians did not interrogate him or ask about his war record—where he was every day and every week of the year. That was the normal procedure. Having read the War Crimes Interrogation Unit's reports Nos. 1500 and 1650, I know that almost every German prisoner had to give details about where he had served during the war so that a pattern could be established. I imagine that the Russian military investigators did the same thing.

Have the Government ever requested help from the Russian authorities to establish whether Mohnke made any statements during his years of imprisonment in Russia about the allegations made against him in respect of war crimes such as the Wormhoudt massacre? In the late 1940s and early 1950s the British Government placed Mohnke's name on the United Nations war crimes list, so it is not as though we were not interested in the matter. The question naturally follows whether we asked the Russians about him.

As I told the Minister earlier, I shall give him more than half the time in this Adjournment debate. I hope that he will be able to make a detailed progress report. No doubt this will not be an end to the matter, but my hon. Friends and I and those who read the reports of our proceedings will read with interest what the Minister has to say.

12.1 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Armed Forces (Mr. Roger Freeman): I congratulate the hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) on his success in the ballot, which provides me with a timely opportunity to report to the House on the Wormhoudt massacre and the action that we have taken and will take in relation to the evidence.

This matter was first brought to the attention of the House by the hon. Gentleman on 21 April. On that occasion my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary said in reply that the relevant material was being rigorously re-examined in the Ministry of Defence to see whether it provided a basis for further action. I should like to take this opportunity to say that this is clearly a most serious matter and to stress that we fully appreciate and share the concern of all those involved. If it is possible to bring anyone to justice for this crime, we must all be anxious that this should be done.

Perhaps it will help the House if I rehearse the events of 28 May 1940. There can be no doubt that on that day a considerable number of British soldiers were murdered near the small village of Wormhoudt in France. It has never been possible, despite all efforts, to discover the exact figure. That is partly due to the number of men missing from various units as a result of that day's fighting, and partly due to the removal of means of identification from the men when they were taken prisoner—they subsequently died—and the loss of many official records during the ensuing evacuation. It was not possible for us to make investigations at the spot until the area was again in allied hands in 1944.

The men, estimated to number between 50 and 150—it was probably between 80 and 90—mainly belonged to the 2nd Battalion the Royal Warwickshire Regiment, but they also included men from the Cheshire Regiment and from the Royal Artillery. The soldiers were part of the defensive perimeter being held at all cost by the allied Armies round Dunkirk, to enable as many as possible from the British Expeditionary Force and their French comrades-in-arms to be evacuated from the beaches.

In common with other actions on the Dunkirk perimeter, the fighting in and around Wormhoudt that day was very fierce and often confused. The German forces involved, though outnumbering the British, encountered stiff resistance and suffered many casualties, including the commander of the SS battalion trying to capture Wormhoudt. The accounts of those who survived that day vary in some details, but it is clear that eventually the defenders' gallant resistance was overcome and that several groups of men who had been taken prisoner and disarmed towards the end of the fighting around the village were collected together by the SS soldiers and marched off to a small barn some distance away.

A number of other prisoners seem to have been brought to join that group near the barn, and at least one man who fell out on the way to the barn was bayoneted by the SS German escorts. At the barn the men were herded inside. Any thought that our men had that this was to shelter them from the heavy rain that was now falling was short-lived.

The barn was too crowded for the wounded to lie down and the only British officer who appears to have been present was brusquely rebuffed when he protested about the lack of room in the barn. The SS troops who had taken the men to the barn then threw grenades in among them, causing many casualties. After that, some of the dazed prisoners were ordered out into the field in small groups and were then shot: the last act of some of those men was to turn and face their killers. The SS men then changed their tactics and, standing along the sides of the barn, which was of a fairly open construction, shot at those still in the building. The SS troops' final act was to enter the barn to kill any prisoners they thought were still alive. They then left the scene.

During the attack, three men at least appear to have escaped from the barn—one to hide successfully, the other two, including the officer, to be followed and shot. The officer died; the wounded man he had dragged with him survived, despite being further wounded.

Despite the ferocity of the attack, a number of men survived. Most of them stayed near the barn for between two and four days, during which time further men died from their wounds. The men left near the barn, and eventually those who had moved away from it, were all found by other German soldiers who were not members of the SS. Those German soldiers took proper care of the men and they were thereafter given the necessary medical attention and correctly treated as prisoners of war. In all, it would appear that there 14 survivors of the massacre in the barn. The House will be aware that in these harrowing circumstances there many individual acts of bravery. Witnesses have particularly testified to the conduct of the officer and two senior NCOs involved in the shooting at the barn.

The House will join me and the hon. Gentleman in paying respect to the courage and bearing of the men murdered and to the proud record of the Royal Warwickshire Regiment. The hon. Gentleman has written to me about posthumous awards for gallantry, and I shall reply to him separately and soon.

The crime first came to light in this country in late 1943. That was when some of the survivors, wounded and prisoners of war, were repatriated, and they spoke of their ordeal. When their interviews were studied, it became evident that a serious crime had been committed, and investigations began. They continued from 1944 onwards.

As soon as it was possible, inquiries were made at the scene and statements were taken from several local people, none of whom, however, was a witness to the crime. Eight British survivors were eventually found by the investigators and detailed statements were taken from them. More than 50 voluntary statements were taken from 38 former SS men who had been in the regiment concerned on 28 May 1940. Others were interrogated and reported on. Some key figures, however, were not interviewed. Some were known to have been killed later in the war. Others, like the former SS Captain, by then SS General, Mohnke, could not be traced or were known to be detained elsewhere and unavailable.

The investigation had been taken over in late 1945 by the newly established War Crimes Interrogation Unit led by Lieutenant-Colonel Scotland. This unit took the information already collected and gathered much more, enabling an outline of events to be established and reports on the case to be made.

I do not wish to prejudice the outcome of this matter, but I must tell the House that from all the information and statements collected during the investigation, it was then concluded that there was insufficient evidence of identification and testimony to bring to trial any of the German SS soldiers who were thought possibly to have committed the murders.

However, Lieutenant-Colonel Scotland concluded that a German officer had been present and had been responsible for ordering the shooting of the prisoners of war. He identified this officer as the then Captain Mohnke. It is not clear from our review of the evidence on what grounds Lieutenant-Colonel Scotland was so definite in his accusation. I can say that three of the eight British survivors interviewed had mentioned the presence of a German officer. Only one gave a specific description, and he is now believed to be dead. The only evidence that Mohnke had ordered the shooting came as hearsay from two Germans, both of whom said that others had told them that Mohnke gave such an order: neither had witnessed the order being given and those who were supposed to have told them of it either denied it or could not be found.

Clearly the fact that Mohnke was not available for questioning hindered the investigation, but with no more evidence than was available in the late 1940s, the crime remained unresolved, there being insufficient evidence to bring the case to court.

Before I deal with the action that we now propose, I would like to turn to a number of points of which the hon. Gentleman kindly gave me notice, and which he has just repeated.

In 1948, the British Government of the day took the decision, after careful consideration, to cease war crimes trials. The War Crimes Interrogation Unit was wound up and responsibility for any further German war crimes trials was handed over to the German courts constituted under the authority of the allied occupying powers. The Canadian Government had ceased war crimes investigations in 1947 before the British decision, and had handed over material on unresolved cases to the British investigators. A number of Canadian cases were brought to trial by the British: those unresolved in 1948 remained so with the British decision to cease trials. However, we are now in touch with the Canadian authorities and will co-operate fully with their current renewed investigations.

With the establishment of the Federal Republic of Germany as a sovereign state, the responsibility for further prosecutions passed to the newly established sovereign German courts. That was the position when Mohnke was released by the Russians in 1955, and it remains the position today. There is, as my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary explained, no jurisdiction in this country in the present case and there is no possibility of extradition. The courts in the Federal Republic of Germany would of course have jurisdiction, and I understand that the public prosecutor in Lubeck has agreed to re-open the case and to take up the investigation.

The hon. Member has raised a number of questions about the Government's knowledge and actions concerning this case over the years. When the public prosecutor in Lubeck investigated the case against Mohnke between 1973 and 1976, we understand that he concluded that he did not have enough evidence to mount a prosecution. We have been unable to find any evidence that the Government have ever been requested by the authorities of the Federal Republic of Germany to provide information in connection with this case. Nor, so far as we are aware, have any of the regiments concerned ever officially pressed for the allegations against Mohnke to be followed up.

Similarly, we are not aware whether the British Government specifically knew that Mohnke had returned to Germany, nor have we found any evidence of British involvement in or knowledge of his interrogation on his return.

We have found no evidence that the Government have asked the authorities of the Federal Republic of Germany since its inception about any of the men thought possibly to have been the perpetrators of the massacre; nor are we aware of any approach having been made to the Soviet authorities about Mohnke.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): Was there any contact from the Nachrichtensdienst, the intelligence services, or the Verfussungschutz or the Bundeskriminalamt about the 1955 events? Was no initiative taken?

Mr. Freeman: I have given the House and the hon. Gentleman the facts as available to me about contacts between the British Government and their agencies and those of the Federal Republic.

The hon. Member for Perry Barr raised the question of the closed records. Public records relating to Wilhelm Mohnke and the Wormhoudt massacre are subject to the provisions of the Public Records Act 1958. The Act provides for certain records over 30 years old to be retained by Departments for administrative or other reasons, under section 3(4); or to be closed for extended periods within the public record office under section 5(1), in accordance with the criteria set out in paragraphs 26 and 27 of the White Paper "Modern Public Records".

Those criteria are as set out in paragraph 26: exceptionally sensitive papers, the disclosure of which would be contrary to the public interest whether on security or other grounds; documents containing information supplied in confidence, the disclosure of which would or might constitute a breach of good faith; and documents containing information about individuals, the disclosure of which would cause distress or embarrassment to living persons or their immediate descendants. Paragraph 27 of the White Paper notes that sensitivity should not be deemed to cover party politial sensitivity and that distress and danger should be the criteria rather than distress and embarrassment.

A file containing reports of the incident is available for public inspection in the Public Records Office, reference TS 26/206. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman is aware of that. I can inform the House that we have now collected and collated all the relevant material from our records, so that stage of our work is complete.

I conclude by repeating that the Government take the matter very seriously and will now make all the evidence we have available to the relevant authorities in the Federal Republic of Germany, with whom we are in touch. Further, we will co-operate in every way to facilitate their inquiries. At the end of the day, no matter how horrendous the crime committed on 28 May 1940, and however serious our concern, I think that the hon. Gentleman will agree that it must be a matter for the relevant authorities in the Federal Republic of Germany to consider the evidence and decide whether a case can be brought against any individuals who may have been involved.

The Wormhoudt massacre was a sordid, brutal and dishonourable event in a bloody war, and the British Government will do their part to facilitate justice.

12.17 am

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) on his persistence in this matter. I supported him when the matter was first raised with the Home Secretary, so I have some locus and an increasing interest in it. I say a great "Thank you" to the Minister for his most serious reply. It was an example of how an Adjournment debate on such a difficult matter should be handled. I have no doubt of his sincerity.

I return to the question of the mid-1950s because, as it happens, I was in the Rhine Army and all the Scots Greys were taken to the Hohne site—that is, the site of Belsen. It is firmly in my mind that undertakings were given—obviously, not to us as national service men—that everything would be done to ensure that those responsible for war crimes were brought to book.

From my understanding of the 1950s—and I have made various inquiries—there was an obligation on the German authorities to bring to the notice of the British anyone suspected of war crimes who returned from eastern Europe. My hon. Friend has similar information, and it ties up with the Canadian example. I admit that it is difficult to go back 33, 34 or 35 years, but the Verfussungschutz—the society for the protection of the constitution—and the German Nachrichtensdienst have extremely efficient records. Equally, the Bundeskriminalamt, the German police, are as efficient as any in the world.

What I find difficult to understand is why on earth those organisations were not asked those questions. Was there no contact? Had people simply washed their hands of it in the mid-1950s? As a young national service man in Germany at the time, I can tell the Minister that that was certainly not my impression. The undertaking was given that there would be an effort to get to the root of all these matters—not least from the French, the Americans, the British and—as it related to them—the Russians. I do not understand how a void developed in the 1950s about an agreement dating from 1947 for the Canadians and 1948 for the British.

There are people to be questioned about the undertakings given. One of the people to question is my noble Friend Lord Elwyn-Jones, who knows a great deal about what happened in Germany immediately after the war. My concrete suggestion is that those around at the time should be questioned, so that—

The motion having been made after Ten o'clock and the debate having continued for half and hour, Madam Deputy Speaker *adjourned the debate without Question put, pursuant to the Standing Order.*

Adjourned at nineteen minutes past Twelve o'clock.

House of Commons

Wednesday 29 June 1988

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

SCOTLAND

Ferry Companies (Subsidies)

1. **Mr. Barry Field:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many ferry companies in Scotland receive subsidies from public funds.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton): The Scottish Office provides subsidies to two ferry companies in Scotland: Caledonian MacBrayne Limited and P and O Ferries Limited. In addition, some local authorities subsidise ferry operations.

Mr. Field: Does that answer not show not only the Government's strong commitment to the Highlands and Islands, but the generosity of United Kingdom taxpayers, some of whom live on the Isle of Wight and travel to and from the mainland in unsubsidised ferries, paying the full fare out of their own pockets?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I should mention that this year the provision is for a £6·5 million subsidy to CalMac, to cover its deficit in providing approved services, and for a £4·1 million subsidy to P and O Ferries, to reduce fares to the Orkney and Shetland islands. There are about 100,000 persons living on about 75 Scottish islands, many of which have to be reached by long, difficult and stormy journeys. For example, the journey to Lerwick takes 14 hours. We have a commitment to maintaining that subsidy.

Mr. MacDonald: Will the Minister confirm that Caledonian MacBrayne receives large amounts in assistance from the European Commission towards the construction costs of new ferries and piers, and that such assistance would not be available if it were under private ownership?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: It is certainly the case that the ERDF subsidy is received by Caledonian MacBrayne at present, and it is not at all clear whether it would continue under a different system. My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland is considering future arrangements for CalMac following his decision to privatise the Scottish Bus Group. He has commissioned the Scottish economic consultants Pieda to advise him in that respect. Whatever structure is adopted, it will guarantee the best quality of service, which the islanders rightly enjoy.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: We very much welcome my hon. Friend's statement that the situation of ferries serving the Western Isles and the northern isles of Scotland is quite different from that of ferries serving other areas of the United Kingdom, and his commitment to them. Will he go a little further and say that he will ensure that in any privatisation proposals the special position held by those services, and the way in which they are viewed by the communities they help, will be fully taken into account?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Yes. Whatever proposals may eventually be put forward will ensure the best arrangements possible. In our election manifesto we pledged to continue the substantially increased financial support and upgrading of ferries and terminals that are so vital to the islands. When I met the STUC and the joint shipping services advisory committee, I acknowledged that those services are a lifeline to the islands.

Court of Session (Appeals)

2. **Mr. Menzies Campbell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will state the number of cases on appeal dealt with by the Inner House of the Court of Session in the last five years for which information is available.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information is as follows:

	Number
1983	164
1984	159
1985	137
1986	130
1987	104

Mr. Campbell: Does the Minister accept that, due to the increase in the number of cases in the High Court of Justiciary, Scottish judges are less able to spend time dealing with civil business? Is this not the time for a radical review of the Court of Session procedures, to ensure that civil business is more speedily conducted? In the end, delay is against the interests of justice.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I entirely agree with the hon. and learned Member's comment that delay is contrary to the interests of justice. I confirm that during 1987-88 the number of bench days devoted to criminal business exceeded for the first time those devoted to civil business in the supreme courts. Delays are being reduced, and have fallen from about 10 to eight months, which is an improvement. The 1986 report of the review body on the use of judicial time made recommendations, many of which have been implemented. From April 1987, parties must now appear and give notice that the case will proceed and an up-to-date estimate of how long it will take. That permits more effective planning of court time.

Mr. Foulkes: When a judge instructs a regional council to keep a school open, who is responsible for making the extra money available to keep the school open without the regional council incurring a penalty?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I can tell the hon. Gentleman that that cannot possibly cause further delays in court time.

Greater Glasgow Health Board

3. **Mr. McAvoy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make resources available to Greater Glasgow health board enabling the board to provide geriatric hospital services for all of Cambuslang and Rutherglen within its geographic catchment area; and if he will make a statement.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Michael Forsyth): The Greater Glasgow health board is conducting a major strategic review of its services for the elderly. This will cover the whole of its area, including Cambuslang and Rutherglen. The question of resources does not arise until the review is complete and building plans have been made in the light of its outcome.

Mr. McAvoy: Does the Minister agree that the present position causes great difficulties for people from Cambuslang and Rutherglen travelling to visit relatives? Does he further agree that if the review shows that the needs can be met and that further finance is required, that finance will be available?

Mr. Forsyth: I acknowledge that there has been a long-standing deficiency in geriatric services in the south-east of Glasgow. As I have said, the board is developing its strategies for the services, and we shall certainly take account of the representations that the hon. Gentleman has made about the extent to which those services could be made a priority.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: Given the importance of ensuring adequate services for all the elderly in Scotland, can the Minister tell us whether he is in a position to give a Government response to the Griffiths report and how it will apply to Scotland?

Mr. Forsyth: I can give an answer, and that answer is no. As I have said, the report is important and we are giving it careful consideration.

Mr. Graham: Is the Minister aware of the threat to the Crossroads attendance scheme, which services many geriatric people in Scotland? The abolition of that scheme could throw at least 20 people instantly into residential care, which would cost nearly £3 million a year. Will the Minister give us an assurance that money will be available to ensure that geriatric patients in Inverclyde can at least be looked after?

Mr. Forsyth: I agree that the Crossroads scheme provides a valuable support service for the elderly. Money is available through the MSC, where schemes can be adapted to include an element of training. I understand that there have been problems with some schemes in meeting those criteria. I am happy to give the hon. Gentleman an assurance that I am looking into the matter.

Rating Reform

4. **Mr. Wilson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what assumptions on the likely evasion rate for the poll tax local authorities will be allowed to make when setting a budget.

The Minister of State, Scottish Office (Mr. Ian Lang): It will be for local authorities in setting their budgets to take into account, among other things, the estimated levels of collection of personal community charge. But it seems that the hon. Gentleman's "Stop it" campaign has not stopped it.

Mr. Wilson: I am a relative novice in these matters, but that must be the crassest reply delivered by a Scottish Office Minister since I came here. The Minister is proposing to replace a scheme that results in less than 1 per cent. non-collection with a new system which, on the assessment of every independent analysis, is likely to result in at least 10 to 15 per cent. non-collection. Is no guidance to be given to local authorities on what they can do to take account of that? If not, may we have an assurance that local authorities will not be hectored by the Minister if they take reasonable account of that reality?

Mr. Lang: There is no question of hectoring local authorities. The hon. Gentleman's figures are speculative. The basis of the estimates that we have given so far—I emphasise that they are not forecasts—is the product of rate poundages and local authorities' total domestic rateable value divided by the Registrar General's estimates of the number of adults in each local authority area. On that basis, we estimate that a 7 per cent. cushion is built into the figures, because the actual rate income is less than the total that we have been using.

Sir Hector Monro: Does my hon. Friend agree that the policies of the Labour party and the Scottish National party on the community charge are as confused as their policies on defence? Does he further agree that the very high registration figures, running up to 95 per cent. and more, show that the Scottish people will pay their community charge as laid down in law?

Mr. Lang: My hon. Friend is right. According to the published figures, the registration process seems to be going well and the attempts of Opposition parties to frustrate the future collection of resources for local authorities seem not to have succeeded. I agree about the confusion of the Labour party's policies. So far as I am aware, it has not yet repudiated the policy set out by the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley), which is to keep domestic rates, to add volatility by basing them on capital values and to have a local income tax. I suppose that that is something for something—or something.

Mr. Salmond: Does the Minister consider that overseas service men who have been exempted from poll tax should be included in the evasion rate? How does he explain to people in Scotland that overseas military personnel will be exempt from the poll tax, while tourists coming to Scotland will have to pay the standard charge? Is the Minister saying that the military contributes more than the tourist industry to the Scottish economy?

Mr. Lang: The arrangements that we are contemplating for overseas service men in Scotland are broadly comparable to the existing system under rates, whereby they make a contribution to the resources of local authorities.

Mr. Favell: Will my hon. Friend confirm that the bill for Scottish community charge evasion will fall on Scotland and not on the rest of the United Kingdom, and that if the Scottish Labour party succeeds in its campaign to persuade the Scots to fiddle, they will be fiddling their fellow Scotsmen and not the rest of the United Kingdom?

Mr. Lang: My hon. Friend is right. The only effects of the success of the irresponsible campaign advocated by Opposition Members would be a poorer quality of local services, and the loss of jobs in local authorities.

Mr. Douglas: Notwithstanding the reasons for evasion, will the Minister consider the issue of exemptions? What progress has he made in giving guidance to local authorities about exemption for the severely mentally handicapped? In addition, what discussions have taken place with the Armed Forces Pay Review Body to compensate service men who will now have to pay poll tax, but previously were compensated under the rates system?

Mr. Lang: The arrangements that we are proposing for service men are broadly comparable with those under the present rating system whereby if they have a sole or main residence they will be liable to community charge in place of domestic rates, and if they are living in barracks they will make a contribution through a general fund, handled by the Ministry of Defence, which broadly replaces the present system.

In regard to the severely mentally handicapped, as the hon. Gentleman knows, the Local Government Finance Bill is at present before another place and an amendment in that respect will be debated shortly.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: Will my hon. Friend point out to Opposition Members, including the hon. Member for Dunfermline, West (Mr. Douglas), who told a selection conference that he would not advise his constituents to pay the community charge, that in a democracy all people have to obey the law, and that we disagree with many laws passed by the Labour Government but we obey them?

Mr. Lang: My hon. Friend is right. The level of the community charge will be set by local authorities. The more people who are registered in each local authority area, the lower the charge will have to be.

Mr. Maxton: Will the Minister first take the opportunity to repudiate what the hon. Member for Stockport (Mr. Favell) said about Opposition Members asking anyone to fiddle? Secondly, does he accept the CIPFA report, requested by him and the Secretary of State, that there would be 15 per cent. evasion or non-payment of the poll tax? If he accepts that, will he give a guarantee today that next April the Secretary of State will not use his powers to reduce local authority poll taxes if they are set on the basis of that 15 per cent. evasion rate?

Mr. Lang: I do not accept the figure that the hon. Gentleman has advanced. It is purely speculative. As for the Opposition policy on non-payment, I accept that the hon. Member for Glasgow, Cathcart (Mr. Maxton) in an article in the *Glasgow Herald,* said

> "All responsible politicians have now rejected the case for a mass campaign of non-payment".

Unfortunately, he seems unable to carry all his hon. Friends with him.

Mr. Wilson: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. In view of the unsatisfactory nature of that reply, I beg to give notice that I shall seek to raise the matter on the Adjournment at the earliest opportunity.

Electricity Industry

5. **Mr. Buchan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a further statement on the future of the electricity industry in Scotland.

Mr. Lang: The Government remain firmly committed to their policy of privatising the electricity supply industry in Scotland within the lifetime of this Parliament. The development of our proposals in detail is proceeding well, and draft legislation will be brought before Parliament in due course.

Mr. Buchan: As the Government's own White Paper stresses that a monopoly will continue and that the boards have been efficient, is there any case for proceeding with privatisation other than political dogma and the pursuit of profit by the Government's friends? Above all, is it not incredibly dangerous and reckless, still in the decade of Chernobyl, to put our nuclear power industry in the hands of private profit-makers? It is one of the most dangerous and foolish things that this dangerous and foolish Government have ever done.

Mr. Lang: There is considerable advantage to be gained from the development of two free-standing companies in Scotland able to offer competitive sourcing of electricity to Scottish consumers. The important point about nuclear power is the way in which it is regulated, and we are not contemplating any change in the Nuclear Installations Inspectorate, which regulates these matters.

Mr. Oppenheim: Will my hon. Friend remind Opposition Members that Scotland has electricity consumers as well as electricity producers, and that those consumers employ people and have interests as well?

Mr. Lang: My hon. Friend is right. If we pursued the electricity policy advanced by the Opposition during the last general election campaign, and abandoned nuclear power, electricity prices in Scotland would have to rise by 30 per cent.

Mr. Millan: It is now more than three months since the White Paper was published, and we have still not had answers to the basic questions that it raised. Can the Minister at least give us an assurance that, whatever else happens, the industry will not be allowed to fall into foreign hands? Nobody believes that it will stay under Scottish control, but can he at least give us that minimal assurance?

Mr. Lang: I understand the right hon. Gentleman's anxiety about this matter. It is an important issue and we are considering it carefully. There will be nothing wrong with a measure of foreign investment in the industry when it is in private hands, but I accept the right hon. Gentleman's anxiety about control or ownership being in foreign hands. That is something that we shall consider closely, and we shall announce our decision at the appropriate time.

Mr. Bill Walker: Does my hon. Friend agree that privatisation of the electricity supply industry will give us an opportunity to export electricity to England on a substantial scale? Does he also agree that it gives the Scots an opportunity to invest in the new electricity companies? More important, is my hon. Friend aware that the chairman and senior executives of the British Airports

Authority said on the Terrace last night that privatisation is the best thing that has ever happened to them because of the effect it has had on their management, particularly because it electrifies the management as nothing else does?

Mr. Lang: My hon. Friend is right. I met representatives of the BAA last night and they confirmed to me the great success that has resulted from privatisation. My hon. Friend mentioned the export of electricity to England. That is an area in which the Scottish electricity industry and, therefore, the Scottish consumer, can benefit considerably, provided that electricity can be generated competitively.

Mr. Dewar: How can the Minister describe the privatised companies as free standing if they are to be linked in a joint operating company for nuclear power? Will he give an assurance that, whatever else happens, there will be separate Scottish legislation when the matter comes to the House? That is surely in the interests of good parliamentary scrutiny and democratic control over what the Government are doing. Perhaps I may echo the point made by my right hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Millan). We have asked whether there will be effective plans to limit foreign ownership and more, important, to retain control in Scotland. Continued dodging and ducking on that issue suggests that the Government are prepared to watch an essential public utility being sold to anyone, anywhere, at any price.

Mr. Lang: We are not ducking or dodging anything. There is an appropriate time to answer these matters. Legislation has not yet been prepared or presented to the House. When it has been, that will be the appropriate time to answer these questions. There is nothing anomalous about two independent free-standing companies sharing ownership of a subsidiary. I hear what the hon. Gentleman says about the Opposition's desire for separate legislation. That will be decided at the appropriate time. The hon. Gentleman is as aware as I am that there are many matters that affect the industry both north and south of the border.

6. **Mr. McKelvey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has yet reached any conclusions as to what strategy he intends to adopt in order to ensure that control of privatised Scottish electricity boards remains in Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: The Government will seek to encourage as many Scots as possible to invest in the Scottish electricity industry. We are considering whether a special share or other form of protection is appropriate and our conclusions will be announced in due course.

Mr. McKelvey: When the Secretary of State's surrogate perpetrates the plunder of one of Scotland's assets, will he bear in mind the increasing poverty in Scotland? When he clinches the sale of the century, will he at least underpin the position of those in poverty by seeking to guarantee their right to fuel and their right not to be cut off? We do not want to see the same thing happen as occurred after privatisation of the gas industry, where the number of cut-offs leapt by a huge percentage in England and to a certain extent in Scotland. We want cut-offs to be disallowed.

Mr. Lang: I do not know how the hon. Gentleman can speak about increasing poverty in Scotland when personal disposable incomes in 1986 were 16 per cent. higher than they were 10 years ago. There is no reason why we should depart from the present policy on cut-offs.

Mr. Steel: If control does not remain in Scotland, how will the Minister explain to the House and his constituents that the common tariff principle, which protects consumers in rural areas in the north of Scotland, will not be applied to rural areas in the south of Scotland?

Mr. Lang: I take it from the right hon. Gentleman's question that he welcomes the prospect of control and ownership of the companies returning to Scotland, because, at present, the industries are owned by the Treasury.

Mr. Steel: Answer the question.

Mr. Lang: On the question of common tariffs, the only requirement is for the north board to provide a common tariff, and it will be able to do so as largely a result of the availability of hydro power. There is no requirement at present for the south board to provide a common tariff and we see no need for that.

Mr. Forth: Will my hon. Friend resist the pathetic chip-on-the-shoulder paranoia of Opposition Members? Will he contrast the apparent wish of Opposition Members to restrict ownership of a utility to those within a particular geographic area with their welcome for the jobs generated by external investment in Scotland over many years? Can my hon. Friend tell me how many jobs in Scotland depend on investment by what Opposition Members call foreigners? What confidence does he have that restricting ownership to Scots would do any good for the Scottish economy?

Mr. Lang: Since Locate in Scotland was established in 1981 about 50,000 jobs have been created or safeguarded in Scotland as a result of inward investment. We share my hon. Friend's view that the electricity industry in Scotland is a great potential asset. We believe that by privatising it we will enable Scotland to enjoy the maximum benefit from it.

Nurses (Pay)

7. **Mr. Ernie Ross:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what estimate he has made of the cost of the recent pay award to nurses in each health board area.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: We have already announced that an additional £92 million is to be made available in Scotland to finance the full additional cost of the review body awards. The distribution of that amount among the various health service bodies is currently being calculated. Health boards will be informed of their additional allocations shortly.

Mr. Ross: The Minister will know that he intends funding only the sum above the 4·5 per cent. that he believes to be the rate of inflation. The Grampian health board will receive only 4 per cent. for inflation, which leaves a shortfall of at least £500,000. What will the Minister do about that shortfall?

Mr. Forsyth: The hon. Gentleman chose the worst possible example to make his point. Grampian health board will have the biggest increase of any health board in Scotland. If he wished to seize on a board to make his point, he would have done better to choose his own health board of Tayside, which will not benefit from the 1 per cent. distribution of resources under the SHARE formula. The overall cash increase for health boards in Scotland is 5·8 per cent., which is well ahead of inflation. We have chosen to allocate that in three parts: first, the flat rate 4 per cent. allocation to all health boards, then a further 1 per cent. distributed differentially according to the SHARE formula and then an additional 0·8 per cent. to meet specific priority areas such as breast cancer, AIDS and the waiting list initiative, from which Tayside, along with other boards that are not benefiting from growth on the SHARE formula, will benefit.

Sir Hector Monro: Does my hon. Friend agree that under the last Labour Government nurses' pay fell substantially in real terms? Does he also agree that the fact that thousands of new nurses have come into the Health Service since 1979 in Scotland shows that they believe that the Conservative party accepts patient care as the first priority? Does he further agree that they welcome warmly the new structure for nurses' pay?

Mr. Forsyth: My hon. Friend is quite right. Under the Labour Government nurses' pay fell by more than 20 per cent. in real terms, whereas under this Government it has increased by 44 per cent. in real terms. For those who dismiss such figures as mere statistics, that means that a sister's income will have increased by as much as £5,000 in real terms as a result of this Government being in power.

Rev. Martin Smyth: Will the Minister confirm, or correct, the impression that in granting extra funds to the Health Service to fund nurses' pay the Government omitted from their calculations those nurses who work in hospice care?

Mr. Forsyth: No, I cannot confirm that. If the hon. Gentleman is thinking of hospitals in the private or independent sector, which are run as voluntary hospitals, as many hospices are, they would not be affected by our commitment as they are not funded by the Government.

Mr. Jacques Arnold: Is not one of the greatest advantages of this nursing settlement that it allows us to pay the proper rate for the job, which is needed by qualified nurses if we are to uphold the NHS?

Mr. Forsyth: I agree with my hon. Friend——

Mr. Galbraith: Does the Minister know what his hon. Friend said?

Mr. Forsyth: The hon. Member for Strathkelvin and Bearsden (Mr. Galbraith) asks me what my hon. Friend said. The hon. Gentleman should have listened to what he said. My hon. Friend was making a point which, as a Front-Bench spokesman, the hon. Gentleman should welcome, namely, that, as a result of the pay review body recommendations, nurses who are involved in clinical duties will be rewarded. For the first time we are providing nurses with a career structure that does not take them into administration if they wish to remain at the patient's bedside.

Mr. Galbraith: The Minister should not get so angry so easily. As he knows, I have written to every health board in Scotland on this matter and, as the Minister will also know, because they are now in the habit of making private correspondence available to him, they have replied saying that they do not know how much the nurses' pay award will cost, because of the regrading. If, as a result of the regrading, the award costs more than £92 million, will the Minister make the extra funds available?

Mr. Forsyth: On the point about private correspondence, if the hon. Gentleman has looked at the letter that was sent to him by Grampian health board he will see that it was copied to other Members of Parliament representing that area. My right hon. Friend the Member for Kincardine and Deeside (Mr. Buchanan-Smith) along with others, wrote to me about that.. The hon. Gentleman should check his facts before he makes such allegations.

On the hon. Gentleman's questions about the extra costs of the awards, the overall provision of expenditure for the hospital and community health service took into account——

Dr. Moonie: Yes or no?

Mr. Forsyth: The hon. Gentleman says, "Yes or no?", but the position is that the costs of the review body recommendations were calculated on the basis of the information that was supplied by the boards themselves.

Regional Industrial Policy

9. **Mr. McLeish:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the implementation of regional industrial policy since the abolition of regional development grants on 31 March.

Mr. Lang: My right hon. and learned Friend considers that regional policy will be more cost-effective following changes which included the ending of the regional development grant scheme. Planned spending on regional assistance is being maintained but, through selective schemes, support will be directed to where it is needed.

Mr. McLeish: Is the Minister of State aware that, because of the rush to beat the 31 March deadline for RDG, there is now a considerable backlog of applications and that that could take between one and two years to work through? Is he further aware that, as a consequence of that, business men in Scotland are not getting grants through as quickly as they should, with the result that there is now some doubt about the total budget available for regional selective assistance and regional development grants? Will the Minister look into those matters and report back to the House about the gravity of that situation, which has been caused by the incompetent decision to phase out regional development grants far too quickly?

Mr. Lang: I believe that that decision was correct. It is certainly the case that the number of RDG applications increased before the deadline, as one would expect. The hon. Gentleman underrates the capacity of my Department to handle those applications. My officials are giving them as much close and effective attention as they can. The hon. Gentleman will be aware from the public expenditure White Paper that net provision for industrial support over the three years covered in the White Paper remains largely unchanged.

Mr. Wallace: Will the Minister take this opportunity to clarify the position of the Highlands and Islands with regard to the European regional development fund? Several weeks ago the Foreign Secretary said that a deal had been clinched, although I suspect that that has subsequently been clouded by word from Europe and that that is not the case. Will he clarify the position?

Mr. Lang: As the hon. Gentleman knows, negotiations are continuing. I am under the clear impression that agreement has been reached that the Highlands and Islands will be covered under objective 5 of the European regional development fund, which relates to rural areas.

Mr. Fallon: Is not the biggest single threat to overseas investment in Scotland the regional policy of Mr. Ron Todd, who puts the lads at Dagenham before jobs in Dundee? Would not the Labour party be a little more credible if there was any evidence that it made these points to Mr. Todd?

Mr. Lang: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. The contrast in the successful generation of employment during the period of this Government with that of the previous Government is a dramatic illustration of the Labour party's inability to control its trade union friends.

Mr. Canavan: In view of all the hard work by Central regional council in preparing an updated submission in support of enhanced development status for the Falkirk travel-to-work area, where more than 8,000 people remain out of work, why did the Minister refuse a reasonable recent request for a meeting with council representatives to discuss this important matter? Is it not treating my constituents with absolute contempt for this Minister to refuse even to meet local councillors, who received a better mandate to represent their people than did the Minister, whose Government were rejected by more than three quarters of the people of Scotland?

Mr. Lang: I often meet representatives from many different local authorities. I am sure that if an appropriate issue can be resolved only at a meeting, that, too, can be arranged. The hon. Gentleman will welcome, as I do, the fact that unemployment in Falkirk has fallen by 1,900 in the past year.

Higher Education

10. **Mr. John Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement about the provision of higher education in Scotland.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The number of students in higher education in Scotland has risen steadily since 1979 and is higher now than ever before. Participation rates are above those in Great Britain as a whole. I am confident that our universities and colleges will be able to meet the increasing demands from employers for highly qualified manpower, while still maintaining standards.

Mr. Marshall: Does my hon. Friend agree that these statistics demonstrate how well Scotland is doing through the Union under this Government? Does he agree also that in future it is much more important to increase the number of places in higher education than to maintain a system of student support that is the most generous in the free world?

Mr. Forsyth: I agree with my hon. Friend, who speaks with great authority on these matters as a graduate of St. Andrews university and as a former lecturer at two of our universities in Scotland. He is right to point out the importance of the number of students in higher education, both in universities and elsewhere. Contrary to popular belief, the total funding of our universities has increased during the period that this Government have been in power, partly through their efforts at obtaining funding from elsewhere.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: Is the Minister aware that the previous answer is wholly unacceptable, in that since 1986 the Government have cut grants to the eight Scottish universities by more than £12 million? *[Interruption.]* This year Edinburgh university faces a deficit of £3 million, Aberdeen university faces a deficit of £1 million, and Glasgow university faces a deficit of £500,000, and the hooligan interjections of the hon. Member for Mid-Worcestershire (Mr. Forth) will not change that. In short, the future of many of our brightest Scots is being blighted by this Government through their cuts in education and in funding to universities.

Mr. Forsyth: If the answer is unacceptable to the hon. Gentleman, it is because it is the truth. I accept that a party that has no policies must rely on claim and counterclaim. The hon. Gentleman has a constituency interest in Edinburgh, which, for research funding, is one of the top four universities in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Griffiths: No thanks to the Minister.

Mr. Forsyth: The hon. Gentleman may say that, but last year it received £18 million in research grants and contracts, including the largest grant ever awarded by the Natural Environmental Research Council. The hon. Gentleman should take account of the Fraser of Allander Institute report—an institute that is hardly a friend of the Government—which showed clearly that, in real terms, the income of Scottish universities has increased substantially.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: Does my hon. Friend agree that the emotional exaggeration of the hon. Member for Edinburgh, South (Mr. Griffiths) does nothing to carry forward the cause of university education in Scotland? Does he further agree that although universities in Scotland have been successful in recent years in obtaining funding from sources other than the Government, it would be right to bring to bear on our right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science the fact that there is a limit to that funding? Are not teaching and fundamental research the primary responsibility of Government?

Mr. Forsyth: I agree that the UGC's allocation system applies the same criteria to all universities in Great Britain, which the majority of the Scottish universities wish to continue. It is true that Aberdeen's funding from the UGC has declined by £7·25 million, but it is also true that its total income has increased by £190,000 because of its efforts to find additional money. If the Scottish universities are obtaining more funds and becoming less dependent on the Government, surely that is a far healthier position for them to be in and one in which academic freedom can flourish.

Mr. Norman Hogg: As the Minister has read the Fraser of Allander report, does he agree with its finding that the impact of the cuts in Scottish universities will amount to a cut of £33 million in the Scottish economy by 1990? What is the merit in making those cuts in the academic life of our universities? Who will benefit from cuts that damage academic life, the local economies where universities are based and the economy of Scotland? Who will be the gainers from that policy?

Mr. Forsyth: I am astonished to hear the hon. Gentleman saying that. If he accepts the Fraser of Allander report's conclusion that the overall net resources to Scottish universities have increased because they have found private and other sources, how can he argue that there has been a net loss to the Scottish economy? The net effect is a net increase to the Scottish economy. Do the Opposition believe that only public expenditure creates wealth, and not money that comes from the private sector?

Student Nurses

11. **Mr. Steel:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the figure for the number of student nurses in Scotland; and how that figure is expected to change over the next three years.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Since 1979 the number of qualified nurses employed by health boards in Scotland has increased by more than 30 per cent.—from 26,929 to 35,110. The number of student nurses in training has increased by 15 per cent. At 30 September 1987 there were 8,694 student nurses in training in Scotland. The number of student nurses over the next three years will be affected by a range of factors, but we intend to maintain our splendid record in this area.

Mr. Steel: Does the Minister accept that falling school rolls will make it difficult to keep up the number of recruited student nurses? That is, perhaps, something that the Government can do little about. What effect does he think the poll tax will have on that, given that Scottish student nurses will have to pay it for at least a year, while English student nurses will not? Will that not have a devastating effect on student nurse recruitment north of the border?

Mr. Forsyth: If it were true it might, but it is not true. As the right hon. Gentleman must know, we have responded to the Project 2,000 proposals and there is no question of the status of student nurses in Scotland being altered in 1990 or of there being a period when student nurses are put in a different position from anyone else. The right hon. Gentleman might have taken the opportunity to welcome the new £32 million hospital in his constituency, which will be opened this week by Her Majesty The Queen, which will have a new training centre for student nurses to ensure that student nurses are recruited and equipped to meet the needs of his health board and his constituency.

Mr. Strang: Surely the Minister recognises that as things stand student nurses in Scotland, unlike their English counterparts, will have to pay the poll tax in its first year of operation. Surely that is anomalous and unfair. Are the Government prepared to look at that again?

Mr. Forsyth: That is the unsophisticated version of the argument that the right hon. Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale (Mr. Steel) was making. Student nurses and every other group in Scotland will pay the poll tax before those in England *[Interruption.]*—the community charge—because we are introducing the community charge a year earlier. Why does the hon. Gentleman not ask me about the fact that student nurses will stop paying rates in Scotland a year earlier than in England? *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Bill Walker: Does my hon. Friend agree that Scotland's splendid record for training nurses has been continued and improved under the Conservative Government, and that one of the things that we are so proud of is that in every part of the world one will always meet nurses who have been trained in Scotland? Will my hon. Friend also confirm that nurses, like everyone else who will be required to pay the community charge, will, where their incomes so merit, receive rebates, so all the Opposition's fears are just nonsense?

Mr. Forsyth: My hon. Friend is correct about rebates, but as we have increased the pay of student nurses so substantially they will find themselves moving up the income scale. Those hon. Members who shouted out that student nurses do not pay rates either do not live in the real world or assume that all student nurses live in hospital accommodation, which they do not. The end of rating will be taken into account.

Rating Reform

12. **Mr. Allen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what further representations he has received from England on the poll tax.

Mr. Lang: Eighty seven such representations have been received since 1 January 1988.

Mr. Allen: Is the Minister aware that, despite the Government, Scottish higher education still enjoys a high reputation and that a large number of English students go to Scotland for their education? Is he further aware that the poll tax will act as a disincentive to those students and the reduced number of English students going to Scotland to study may well diminish the number of Scottish Tory Members in the House?

Mr. Lang: The hon. Gentleman's question makes a change from the usual complaint that we receive in Scotland that there are too many English students coming up. But the quality of higher education in Scotland is such that it will continue to attract English students in large numbers. Where they find themselves liable to pay 20 per cent. of the community charge they will be able to console themselves with the thought that they are saving a substantial amount on rates, which would otherwise be included in their rent and rates payment.

Mr. Worthington: The Minister will be aware that there is widespread anxiety that, with revaluation and the introduction of the uniform business rate in England and Wales, the present beneficial treatment that the north of England receives in terms of the amount of rates paid will be even greater and there will be a substantial disadvantage to Scottish industry. The Minister will also be aware that the CBI and the chambers of commerce in all sectors of Scottish public life are worried that the Scottish Office is taking no steps whatever to protect Scottish industry and commerce when that occurs. Will he comment?

Mr. Lang: I shall gladly comment. As a former finance convenor of Strathclyde regional council, the hon.

Gentleman knows better than most the measure of the burden that Scottish Labour-controlled councils have laid on business in Scotland over the years, as a result of which Scottish business pays higher rates than other parts of the United Kingdom. Until we can achieve harmonisation of valuation law and practice north and south of the border, we have introduced index-linking in the Abolition of Domestic Rates Etc. (Scotland) Act 1987 to protect business in Scotland from the depredations of members of local authorities, which is what the hon. Gentleman was formerly.

Lotteries

13. **Mrs. Fyfe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he has any plans to raise money for health boards by means of a lottery.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: No, Sir.

Mrs. Fyfe: In the light of that definite reply, will the Minister explain why he contemplates a lottery for the funding of local authorities?

Mr. Forsyth: I am sorry, but I did not hear the question.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. The reason why the Minister did not——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Mrs. Fyfe.

Mrs. Fyfe: Conservative Members seem to think that they are wits, but they are only half right. I shall repeat my question. If the Minister thinks it is so easy to answer no in the case of health boards, will he explain why he can contemplate such things to provide funding for local authorities, to reward people who pay the poll tax properly?

Mr. Forsyth: I apologise to the hon. Lady.

The national lottery in connection with the collection of the community charge is what I suppose her question relates to. These provisions were introduced in the Local Government Finance Bill at the request of local authorities so that they might have the opportunity to offer incentives to people who agree to pay their community charge in a way that minimises local authorities' collection costs. *[Interruption.]* I can well imagine why Opposition Members are muttering that that is amazing. It did not come across in that way in the press, but the request came from local authorities.

Mr. Salmond: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I hope that this is a genuine point of order and not merely the hon. Gentleman disagreeing with something.

Mr. Salmond: It is a genuine point of order, Mr. Speaker. When the hon. Member for Glasgow, Maryhill (Mrs. Fyfe) was asking her question I heard Conservative Members making racist remarks across the Chamber. I distinctly heard them asking her to put her question in English, which was clearly a racist remark.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Points of order of this sort take up time. Perhaps the hon. Lady was not heard easily from the Government Front Bench when she put her question, but she put it very well.

Mrs. Fyfe *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Other hon. Members want to take part in Question Time, too.

Scottish Financial Enterprise

14. **Mr. Malcolm Bruce:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he last met the executive director of Scottish Financial Enterprise; and what matters were discussed.

Mr. Lang: I met Professor Shaw and other members of the board of Scottish Financial Enterprise on 6 June as part of a regular exchange of views on topics relevant to the financial services industry in Scotland.

Mr. Bruce: Does the Minister agree that Scotland's growing importance as a financial centre is a considerable asset to the country, but one that could be used to greater advantage? Would he be prepared to discuss ways in which this financial strength could increase the number of home-grown locally controlled enterprises in Scotland, and could initiatives be taken to achieve that?

Mr. Lang: I am happy to agree with the hon. Gentleman. Scotland's financial sector has increased by 40 per cent. in employment terms in the past decade. We are increasingly attracting overseas companies to invest in Scotland because of this strength. I know that Scottish Financial Enterprise is perfectly willing to contemplate a greater involvement in parts of Scotland other than just the central belt. We are also developing enterprise trusts around Scotland—there are 40 around the country—with a view to developing a greater commitment and understanding of enterprise.

Mr. Jack: Does my hon. Friend agree that the location of overseas financial institutions in Scotland is making a substantial contribution of our balance of payments and is a vote of confidence in the Scottish and United Kingdom economy?

Mr. Lang: That is absolutely right. It may be because manufacturing productivity in Scotland has risen by 5·6 per cent. a year on average in the past eight years, thus taking us to the top of the league of OECD countries.

Mr. Ron Brown: Speaking in a posh accent for the benefit of *The Guardian* columnists, may I remind the Minister that Jackie Stewart and his Tory friends recently visited Gleneagles? Those individuals repeatedly dodged tax and made sure that the Exchequer did not receive sums of money that should have been spent in Scotland. Clearly, something should be done about that. Will the Minister comment on that abuse?

Mr. Lang: If the hon. Gentleman would like to send me further details of his allegations I shall look at them. As far as I am aware, Mr. Jackie Stewart and some other people recently visited Gleneagles to raise a large amount of money for charity. That is an altogether commendable activity.

Labour Statistics

15. **Mr. Forth:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the Scottish unemployment figures for May 1987 and May 1988; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: The total number of unemployed claimants in Scotland was 346,140 in May 1987 and 296,821 in May 1988. Unemployment in Scotland has now reached its lowest level for six years. The firm downward trend over the last year is clear evidence of the success of the Government's economic policies.

Mr. Forth: In welcoming my hon. Friend's announcement of this excellent trend in the figures, and in trusting that the Opposition will unreservedly welcome it, may I ask him to confirm that the trend is due to the burgeoning success of the private sector in Scotland? Does he also agree that the traditional and historic over-dependence of Scots on the public sector is now firmly behind us and that we can look forward to a continuing fall in unemployment because of the success of the private sector?

Mr. Lang: I entirely share my hon. Friend's view about the reason for this growing success of the Scottish economy. He will be as encouraged as I was today to learn that the latest Fraser of Allander Institute report shows that the Scottish economy is now moving in line with that of the rest of the United Kingdom and expects that over the next five years employment in Scotland may grow by 100,000.

Mr. Dewar: How does the Minister justify his complacent statement that we are performing in line with the rest of the United Kingdom when we have slipped so conspicuously behind the rest of the United Kingdom in productivity, and especially in unemployment rates?

Mr. Lang: The hon. Gentleman is wrong about productivity. I said that it had increased by 5·6 per cent. per annum since 1979. That compares with 3·9 per cent. in the United Kingdom as a whole. Scotland has done remarkably well. The news about the Scottish economy now moving in line with the rest of the United Kingdom came from the Fraser of Allander Institute, not from me.

Rating Reform

16. **Mr. Allen Adams:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what steps his Department is taking to encourage local authorities to seek the prompt payment of poll tax as a lump sum.

Mr. Lang: Following consultation with the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities an amendment has been made to the Local Government Finance Bill in the other place which would give community charge levying authorities in Scotland power to offer discounts or other incentives to encourage community charge payers to enter into payment arrangements of financial benefit to the authority. Such arrangements could include payment by a lump sum.

Mr. Adams: Scottish Opposition Members understand just how much of a lottery Government policy is. Chancellors tend to like lotteries. Will the Minister take this opportunity to try to expunge some of his heinous guilt by saying that he will dissociate himself completely from any local authority attempting to run a lottery for those who can afford to pay their poll tax in one lump sum? That excludes the vast majority of people who cannot afford to pay it in that way.

Mr. Lang: I can assure the hon. Gentleman that the amendment tabled to the Local Government Finance Bill had no effect in changing the law, but simply clarifies it in response to a request from the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities. The provision for lotteries which the hon. Member for Glasgow, Cathcart (Mr. Maxton) described as, "Mad—a really crazy scheme," and which his hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) described as, "A bad joke", was enshrined in the Lotteries and Amusements Act 1976 brought in by the last Labour Government.

Bus Fares

17. **Mr. Wray:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what has been, in percentages and for each year since 1974, the average increase in bus fares in Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Information on bus fare increases in Scotland is readily available only from 1980. I have arranged for a table to be placed in the Library which shows annual fares increases from 1980.

Mr. Wray: Does the Minister agree that since deregulation of public transport there has been a substantial increase in fares and drastic cuts in services in some areas that have brought hardship to large families in perimeter schemes? Does he also agree that all transport should be transferred back to the regional authorities?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: No, Sir. I do not agree with the hon. Gentleman. The figures show that the overall annual fare increases from 1983 have been modest and below the rate of inflation. On routes that are subject to competition, fares have generally fallen or have increased at a rate below the rate of inflation. On other routes fares have generally increased in line with inflation. What has undoubtedly happened since deregulation is that vehicle mileage has increased by 4 per cent. and many innovative services have been introduced. For example, in Fort William, independent Gaelic Bus is competing with the Scottish Bus Group operator, Highland Scottish, and that has led to fare reductions on some routes.

Mr. Leigh: Will my hon. Friend tell some of the carping Jeremiahs on the Opposition Benches that there were plenty of their spiritual cousins south of the border before deregulation, but that since deregulation they have been strangely silent? Perhaps Opposition Members should take a leaf out of our book.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The object of privatisation is to ensure that the services are more responsive to the requirements and needs of the consumer.

Mr. Bahdur Singh

18. **Mr. Galloway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what progress he has made in his inquiries into the treatment in Her Majesty's prison Barlinnie of the late Mr. Bahdur Singh; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I understand that the procurator fiscal has instructed the police to investigate the allegations. It would not be appropriate for me to comment before the outcome of those investigations is known.

Mr. Galloway: Is the Minister aware of the state of anxiety, bordering on real fear, felt in many of Scotland's ethnic communities as a result of this case and others? Can he begin to grasp what it must have been like for a person to spend six months without being able to speak any English, in the cauldron of hate that Barlinnie and other Scottish prisons have become, for no crime other than being in the country without proper documentation? Is there not a better way of treating people suspected of being in the country illegally than slamming them up in Barlinnie for six months, where this particular individual was treated so badly that he ended up dying on a bus in the Punjab when he was released.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The hon. Gentleman has raised a number of very important points. I have asked the Chief Inspector of Prisons to make inquiries and investigations as to whether the prison service ought to be making any improvements in the arrangements for accommodating those who may be deported. I have given details to the hon. Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke), who raised this matter. One of the reasons why the person was in prison for so long was that the hon. Member for Monklands, West had applied on his behalf for political asylum. Thorough investigations were made, and I shall give whatever information is available to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Hillhead (Mr. Galloway).

Mr. Tom Clarke *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I shall take points of order after the statement.

Official Secrets Act 1911

3.31 pm

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Douglas Hurd): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I wish to make a statement about reform of section 2 of the Official Secrets Act 1911.

In a debate in this House on 15 January, I explained that the Government had, since the previous April, been studying proposals for the reform of section 2, and that I hoped to bring forward proposals in the form of a White Paper in June.

I have laid the White Paper before the House today. We have aimed to find proposals that are effective, enforceable and reasonable. We hope to break the deadlock that has beset this question throughout its recent history.

We have taken careful note of the criticisms made of the Government Bill introduced in 1979, together with comments and suggestions made since then, including during the debate on the Bill introduced in January by my hon. Friend the Member for Aldridge-Brownhills (Mr. Shepherd). As a result, the proposals in the White Paper include some major changes to, as well as similarities with, previous attempts at reform. I invite right hon. and hon. Members to read the White Paper in full, but I offer the House now an outline of the main points.

The essence of the proposals is that it would no longer be a criminal offence, as it is under the present law, to disclose any official information without authority. The scope of the legislation would be confined to the very small amount of information that it is in the whole nation's interest to keep secret and which would therefore continue to have the protection of the criminal law. Other information which cannot be disclosed without breaching the trust between Ministers and officials, or which a Crown servant has been instructed not to disclose, would continue to be protected by normal disciplinary arrangements.

Six categories of official information would be within the scope of our proposed legislation. They are information relating to defence, international relations, security and intelligence, the interception of communications, information received in confidence from other Governments and from international organisations and, finally, information which is likely to be useful in the commission of crime or in helping a prisoner to escape from custody. These are the areas which we think the legislation should cover. We do not propose that the criminal law should any longer apply to, for example, economic information, or to Cabinet documents or ministerial correspondence in general. Nor do we now think it necessary for information received in confidence from firms or individuals to be covered by a general law on official secrets. These proposals represent a further narrowing compared with the 1979 Bill.

We think it should continue to be an offence for any person to disclose any information relating to or obtained by interception, or any information received in confidence from other Governments or international organisations, because any such disclosure damages the national interest. We accept, however, that not all information in the defence and international relations categories needs the protection of the law. We therefore propose that the disclosure of information falling within these categories should be an offence only if it is likely to result in specified damage to the national interest.

Proposed tests of damage are set out in the White Paper. Hon. Members will see that they are narrower and more specific than the broad test of serious injury to the interests of the nation which was recommended by the Franks committee and contained in the 1979 Bill. They are designed to leave no doubt about the reasons for including information within these categories in official secrets legislation. The same applies to information likely to be useful in the commission of crime or in helping prisoners to escape. In this case, a test of damage is built into the categorisation, and the prosecution would have to show that the test was satisfied.

For information relating to security and intelligence, we propose a distinction between those whom the nation trusts to carry on their work in complete secrecy, on the one hand, and of those outside the field of operation of the security and intelligence services on the other. For members and former members of those services, together with a number of other people who work in close association with them, we propose that it should be an offence to disclose any information concerning the work of the services or to make any statement which purports to disclose such information. For other persons—that is, for people who are not or who have not been members of those services or in related work—we propose that the disclosure of official information and security intelligence should be an offence only if it can be established positively that it was likely to damage the operation of the security and intelligence services.

If disclosure of information within a particular category is to be an offence only if it can be established that it meets a specified test of harm, then the old question arises—by whom and by what means is this to be decided? The Franks committee, and the Government in that 1979 Bill, proposed that the question should be conclusively settled by ministerial certificate. This was one of the main points of criticism of that Bill. My hon. Friend the Member for Aldridge-Brownhills later suggested that a certificate by a Minister should be reviewable by some other person or body.

Under our new proposals, however, there are no ministerial certificates. The harm likely to arise from the disclosure would be a matter for the court alone to determine on the basis of argument from the prosecution and the defence. In relation to persons other than Crown servants, the prosecution would have to prove not only that the specified harm was likely to arise but that the accused person knew or could reasonably have been expected to know that it was likely to arise. We are putting our trust in the impartial determination of a jury.

The abandonment of ministerial certificates, and introduction of specific tests of harm for the courts to determine, are major changes from previous proposals. They provide a new framework within which other proposals, made in the context of the 1979 Bill, must be considered afresh. I have in mind particularly the suggestions that there should be a defence of prior publication and a general defence that publication was in the public interest. Within the framework of these new proposals, we do not think it right to provide an overriding defence of prior publication.

In our proposals, arguments about the effect of a second disclosure are for the judgment of the courts within the ambit of the specific tests of harm set by Parliament. So it would be possible on this basis for the court to conclude that further harm was unlikely to arise from the disclosure

[Mr. Douglas Hurd]

in question because there had been a previous disclosure which had already caused the harm. But we think it would be wrong to rule out the possibility of prosecution altogether just because the information had already been published elsewhere—perhaps in different form to a different audience. Nor do we think it right to introduce the uncertainty into the law which a general public interest defence would inevitably entail.

These are the main features of our proposals as set out in the White Paper. They represent a considered attempt to find the basis for a wide measure of agreement in replacing section 2, which all of us wish to do. If carried into effect, they should dispel any notion that the criminal law is being used to protect information simply because its disclosure would be embarrassing to Governments, still less merely because it is official information. But the law must firmly address the problem of disclosures which are truly damaging to the public interest, and provide clear and enforceable definitions and procedures to enable this to be done.

The House should have an opportunity to debate the proposals before they are put into legislative form. We shall take careful note also of views expressed outside the House. We shall then want to move to early legislation to introduce a fair and effective alternative to section 2.

Mr. Roy Hattersley (Birmingham, Sparkbrook): Is the Home Secretary aware that many hon. Members—perhaps the majority—believe that prosecution under any Official Secrets Act should be possible only when the disclosure of information has genuinely damaged or prejudiced the national interest? In his statement the right hon. Gentleman has sought to give the impression that he supports that view, and that the arbitrary and unjustified application of an official secrets law is now to be abandoned. A reading of the White Paper, as distinct from the Home Secretary's statement, shows that not to be true.

We welcome, of course, the removal from the provisions of any Official Secrets Act the omnibus clause covering every item of Government information. We agree that many instances of improper revelation are more suitable for internal disciplinary procedures than for the criminal law. Our real concern relates to paragraphs 41 and 42 of the White Paper, which deal with what is called the security services. These are services which in Britain, as in other democracies, should be subject to general parliamentary scrutiny.

Does the Home Secretary recall that many of the repressive and authoritarian acts perpetrated by the Government over the past nine years have been justified by invoking the name of the security services? Is he aware that that catch-all provision still applies? Indeed, in some ways it is reinforced and made respectable. Does the Home Secretary recall that in the debate in January he derided the present law, which is so ridiculous as technically to make the publication of a Civil Service canteen menu an offence? Paragraphs 41 and 42 make it clear that the unauthorised revelation of the menus at Curzon street or GCHQ is to become a criminal offence. Everything that the Home Secretary defines as "relating to security" is automatically the subject of criminal prosecutions without any of the safeguards which his statement has emphasised.

Is the Home Secretary aware that, until the behaviour of the security forces is no longer cloaked in impenetrable legal protection, most people will continue to believe, in the words of paragraph 32 of the White Paper, that information is being withheld and

> "protected by the criminal law merely for fear of political embarrassment"?

Will the right hon. Gentleman confirm that any revelation of any information that is said to be "related to security" —"related to security" on the Minister's own definition —will be a criminal offence when carried out by members of the security service, ex-members of the security service, those who work with them and support them, whose who are in frequent contact with them and those who deal with them on a regular basis? These are all areas—and there are more—that have been discredited by section 11 of the old Act, which the Home Secretary pretends that he is in some way removing and abolishing.

Will the right hon. Gentleman tell the House how the term "relating to security" is to be defined? Unless it is circumscribed with an exact precision, it will allow Ministers to include within that automatic category for criminal prosecution anything that they wish to include. There is no doubt that while the Home Secretary represents this as a libertarian move, Mr. Clive Ponting, who was found not guilty under the existing Act, would certainly be convicted under the provisions that the Home Secretary has set out today.[HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."] I anticipated that a number of Government Members below the Gangway would cheer. They may be pleased by that provision, but they cannot claim that it liberalises the present law.

If Ministers claim that the security services are involved and are connected with almost anything they care to put within that category, none of the defences that the Home Secretary so strongly emphasised will apply. There will be no defence in terms of the national interest not having been damaged. The Minister will have arbitrary and authoritarian power to include within the criminal prosecution section whatever he or his successor chooses to include.

Nor will that test apply—although the Home Secretary gave a different impression in his statement—in one other respect. According to paragraph 51 of the White Paper, the "harmful to public interest" defence does not apply to information obtained from other Governments. I assume that, ironically, that was included to please and placate the United States of America, whose Senate and Congress would not give house room to the proposals that the Home Secretary is making today.

There are many other inadequacies, shortcomings and omissions. There is the absence of a public interest defence, and the fact that although something may already have been published, it can still be the subject of criminal prosecution if its publication is repeated. There is also included within the catch-all, omnibus definition of security matters those things which ex-members of the security services or their associates may say and which happen to be untrue, or are no more than pub talk, but which will nevertheless be automatically regarded as damaging to the public interest.

We shall return to all those shortcomings in the debate. The point that really must be driven home today is this. Today's newspapers, for reasons we can only guess at, predicted a draconian White Paper, and that is what we have been given. However, it is a different White Paper from that which the newspapers predicted—but it is just as bad and just as unacceptable in a free society. Anyone who reads the White Paper rather than relies on and trusts the Home Secretary's statement will know that to be a fact.

Mr. Hurd: The right hon. Gentleman is making an ass of himself. For more than a week, he has been very voluble in talking to and commenting in the newpapers on this subject, on the basis of wholly inaccurate press reports. In particular, they specified in some detail that there had been some great battle in Whitehall, as a result of which it had been decided to introduce ministerial certificates that would in some way be binding on the courts. That was nonsense, and today it is seen to be nonsense.

I do not expect to carry everybody with me, but every fair-minded person will accept that we have gone considerably further in an open direction than was expected—much further than the Labour Government of which the right hon. Gentleman was a member were prepared to go 10 years ago. We are, in effect, confining the criminal law not to matters that might be embarrassing for the Government but to matters that really need to be kept secret if our affairs are to be properly run. In that context, it is right to distinguish clearly between Crown servants and members of the public and those who have, as the White Paper puts it, a special and inescapable duty of secrecy, either because they belong, or have belonged, to the security or intelligence service, or have been one of a number of people whose work connects closely with those services.

It is reasonable, when one is talking about security and intelligence information, to distinguish between disclosures by those people and disclosures undertaken by the press or people outside those services, where the test of damage would apply. The right hon. Gentleman speaks as though the Minister was to decide. Of course it will be the jury that decides in all such cases, and the idea that the jury will decide on a menu in a security service canteen is absurd.

I also think that the right hon. Gentleman is wrong to refer back to the Ponting case. That is always a tricky thing to do. If a similar case came up tomorrow, the prosecution would have to face a higher hurdle than the one that the prosecution had to face under the existing section 2. It would have to show, in the Ponting case, that very specific damage had been done to the defence of the nation, which under the existing section 2 does not have to be shown.

I disagree with the right hon. Gentleman's interpretation, and I believe that he underestimates the change that we propose—a change that means that, for example, a leaked Cabinet paper on housing, however controversial, or the details of a Budget being prepared, will no longer receive any protection from the criminal law. That is a major change, which it is churlish of the right hon. Gentleman not to acknowledge.

Mr. Leon Brittan (Richmond, Yorks): Does my right hon. Friend accept that his proposals will be regarded in large part by Conservative Members as a substantial, much-needed and thoroughly desirable liberalisation of the law, and be welcomed as such?

While some details are of course challengeable, does my right hon. Friend agree that the abolition of the system of binding ministerial certificates will in practice mean that, in the majority of cases, the media will be able to argue that the publication is not harmful and is therefore defensible, either because it has previously been in the public domain or for other reasons? Does he also accept that the vast majority of the people of this country regard it as entirely reasonable that those who embark on a career as members of the security and intelligence services should accept an obligation of secrecy, provided that there is a satisfactory system whereby, within the public service, complaints of abuse, misconduct and impropriety can be properly investigated?

Mr. Hurd: I am most grateful to my right hon. and learned Friend. I confirm what he has said, and the substantial relief that the proposals, if approved by Parliament, will give the press.

My right hon. and learned Friend is right to emphasise his last point, and I understand why he did so. It is important that the individual civil servant should feel confidence in the procedure which provides him with recourse to his permanent secretary and eventually to the head of the Civil Service. In the security service fairly recently we instituted the position of staff counsellor—at present held by Sir Philip Woodfield—who has access to me where necessary. I agree about the importance of those procedures.

My right hon. and learned Friend has himself worked hard in this sphere, and has substantial experience of it. I am, therefore, especially grateful for his support.

Mr. David Steel (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale): I hope that the Home Secretary did not give me a different edition of the White Paper from the one that he gave the Leader of the Opposition. On first reading, the White Paper seems to me to represent a considerable victory for the House, and for hon. Members on both sides who campaigned for the abolition of section 2 and the philosophy that lies behind it—in particular the abandonment of ministerial certificates and the specific tests of harm for the courts to determine. Will the Home Secretary confirm that if the White Paper had been in legislative form Miss Sarah Tisdall, for example, would never have been prosecuted and sent to prison, but would have been subject to disciplinary proceedings?

Does the right hon. Gentleman accept that I have one reservation, which is the lack of the specific public interest defence? Does he accept that circumstances might arise in which a court could decide that harm had been caused, but the House might consider that the harm was overlaid by the public interest in the disclosure?

Mr. Hurd: I am grateful to the right hon. Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale (Mr. Steel) for the main thrust of what he said, which gives the balance rather better than the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) achieved. It is too early to distribute any medals on the subject, but the right hon. Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale is right. Of course we took into account, as I said we would, points made in the House, including those made in the debate in January on the Bill introduced by my hon. Friend the Member for Aldridge-Brownhills.

I am reluctant to hark back to old cases and say what would have happened. Obviously Miss Tisdall would not have been treated as a former member of the intelligence or security services. I do not know whether it would have been thought that what she did could have passed the test of damage. I do not think that one sensibly can speculate about that.

[Mr. Hurd]

The right hon. Gentleman is on to a point that we shall want to discuss at greater length when he talks about the public interest defence. Where there is a test of damage, we have set out certain narrow specific tests of damage which the prosecution will need to establish. In many cases it will find that difficult because the tests are quite high. It would be confusing and difficult if, in addition, we tried to provide in some general form for a public interest defence.

Mr. Richard Shepherd (Aldridge-Brownhills): I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for providing me with an opportunity to read the White Paper an hour or so ago, because the balance of his remarks is confounded by any reading of that paper. It is a most extraordinary document, inasmuch as it makes whole areas of our national life subject to almost mandatory ministerial judgments, without the ability of a court to find otherwise unless a jury decides to put up two fingers. It extends the law into areas to which it did not apply previously, such as where information has been published abroad freely and it was not an offence to publish it here.

It is a very repressive measure indeed. There is no balancing factor—which is very important—of the public interest whereby someone can say that it was necessary for the public to know about something. This goes to the heart of our democratic institutions. The White Paper contains a whole series of very unhappy contentions. It is illiberal and it is not consonant with the experience and practices in Canada, Australia and the United States. I do not know what world we think we live in when we try to bind up a certain class of civil servants so that they may never again speak about anything in their lives in regard to certain duties.

My hon. Friend makes the contention that it will be effective and enforceable, but it will not be reasonable. How will it be reasonable when, for instance, we know that our security services, at the order of the British Government, put limpet mines on Jewish refugees' boats going to Israel? I would argue that it is in the public interest that we know about public policies of that nature. The White Paper will ensure that we know nothing about areas of our national life.

Mr. Hurd: I did not expect to carry my hon. Friend totally, but I must say that I am surprised at the result of his reading of the White Paper. He has fastened on a tiny but important section of official information. He has neglected to observe the great area which is being freed entirely from the reach of the criminal law with substantial influence on how the country is governed. It is a matter on which there will be substantial argument, and I do not agree with him. He is quite right to draw attention to the fact that we intend to bring within the scope of the law cases of matter published abroad as a result of information from this country. The reason for it is set out in the White Paper.

In other respects, as I believe is abundantly right, we are distinguishing between ordinary servants of the Crown and people outside Crown service and those in the particular categories of the security and intelligence services. Of course, as time passes, it will be increasingly possible for members and former members of those services to publish with authority. My hon. Friend knows that that happens already. It is specifically provided for here, and it will continue to happen. There is no reason why it should not happen, but I believe that it should be with authority. I believe that my hon. Friend is attacking not so much the content of the White Paper as the way in which the security and intelligence services are run and their responsibility to this House. That is the crux of what he said, and I shall rest on what I have already said in previous debates on the matter.

Mr. Michael Foot (Blaenau Gwent): One of the events which have led to this pronouncement—it is not the only one—is the prosecution of Mr. Peter Wright for publishing his memoirs in Australia. He alleged that, for a long time, the secret services grossly misused their power and broke the law with impunity.

Would the proposed changes deprive the Government of the defence that they employed in that case? Would the White Paper make any difference to such a case? Does the right hon. Gentleman understand that, if it makes hardly any difference or no difference, the monstrous acts that have been described could be continued without any proper investigation?

One of the reasons for the disturbance in the public mind is that the Government so resolutely persisted with that case, yet they persistently refused to conduct any proper inquiry into gross breaches of the law. Will the right hon. Gentleman explain how his proposals will change that? The Leader of the House will confirm that, a little earlier today, the former Lord Chancellor, Lord Hailsham, spoke in the Banqueting hall about much earlier events. He explained clearly that the main reason for the glorious revolution of 1688 was the gross breach of the law by the Executive. That has happened often, and we want a change in the law to stop it.

Mr. Hurd: If the right hon. Gentleman's point were true, these proposals would end it, as they will perform in line with the traditions of the House. We are proposing that Parliament should clip the wings of any possible abuse of the criminal law by the Executive. We are proposing to narrow, refine and define. That is in the parliamentary tradition which the right hon. Gentleman and the glorious revolution of 1688 embody. We are dealing with the criminal law which, by definition, applies only within the jurisdiction. It is for the right hon. Gentleman to work out what the effect would have been, under the existing law or under our proposals, if Mr. Wright had remained in the jurisdiction.

Mr. John Wheeler (Westminster, North): Does my right hon. Friend agree that any impartial reader of the White Paper would regard it as an extremely liberal and practical document which identifies areas where the law should apply? Crown servants who have a lifetime responsibility to the British people are catered for quite properly, subject to the provision that my right hon. Friend has referred to. Does my right hon. Friend agree that, compared with any recent proposals, particularly those of the Labour party in 1978, this document is a remarkable advance?

Mr. Hurd: I am grateful to my hon. Friend, who has studied these matters deeply. It is noticeable that, when the Labour Government tackled this subject, they proposed to cover Cabinet documents and information on currency and reserves. They proposed to rely on the classification of documents as the test and said that the responsible Minister should review that classification, and that his certificate about it should be conclusive evidence. We have travelled a long way since the Labour White Paper and, compared with it, our proposals are a model of openness and liberalism.

Dr. David Owen (Plymouth, Devonport): Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that paragraphs 38 to 48 of the White Paper deal with the security and intelligence services and rightly treat them as being different from anyone else working in Government employment, but that it would be far easier for the House to accept the purport of them if the right hon. Gentleman and the Prime Minister would look again at the case for parliamentary scrutiny of the security and intelligence services?

As to the other parts of this complex and interlocking package, particularly paragraph 51, on information obtained in confidence from other Governments or international organisations, which goes extremely wide, will the right hon. Gentleman live up to the wording in paragraph 61, which says:

"the Government is of the mind that there should be no general public interest defence"

and recognise that the balance of this legislation depends on there being a general interest defence? Without it, it is fatally flawed.

Mr. Hurd: I am grateful for the right hon. Gentleman's first point about the need to put in a separate category those who owe a duty of trust and secrecy. I agree that we want to consider carefully the definition of categories and the test within each category.

This is White Paper, not legislative, language, and before it goes into legislative language there will have to be a debate. The House will want to consider carefully the legislative language when the Bill appears. I accept that entirely. I do not think that I have anything to add to the point about a general public interest defence.

Mr. Jonathan Aitken (Thanet, South): Will my right hon. Friend accept that, on close reading, the White Paper seems to be very helpful to state prosecutors? The narrowing of the classification of some types of information no longer covered by the criminal law is welcome, but to many of us of a libertarian frame of mind there are still grave defects in certain sections which I hope will be remedied before legislation is brought forward. How does my right hon. Friend justify abolishing by legislation the two principal defences of iniquity and prior publication which, during the past half century, have allowed some juries occasionally to acquit a few defendants, even under the 1911 Act?

Mr. Hurd: I do not think that my hon. Friend is entirely accurate. We are not abolishing any existing defences. When he talks about the public interest defence—he kindly drew my attention to this this morning—he may be referring to section 2(1)(a) of the 1911 Act where there is a reference to the interests of the state. The courts have never interpreted that in criminal cases as to be distinguished from the interests of the Government.

As to prior publication, when there is a test of damage, with the exception of the security and intelligence services, it will be open to the defendant who it is alleged has committed a damage to say, "My disclosure cannot have committed this damage because it appeared in the *Boston Globe* or *Time* magazine a fortnight ago." That will make it that much harder for the prosecution to persevere and to prove that damage done by the second disclosure is as serious as is needed under our proposals. The concept of a test of damage, rather than ministerial certificate and a jury deciding, includes to a reasonable extent the defence of prior publication.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): Why does the Home Secretary make out that there would have been a higher hurdle for the prosecution in the Ponting case? Given her frame of mind at the time, would not the Prime Minister have seized on paragraph 4 of the White Paper, which says:

"there should be a power for the responsible Minister to designate individuals or groups whose duties necessarily involve extensive familiarity with the work of the security and intelligence services as having the same criminal liability as members of these services in respect of the disclosure of information relating to security or intelligence."?

Whatever the view of the Home Secretary, would not Downing street have insisted that Clive Ponting was in that category and therefore he would almost certainly have gone to clink? Where lie the powers of juries? Would not Mr. Justice McCowan have got his way?

A former Prime Minister is present and he ought to look at the case of Anthony Cavendish. Under the juxtapositioning of paragraphs 42 and 47, how on earth would Anthony Cavendish have not got into the greatest difficulty for talking about the destabilisation of the Heath Government?

Mr. Hurd: The hon. Gentleman is wrong on his first point. He is certainly wrong to suggest that the position of the jury would be undermined. One of the features of the proposals is the reinforcement of the role of the jury. It is difficult to hark back and apply new proposals to old cases, but I believe that the prosecution in the Ponting case would have had to prove that Mr. Ponting had, in one way or another, inflicted damage on the defence of the country, as specified in paragraph 49 of the White Paper.

I will not comment on the position of Mr. Cavendish or on what he might or might not have been prosecuted for. The distinction we make between Crown servants and former members of the intelligence and security services is clear and thoroughly defensible.

Mr. Rupert Allason (Torbay): Will my right hon. Friend accept the congratulations of the House on beating his deadline for publishing the White Paper by about 32 hours and for confounding many of the recent press critics? He is to be congratulated on scrapping the idea of ministerial certification. That is a step in the right direction. Apart from the idea of judicial review, it is difficult to know what could be a better arrangement than review by jury.

May I suggest that my right hon. Friend should turn his attention to an issue that he mentioned in an earlier reply —the specific section relating to the disclosure without authority of any information on the work of the security and intelligence services? Would he consider including in the legislation a specific mechanism that gives such individuals the opportunity to obtain clearance so that we do not find ourselves in the difficulties that have been experienced recently? In America there is an effective system, and we have recently experienced two cases of CIA chiefs of station in London being able to publish their books in America and England with official sanction. Surely that is a much more sensible arrangement. Will my right hon. Friend carefully consider including such a mechanism in the legislation?

Mr. Hurd: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his general support. Of course there is a procedure with which my hon. Friend is familiar. The defects do not seem to have impeded him in making some progress in the matter. This is not a matter for legislation, although my hon. Friend will no doubt develop his case. It is a matter for sensible and sensitive procedures which are fair to people who want to write and which also provide a satisfactory means of safeguarding information that has to be safeguarded.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I remind the House that there is another statement after this and a rare opportunity for Northern Ireland Members to take part in a debate. Therefore, I ask for brief questions, and not on points that may already have been put.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): Is the Home Secretary aware that over the past five years there have been revelations from Cathy Massiter, Clive Ponting, Sarah Tisdall and Peter Wright of the political activities of the security services and clear efforts by them to destabilise past Labour Governments? In the light of those revelations, does the Home Secretary accept that his White Paper does nothing towards bringing the security services under political control? Should he not now bring forward proposals to do just that, so that we are no longer faced with the idea of security services, paid by us, which can politically attempt to destabilise a future Labour Government?

Mr. Hurd: That is a separate matter that the House has debated and may one day return to. It is not covered in the proposals. The hon. Gentleman will know that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister set up an investigation into those points and reported the outcome to the House.

Mr. Ivor Stanbrook (Orpington): Is my right hon. Friend aware that the Government have gone too far in entrusting the safeguarding of the public interest to the verdicts of individual juries, which are notoriously liable to return perverse verdicts in cases of this sort? Who better than the elected Government of the day, controlled by the House of Commons, to determine the public interest?

Mr. Hurd: I am not surprised that a note of criticism from that wing of the argument should be sounded. It provides a healthy corrective to some of the criticisms I have received in the opposite direction. My hon. Friend has a point, and that is why originally and for some time successive Governments have clung to the idea that the Executive should have a say, either a decisive or an influential say, before a jury reaches its conclusion. Having reviewed all the arguments, including my hon. Friend's point, we came to the conclusion some time ago that the game was not worth the candle. In spite of what my hon. Friend says, we believe that the best answer in such cases is to rely on the jury.

Ms. Diane Abbott (Hackney, North and Stoke Newington): Is the Secretary of State aware that the White Paper appears to be a liberalising White Paper only in the context of the press stories that have been floated for at least a week previously threatening all manner of draconian measures? Will he take this opportunity to assure the House that the floating of those press stories was entirely fortuitous and was not a deliberate attempt to allow him to bask in the mantle of the great reformer?

Mr. Hurd: We are not as clever as that in the Home Office. It is fairly clear what happened. The persistent critics of the Government on this issue erected, from January onwards, a caricature of Government policy with which they began to frighten themselves. They began to write stories as if we were about to do what they feared rather than what I said in the January debate we would do.

What we are now doing is close to the agenda I then set. It falls exactly within the general approach we have stated consistently to the House.

Mr. Richard Page (Hertfordshire, South-West): I welcome my right hon. Friend's moves to reform section 2 and to bring about the abandonment of ministerial certification. However, will he assure hon. Members and those in the country who are not into the details of the Official Secrets Act that the Government will not hesitate to prosecute to the limit of their legal ability people such as Peter Wright who betrayed their trust in the country?

Mr. Hurd: Decisions on prosecutions are not for me. The balance we want to strike in the proposals includes retaining and making effective the ability to protest, by use of the criminal law, those parts of official information where it is necessary to do that.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): Will the Home Secretary confirm that he is proposing nothing that in future will stop former security officers from retiring overseas and spilling the beans? Can he say what financial implications he believes will result from his proposals, especially in estimated legal costs? Has it ever crossed his mind that the best course would be to repeal the Official Secrets Act and replace it with a freedom of information Act and proper democratic accountability for the security services?

Mr. Hurd: Obviously the criminal law reaches as far as it can and no further. I cannot possibly say whether there are likely to be more or fewer prosecutions. We are trying to define the area in which criminal prosecutions are justified.

The hon. Gentleman's third point is a familiar one which links this subject with freedom of information. Clearly this is not a freedom of information Bill, but I believe that, especially in the areas of the security and intelligence services, no Government have provided more information to the House and the public on such matters than we have.

Mr. Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): First, is it really fair or reasonable that there should not be any public interest defence that a member of the security services can even argue before a court if he has revealed something that was unauthorised, undemocratic and unfair? Does the Home Secretary think that it is fair to say to people, "You can to go court," when the law has taken away all the defences that they might make?

Secondly, can my right hon. Friend say something about paragraph 51, which states that any revelation of any communication from any international organisation, irrespective of the harm which might be involved, will result in prosecution? Does that cover all international organisations and, for example, the masses of documents that we get every day from the EEC?

Mr. Hurd: My hon. Friend's first point is perhaps the one which will be most controversial between the Government and their critics on, as it were, the liberal side, although we are now developing some critics on what one might call the security side. Anybody joining one of the services that we are discussing knows—the background of those services makes this clear—that there is a special duty of trust and confidentiality which remains after retirement. Although that duty of trust can be mitigated by gaining consent for the publication of this or that, it nevertheless remains. That is the point that the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen) made, and I agree with him.

The House will obviously want to discuss my hon. Friend's point about paragraph 51. Where a Government or international organisation passes any information which is to be held in confidence to the British Government, we would lose that confidence and harm ourselves if we could not keep that confidence. That is the thinking behind paragraph 51, and I think it is right.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett (Denton and Reddish): Does the Secretary of State agree that it is fundamental to our democracy that Ministers tell the truth and that Governments obey the law, and that that applies especially to the security and intelligence services? Why should it be a criminal offence for someone to disclose that a Minister has not told the truth or that the security forces or intelligence services have broken the law?

Mr. Hurd: Other remedies and recourses are open to such a person, which are better suited to his position and the trust that he has undertaken. We are talking about members of the security and intelligence services.

Sir Ian Gilmour (Chesham and Amersham): I welcome a number of features in the White Paper, on which I congratulate my right hon. Friend, but does he agree that one of the absurdities of the past few months has been the attempt to stop the British people reading what every other person in the world has been able to read? In view of that, does he not agree that the inclusion of the last sentence of paragraph 26, which states:

> "its further disclosure in this country should be treated in the same way as if the original disclosure had taken place in this country",

is an attempt to perpetuate that very absurdity?

Mr. Hurd: The House of Lords is considering some of the main issues raised by the "Spycatcher" case, so I will not respond to my right hon. Friend's invitation to tread on that ground. I do not think that paragraph 26 falls into the criticism that he made. It is a worry if such circumstances occur. It is reasonable that, as they come forward, our proposals should include that point.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): If members of MI5 assassinate, take part in a seditious conspiracy to overthrow a Government, or seek to lie or to disseminate lies and untruths in a campaign against any political party, and if there are members of MI5 who might, for example, oppose the dominant political philosophy in MI5 at any given time—as Peter Wright pointed out, in 1974 that was support for the Conservative party—and supposing that someone wanted to expose the maggots eating away at our constitution, is the Secretary of State saying that there are no circumstances in which a member of MI5 would be justified in disclosing a serious attack on our constitutional position or disclosing murder and mayhem, which is what Peter Wright suggested in his book? That would be an outrage against any democratic system.

Mr. Hurd: We are not altering the position in that respect except to the extent that we now have procedures in the security service by which someone in that position can have access to me and, through me, to the Prime Minister. That is the doctrine of ministerial responsibility for those services. The House has often discussed that and I believe that it is the correct way of establishing responsibility for the running of services where the ordinary cut and thrust of public debate obviously does not work and is not justified.

Mr. Alastair Goodlad (Eddisbury): Does my right hon. Friend agree that the proposal to give absolute protection to security and intelligence information follows closely the proposals in the 1978 White Paper of the then Labour Government? Does he also agree that the proposal that the determination of harm should be left to the courts represents a great advance on the preferences of the previous Labour Government for dealing with these matters by ministerial certificate? Will he apply a low test of seriousness to the effusions of the Labour party?

Mr. Hurd: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. It is sensible to bring a touch of historical proportion to such matters. The House as a whole has moved on in 1988. The caricature that I am trying to resist and demolish is the caricature which says that, whereas opinion as a whole has moved on, the Government are stuck in some pre-1978 or pre-1988 position. We are now giving a lead in producing a set of proposals which, in many respects, are the most liberal and most open that have been suggested.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): In what way would the new proposals enable somebody like me—or, more likely, somebody like my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell)—to demand that the right hon. and learned Member for Richmond, Yorks (Mr. Brittan), the then Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, tell the truth about the Westland letter? Will the new proposals enable my hon. Friend to get the truth from the Prime Minister without being constantly told that she has nothing further to add? Will they help him to get the truth from the Leader of the House, which is what he has tried to do on previous occasions? If this had been in operation a decade ago, would the proposals have enabled me to ask the then Foreign Secretary, now the leader of the provos, the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen), to tell me the truth about the £1 billion Chevaline expenditure which was carried through by the Lib-Lab pact?

Is it not true that this so-called liberal Home Secretary kidded his troops the other Friday when he told them not to back his hon. Friend the Member for Aldridge-Brownhills (Mr. Shepherd), saying, "Leave it to me, I will introduce some liberal legislation"? Well, we have got it, and I do not think it is liberal.

Mr. Hurd: I will need to look carefully at the matter, but I do not think that anything in our proposals will

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either add to or detract from the parliamentary powers of those two Members of Parliament, which remain substantial.

Mr. Spencer Batiste (Elmet): Will my right hon. Friend confirm that nothing in his proposals will inhibit the proper disclosure by civil servants of authorised information? Is he satisfied that the line of authority which is necessary for such disclosure is sufficiently well defined to avoid misunderstandings in the future?

Mr. Hurd: That is a good point. My hon. Friend is touching on a point that has not yet come out of our exchanges. As whole areas such as the preparation of the Budget, or the discussion of a major and perhaps controversial policy in Cabinet, are withdrawn entirely from the scope of the criminal law, the Civil Service will want to look carefully, as would any organisation, at its methods and procedures of discipline because it is on such procedures that it will have to rely in the future if it is to preserve the kind of information which any major organisation wants to preserve within itself. Therefore, it will be in the same position regarding the great bulk of Government information, as is a newspaper, a political party or a company. It will therefore have to consider its procedures, including the point touched on by my hon. Friend, relating to gaining authority for public disclosures.

Mr. Robin Squire (Hornchurch): Does my right hon. Friend accept that there is a presumption in a democracy in favour of all information gathered at the public's expense being made available to the public, subject, obviously, to certain carefully defined areas, such as national security? Does he feel that the White Paper reflects that presumption?

Mr. Hurd: Yes, the White Paper reflects that presumption and it moves the boundary markedly in the direction of that presumption.

Mr. Tim Devlin (Stockton, South): I congratulate my right hon. Friend on abandoning ministerial certificates and on funnelling down secrecy to the six defined areas. Since he mentioned history, how long will those six areas be kept secret? How will the 30-year rule operate, or is he proposing some new rule for when information will become available?

Mr. Hurd: I know of no proposals to change the 30-year rule with the exceptions and procedures built into its operation.

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): Is my right hon. Friend aware that many of us on this side of the House welcome the fact that members of the intelligence and security services must be covered as proposed in the White Paper? Is he further aware that many individuals who work on sensitive matters, who often undertake dangerous activities and are employed on most peculiar engagements, have poor pension schemes? Perhaps more should be done in that area.

Will my right hon. Friend look carefully at prior publication? Is it not well known that one way of disclosing information is to have some obscure publication printed, for example in Eire or Bangladesh, and then to have it taken up by a major paper in the Western world? In that way matters which should not be disclosed are disclosed, as has happened in the past. Is my right hon. Friend satisfied that these measures will take care of that?

Mr. Hurd: I note my hon. Friend's first point and the importance that he attaches to it. His second point is just and is a reason why we have not included a complete defence of prior publication. As I said in my statement, we can imagine circumstances in which information is published in a completely different form to a completely different audience.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett (Pembroke): Is my right hon. Friend aware that ordinary British people will fully appreciate the principle concerning the security services and have never understood the fuss made by the media? Will he clarify two points in his statement? First, how far will journalists' freedom be extended by the White Paper? Secondly, what will be the position of senior civil servants on Budget secrets? It is possible to envisage disclosed Budget secrets destabilising the financial market in the United Kingdom and abroad.

Mr. Hurd: My hon. Friend may be right on the second point. We are not proposing to keep or extend the criminal law in that area, except to the extent that the secret may be a matter of defence security or intelligence, which I doubt. Therefore, protection of information on that subject will rely on the disciplinary arrangements within the Civil Service.

There will be a substantial change in the effect of the law on editors and journalists. Only restricted categories of information will be covered and there will be a specific damage test for defence, security, intelligence and foreign affairs. There will be no ministerial certificates and it will no longer be an offence merely to receive information. Where there are damage tests, the prosecution will have to prove that the damage was likely to be caused and that the defendant, jounalist or editor, knew or had reasonable cause to believe that it was likely to be caused. That position is not only safeguarded but enhanced.

Mr. Anthony Beaumont-Dark (Birmingham, Selly Oak): We all know that grandees, meaning Privy Councillors, always have access to documents before mere humble Back Benchers, and we have got used to that. I should be fascinated to hear from my right hon. Friend whether some Back Benchers are to be given documents an hour or two before the rest of the House. It may well be that an excellent precedent is being set. If this is a precedent so that we can all get documents ahead of time and can take a useful part in debate, so much the better, but who will be the sheep and who the goats? It would be lovely to know. Let us all be sheep or all be goats, but let us not all be led into a position where the Home Secretary can choose those whom he thinks are worthy of having his documents.

Mr. Hurd: I shall not go into the business of choosing between grandees. So far as I am aware, no hon. Member received a copy of the White Paper before——

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: My hon. Friend the Member for Aldridge-Brownhills (Mr. Shepherd) did.

Mr. Hurd: Will my hon. Friend let me finish my sentence?

—it was laid in the usual way in the Vote Office.

Mr. Hattersley: May I say how much I wish that every hon. Member who asked a question had read the White Paper instead of having to rely on the Home Secretary's statement. He was asked several questions about definition, but none has been answered.

Paragraph 47 gives Ministers the right to designate groups and individuals who will not be subject to the normal protections and defences which are stipulated in other parts of the White Paper. Will the Minister alone make that designation? I ask him not to speculate on the groups but to answer the specific question: will the right to designate groups and individuals not subject to the normal protection be up to Ministers alone?

Mr. Hurd: I am glad that the right hon. Gentleman, by implication, acknowledges the strength of the normal protection which does not exist yet. In designating, the Minister will be bound by the purpose of designation which is set out in paragraph 7—*[Interruption.]* Not at all. It is not a power at large, but a power to designate individuals or groups whose duties necessarily involve extensive familiarity with the work of the security and intelligence services. That is a specific point which the House will undoubtedly want to discuss in detail, and it seems entirely reasonably within that definition.

Furniture (Fire Resistance)

4.35 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary for Industry and Consumer Affairs (Mr. John Butcher): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I should like to make a statement about the fire safety of furniture.

On 11 January 1988 my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Corporate Affairs announced the Government's intention to make new regulations about the flammability of domestic upholstered furniture. Draft regulations were circulated for consultation on 1 March and comments invited by 12 May. I am now in a position to announce the changes we propose to make to the regulations as a result of this consultation. I intend to lay the regulations before the House in July.

My hon. Friend announced that the regulations would come into operation on 1 March 1989 for the filling requirements and on 1 March 1990 for covering fabrics. I intend to retain these dates, but to require that furniture supplied to retailers should meet the foam-filling requirement from 1 November 1988. This reflects progress in the changeover to safer materials and gives the retailers a four-month period of grace which will help them to clear existing stocks.

I have decided that covering materials must meet the match resistance test by 1 March 1990. However, some fabrics which are difficult or impossible to treat, but whose burning characteristics are less likely to ignite the filling materials, will be permitted, provided they are used with interliners or barrier cloths which meet the ignition source 5 test. The regulations will specify which materials will be acceptable when used with interliners, and the covering materials concerned will have to meet the cigarette resistance test. This will enable the trade to continue to use many of the fabrics at present on the market, but will not prejudice the level of safety to be achieved by the original proposals.

On second-hand furniture, I have decided that a proposal from enforcement and fire safety organisations should be adopted. From 1 March 1993, all trade sales of modern second-hand furniture will have to comply with the full requirements of the regulations. But from 1 March 1990 to that date the regulations will permit the sale of second-hand upholstered furniture which complies with the 1980 regulations. Private sales of second-hand goods are excluded from the scope of regulations made under the Consumer Protection Act 1987. I also intend to introduce an exemption from these regulations for sales of furniture manufactured before polyurethane foam was generally introduced as a filling material, which was 1950. Furniture made before that date may be traded as collectors' items, but does not contain the material we are banning. This exemption also means that sales of antique or period furniture and reupholstery of antiques are excluded.

For furniture built into new caravans and for garden furniture, the foam requirement will apply from 1 March 1990, because those two sectors of industry have a seasonal pattern of sales that makes it unreasonable to require them to meet the 1 March 1989 deadline. Second-hand caravans will be excluded. The regulations will contain a number of miscellaneous provisions covering specific matters, such as stretch covers, pillows and cushions.

The EC Commission has not raised formal objections, although some member states did object to our original

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proposals. The Commission therefore asked that a number of points should be taken into account. In the changes that I have announced, I have met many of those points, and I am satisfied that the regulations will go no further than is necessary in the interests of protecting consumers.

The new regulations have a cost for industry and for the consumer. It would be wrong to underestimate the task that confronts industry in meeting the new requirements within a very short time scale, but there has been a positive response to the challenge. A substantial majority share the Government's determination to ensure that the catalogue of death and injury from fires involving domestic upholstered furniture should be reduced as quickly as is practicable.

Mr. Tony Blair (Sedgefield): Will the Minister join me in paying tribute to all local authorities, trade unions, fire officers, hon. Members and those in industry who have fought so long and so vigorously on this issue?

I welcome the regulations in so far as they ban the use of killer foam in furniture, bedding and other items, and the phased extension of the ban to second-hand goods, which represents a major advance in fire prevention. However, we are dismayed at the entirely unwarranted exemption of whole categories of ignitable covers from the new tests. The view of fire and of trading standard officers to whom I have spoken is that such an exemption from the regulations will make them seriously defective and will open a potential major loophole in fire safety and enforcement.

Does the Minister recall that the history of the campaign is of initial hostility and scepticism in Government, which has been overcome only by sustained campaigning and publicity? Does he further recall that last October we were told that it was "wholly impracticable and undesirable" to ban standard foam, yet in January he banned it? Does he remember that on 11 January we were told that it was virtually impossible to ban second-hand goods, yet today he has banned them? How many more meals of ministerial words must he eat before the Government listen to the fire safety experts who have been proved right?

Does the Minister realise that tests have shown that ignitable covers, even over interliners, can be just as dangerous? Once burning, the covers can overcome fire-retardant material and, more important, become a fire point for other materials such as curtains and carpets.

Is it right that the regulations will allow, without hindrance, non-fire-retardant foam to be made for export? Secondly, will the Minister give a categorical assurance that he will overcome opposition to the regulations, not just in the EEC, but as they will be affected by the completion of the single European market in 1992? Thirdly, does he agree that we need a national programme to encourage smoke detectors in the home, including the amendment of building regulations to enforce installation in new buildings and in multi-occupation homes, where many of the worse fires occur? Fourthly, does he accept that the trading standards officers who will have to enforce the new regulations must have adequate resources to allow them to do so? Is not that absolutely central to the enforcement of the regulations?

Each year 700 deaths and 7,500 injuries are caused by home fires. Does the Minister realise that the proposals will have a huge impact on that carnage only if the Government learn from their past mistakes, remove themselves from the pockets of vested interests in the trade and put themselves in the hands of consumers?

Mr. Butcher: There has been a very intensive and comprehensive consultation period, during which we listened especially to the fire safety officers and those who will be concerned with enforcement of the regulations. I hope that the hon. Gentleman recognises that one measure in the regulations will henceforth be known as the "Graham compromise"—it relates to second-hand furniture.

I shall restate the context in which the regulations have been brought forward. Even before them, Britain had the most rigorous furniture fire regulations regime in Western Europe. The regulations will make that even more rigorous. It is around that position that the House has coalesced during the past four or five months.

I listened carefully to what the hon. Gentleman said about covers, but some materials are difficult to make match resistant without destroying their qualities. We are stipulating that they can be used over interliners that comply with the very strict ignition source 5 as an alternative to compliance. The effect is still rigorous, but the consumers will have a choice. That is a logical and sensible approach. The exemption is not available to the broad range of mainly synthetic fibres, and in general the predominantly natural fibres burn with less heat than synthetics.

I am satisfied that what we are doing today is compatible with the movement towards 1992. It may take five years for the Commission to come forward with proposals and to set minimum standards. We are already ahead of western Europe, so we have a good chance of complying with any future minimum standards.

The hon. Gentleman will know that smoke detectors are a first issue matter not for me, but for the Home Secretary. Like the hon. Gentleman, I am closely monitoring the experiments in the Granada and Tyne-Tees television areas. If he finds this an agreeable response, I shall consider using my safety campaigns under "Think Safety First", and include in them an element that could raise awareness of safety in the home.

We have consulted the trading standard officers and I think they will welcome the clarity of the regulations, because clarity makes life much easier for them.

Mr. Kenneth Warren (Hastings and Rye): I welcome my hon. Friend's statement. He did not refer to the trade's reaction to his proposals, although there has been a tremendous amount of lobbying by the trade. Will he consider discussing the regulations with our right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport, because there are equal dangers on public service vehicles, especially aircraft and trains?

Mr. Butcher: My hon. Friend will be aware that a number of companies are already making strong efforts to comply with what they anticipated would be incorporated in today's statement. There has been a positive reaction. We have stuck to the timetable announced in January and I have provided an extra four months of grace for the manufacturing of furniture to the new foam requirements. On balance, that is about right. I have spoken at length with the manufacturers and I think that they can cope with the requirements without the viability of the industry being called into question.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce (Gordon): The House welcomes the Government's proposals. However, does the Minister accept that the exemptions and the proposal to categorise materials rather than to provide a safety test for the finished article will cause great concern? Many of those involved in safety believe that people are looking for certification that the combination of fabric and material in a piece of furniture will be safe. Will the Minister ensure that during the transition stage for both new and second-hand furniture, the regulations provide for clear labelling so that people know whether they are buying furniture approved under the new regulations?

I support the representations—although not made to his Department—for the wider installation of smoke detectors. I am sure that that would make a major contribution to preventing death, because it would allow people to get out before the effects of the smoke became a fait accompli.

Mr. Butcher: The whole thrust of the argument behind the regulations is how, in practical terms, we deliver a much safer range of furniture to domestic users. If the hon. Gentleman examines carefully the import of what we are saying today, he will see that even the so-called concessions have been made in a way that provides an incentive for those dealing in second-hand furniture, such as caravans or garden furniture, to move to much safer items. The old tests—the cigarette tests—still apply to those materials that are exempt. Where there is a combination of materials, we are still talking about the ignition source 5 test for the barrier cloth which must be placed under those materials which manage to get on the exemption list.

Sir Giles Shaw (Pudsey): Will my hon. Friend accept my congratulations on the speed and effectiveness with which he has moved on this issue? I have no intention of following the churlish reception of his statement by the hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair), but I would like clarification on three points.

First, I greatly welcome the decision on second-hand furniture, but is there a way in which advertisement regulations can be used to ensure that such furniture is appropriately described in the period when it does not contain non-inflammable material?

Secondly, is it not a fact that the cloth being used will significantly delay flammability, so there is a significant improvement in safety as a result of my hon. Friend's consequential decision on the use of interlining cloth?

Thirdly, all fire services have been lobbying hard on this matter, but it is not sufficient for my hon. Friend to say that smoke detectors are a matter for my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary, which, indeed, they are. There could surely be a more positive interdepartmental effort to apply smoke detectors.

Mr. Butcher: I can reassure my hon. Friend that we are closely engaged in monitoring the present smoke detector awareness campaigns. I said earlier that I had a legitimate interest given my responsibilities for safety in the home generally. On examination of the regulations, my hon. Friend may note that, for example, the caravan industry is prepared voluntarily to put smoke detectors in second-hand caravans when they come back onto the market, and I welcome that. It would be misleading advertising for a dealer to specify that an item that he was selling satisfied the requirements if it did not. On balance, the interplay between second-hand sales through dealers and private sales between individuals is about right.

Mr. Ian McCartney (Makerfield): First, I welcome the Government's decisions on the implementation date and on second-hand furniture, about which I introduced a ten-minute Bill. However, I am worried about the concessions being given to a small number of fabric manufacturers who have been given the potential to drive a coach and horses through the regulations, and it is important that the Minister should answer a number of technical questions. *[Interruption.]*

If the hon. Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton) listened to someone who knows something about fire safety, he might stop making ignorant remarks. Hon. Members on both sides of the House are trying to prevent several hundred deaths a year, and I am trying to be positive, not to attack the Minister personally.

Will ignition source 5 tests relate to combustion modified high resistance foam or standard polyurethane foam testing methods? It is important that the barrier test be done under the standard polyurethane foam test and not under the combustion modified test which is already connected to the ignition source 5 test which would therefore be unable to establish whether the combinations were safe.

Secondly, it is important for the Minister to understand that unless those combinations are proved to be safe, he is simply transferring the secondary source of fire from the filling to the curtains, carpets and other materials in the bedroom or living room. It is essential that regulations cut down not only fires caused by foam-filled furniture, but the secondary causes of fire. If we allow ignitable covers in any circumstances, the fires will continue; they will not ignite the foam but they will ignite other items such as curtains and carpets and the death rate will continue. The Minister should state clearly that such materials will be tested.

Mr. Butcher: First, I thank the hon. Gentleman for his contribution to the debate over a long period. I also recognise that he has been responsible for bringing a number of fire safety commentators to my office, and some positive suggestions were made during those conversations.

I hope that the House will not get the matter of materials out of context. We have not made a major and massive concession, because we are talking about materials such as printed cotton, which includes chintz, and about linen and wool. As I said earlier, in general, such predominantly natural fibres burn with less heat than synthetics, but they still have to be stretched over an ignition source 5 barrier material, and that is a rigorous requirement. The ignition source 2 test for non-foam fillings is also appropriate because those non-foam fillings burn with different propensities and my advice is that that test is suitable for those other mixtures.

Mrs. Elizabeth Peacock (Batley and Spen): The House and many companies in Britain concerned with the industry will welcome my hon. Friend's statement, because, as he knows, there has been much uncertainty recently. However, many companies in Britain already

[Mrs. Elizabeth Peacock]

produce upholstery fabrics that are way ahead of the Minister's regulations and are ready at this moment to put their fabrics in front of blow torches at high temperatures in the knowledge that no flame will go through them. If the Minister would like to see that experiment, as he has said in the past that he would, that can be arranged.

Previous uncertainty will now be allayed a little. However, will my hon. Friend assure the House that the exceptions that he has made will be monitored closely since we do not want to see another aeroplane disaster, such as the one in Manchester, after the new regulations have been laid?

Mr. Butcher: I can give my hon. Friend the assurance that she seeks. When we lay the regulations, there will be a list of materials in the category in question, but, of course, we shall continue to monitor the matter. My hon. Friend has vividly illustrated the strong clashes of opinion that exist on this issue. I do not want the regulations to be rigid or inflexible, so when the list is produced we shall monitor it and we shall take advantage of any technological breakthroughs that permit us to amend it.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I remind the House that this is an important day for Irish Members, so may we have brief questions, please? There will be a debate which will allow hon. Members to make longer contributions.

Mrs. Ann Taylor (Dewsbury): Does the Minister accept that many domestic British manufacturers have put a great deal of time, energy and investment into perfecting flame-resistant fabrics? Will not his exemptions undermine their work if they are too wide? Is it true that many of the manufacturers of the materials that he says may be exempt are based outside this country, and that there is a particular problem with imported material? Is not one of the reasons for his exemptions a desire to satisfy importers? Surely he should be putting safety first and supporting manufacturers who have invested so much in flame-resistant materials, especially as many of them are located in areas of high unemployment.

Will the Minister clarify the position on stretch-fabric material makers, who have asked for an exemption in certain circumstances if the stretch fabrics are to be used as secondary covering?

Mr. Butcher: I agree with the hon. Lady that the suppliers of foam and materials have made great efforts, and I pay tribute to them for that.

As for whether the exemptions are too wide, as I have just told my hon. Friend the Member for Batley and Spen (Mrs. Peacock), the list of exempted materials will be reviewed periodically, which is as it should be.

Imports will have to comply. Nothing in my statement started from a consideration of importers—that was the least of my considerations.

Stretch covers are less of a potential contributory hazard than loose covers, because of their essential construction in respect of fibre type, weight, and use in stretch form, but they will have to meet a match-resistance requirement when tested over combustion-modified foam. I hope that is helpful.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton (Macclesfield): I congratulate my hon. Friend on his realistic statement. He has clearly listened to the industries that are involved in furniture and has appreciated the problems of employment, of investment and of the industries, which are considerable exporters from this country.

Does my hon. Friend accept that his statement makes no concession to the furniture fabric manufacturers? I refer particularly to the ad hoc committee of 21 on the timing of the implementation of these regulations.

Is my hon. Friend prepared to make any concession to fabric manufacturers for the huge additional costs that they are likely to incur in meeting the regulations, which he will lay before the House in the near future?

Will my hon. Friend confirm that he has received a letter from the European Commission requesting more time for the industry to meet the proposed requirements that he has announced?

In conclusion, I thank my hon. Friend for listening to so many members of the industry who are concerned about employment, investment and the future of manufacturing industry.

Mr. Butcher: I am afraid I cannot offer my hon. Friend any hope that the timing will be changed. I am anxious to comply with the timetable that was first announced by my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Corporate Affairs. That is what the House expected of me and that is what it is my intention to deliver.

Industry can live with this regime. The balance is about right. There is no erosion of safety requirements, which the whole House has requested vigorously for some time.

I do not believe that concessions to the manufacturers are in order. Some manufacturers of furniture are already marketing furniture which they claim in their promotional material will comply with the new requirements.

I thank my hon. Friend for the vigorous way in which he has pursued his interest in this issue. I hope that he will agree that the formula that has been brought forward is primarily concerned with safety, as all these measures are. But in the case of safer fabrics, they allow some flexibility while still including a rigorous test for the interliner.

Mr. Jim Callaghan (Heywood and Middleton): I congratulate the Minister on his statement, but may I point out that on 1 January I invited him to try to evaluate the claims of British Vitafoam, an international rubber company based in my constituency, for its research and development into fire-resistant material? Is he aware that in the past month the Member of the European Parliament for the area, Michael Hindley, and myself were invited by the directors of that company to see for ourselves the research and development that it had achieved in these projects?

May I invite the Minister, in the light of what we have seen, to visit the factory to see for himself exactly what the firm has done? If he cannot come personally, will he ask the directors to send him the video that they have produced on their research and development?

Mr. Butcher: I should like to respond positively to what the hon. Gentleman has said. He could make a beginning by bringing two or three of the company's representatives to my office for an initial presentation, to which I should gladly agree.

Mr. Irvine Patnick (Sheffield, Hallam): Is my hon. Friend aware of the shortage of manufacturers who make the flame-proofing treatment used on fabrics, and that there is a need for more companies to do that work? Is he aware of the difficulties with man-made fabrics, which appear to present a larger problem than the natural materials that are used? What steps is he taking to ensure that firms look into flame-proofing and do something about man-made fibres?

Mr. Butcher: Regulations sometimes change market conditions, and that will happen as a result of this announcement. I believe that companies will react and develop products and capabilities. There are real pressures and they must be coped with. I am satisfied that most companies that are affected will act.

There is no doubt that the regulations bite hard on synthetic fibres. I am in no mood to change one semi-colon of the parts of the regulations that deal with them, as they have more dangerous properties than some natural fibres.

Mr. Keith Bradley (Manchester, Withington): The Minister spoke of the need for clarification of the regulations for trading standards officers. What procedures should such officers adopt to ensure that pieces of household furniture have been fitted with an interliner or barrier cloth underneath one of the exempted fabrics?

Mr. Butcher: The hon. Gentleman has asked me to project working practices, but all I can say is that we shall work closely with those who are responsible for enforcement, as we have done throughout the consultation period. I pay tribute to them for the way in which they have deployed their arguments with my officials.

I shall carefully examine what the hon. Gentleman said. If the problem that he anticipates arises, I shall return to him with my proposals.

Mr. Iain Mills (Meriden): I offer my hon. Friend congratulations on good regulations; it is excellent that second-hand furniture has been brought in. Will he consider more resources for trading standards officers to implement the regulations?

Mr. Butcher: I am willing to consider anything, within reason. I recently met representatives of trading standards officers. They told me that their work load was growing ever heavier. They therefore legitimately asked me about resources. The regulations are clear and should not be difficult to enforce, but I am continually examining the resources that are available to these agencies.

Mr. Eddie McGrady (South Down): Like other hon. Members, I warmly welcome these regulations for safety in the home. Does the Minister intend the regulations to apply to Northern Ireland?

Mr. Butcher: I see no reason why Northern Ireland should be exempt. Benign measures such as this are often to be welcomed in Northern Ireland—*[Interruption.]* I suspect that not many measures that are unanimously believed to be benign can be announced, but I hope that there is unanimity in this case. I want the regulations to be applied in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Gary Waller (Keighley): As regards material covers, does my hon. Friend agree that it is a matter of concern that work done by trading standards officers shows that fibre-content regulations are widely flouted, particularly in imports? As that creates difficulties for consumers who are anxious to buy safe materials to cover existing furniture, will my hon. Friend emphasise his commitment to using existing powers on fibre-content safety, particularly at the point of entry to this country, in the interests of consumers who are concerned for their safety and that of their families?

Mr. Butcher: I think that there is already awareness in Europe of the import of these regulations, and we shall do our utmost to see that European manufacturers have no excuse for being ignorant of these requirements. Imports will have to comply. My hon. Friend mentioned covers. We are talking about a match test that will apply to both loose covers and covers that come already fitted to the furniture.

Mr. Tony Lloyd (Stretford): I shall not join in the congratulations to the Minister or in his self-congratulations, because the Government have been dragged to this position because of the deaths earlier this year that aroused such anger in all parts of the House and in the nation. He has not addressed himself to two important questions. One was put by my hon. Friend the Member for Makerfield (Mr. McCartney) who asked whether the test on interliners would be carried out using standard foam. If they are not carried out in that way they will be worthless.

The second question was put by my hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Withington (Mr. Bradley) who asked about the way in which trading standard officers would know about interliners in imported furniture. That is not a trivial matter of detail but is fundamental and the Minister should have had the answer when he came to the Dispatch Box. Will he make sure that he gives a proper answer because this is a potential loophole, makes total nonsense of the exemption and will result in even more deaths?

Mr. Butcher: We should not take admonitions or a lecture from the hon. Gentleman about our care on this matter of safety in the home.

Mr. Lloyd: The Minister should.

Mr. Butcher: Perhaps the hon. Gentleman would let me finish. The hon. Gentleman is obviously not aware of such matters as the "Think Safety First" campaign or of the many measures that come out of my Department to raise consumer awareness on safety matters. Something new is happening almost monthly.

I cannot agree with what the hon. Gentleman has said. We were not dragged to make these regulations. We are building on an already very vigorous fire safety regime. Interliners will be tested over combustion modified foam. If I have misunderstood the hon. Gentleman's question or those of his hon. Friends, I will clarify the matter. I am satisfied on the matter of the use of interlinings that this is an appropriate way to bring true safety to furniture that is built using exempted materials.

Mr. Alistair Burt (Bury, North): May I also warmly welcome what my hon. Friend has done? It is an object lesson on what can be done when the mind is put to it. I also pay tribute to the work of Chief Assistant Fire Officer Bob Graham, who has been instrumental in terms of some of the changes that are coming through. May I commend

[Mr. Alistair Burt]

the further use of smoke detectors and suggest that the Minister takes my ten-minute Bill as a model for further progress? Smoke detectors save lives now, whereas

Secondly, I should like to raise a matter that has inadvertently been missed by hon. Members who are anxious about this issue. Too many fires are still caused through sheer, straightforward carelessness, drink and cigarettes. Any campaign about fire awareness should not only raise technical aspects and smoke detectors but make people aware that their own carelessness can cost lives.

Mr. Butcher: I think that I have already acknowledged the great help that Mr. Bob Graham, my hon. Friend's friend, has been to the debate. I hear loudly and clearly what my hon. Friend says about smoke detectors. That has come through as a strong theme in the debate. Of course prevention is the best and first policy, but we have to reinforce prevention with regulations, such as those that we propose, understandable public concern is aroused over deaths caused by noxious fumes from the sort of substances that we are discussing. It is a two-level attack —prevention and regulation. I pay tribute to what my hon. Friend has done in his ten-minute Bill. He will not mind if I say again that in the first instance it is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary, but I am sure that the signals are coming over loud and clear.

Mr. Graham Allen (Nottingham, South): The Minister may be aware that I and the Nottinghamshire fire prevention panel and fire officers in Nottinghamshire have written to the Government requesting a serious national programme for smoke detectors in homes—both in new-build local authority housing and in new private developments. It is not good enough for the Minister to say that that is somebody else's responsibility. Will he press the Home Secretary and the Secretary of State for the Environment to bring forward proposals and support them wholeheartedly? Secondly, will he also ensure that cotton ignitable covers are no longer exempted under these regulations? Such exemptions mean that more people will die. How many more must die before the Government are dragged kicking and screaming to the Dispatch Box to announce measures in both those areas?

Mr. Butcher: The hon. Gentleman went over the top in his last observations. I and my officials have been painstaking in listening to many representations on this issue from all parts of the House. The paramount consideration has been safety. We have produced a formula that delivers on the safety requirements and does not, as it could have done, call into question the viability of the furniture industry. It will have to deal with these pressures. I believe that it can and, as I said earlier, I think that the balance is about right.

I spoke earlier about linens and natural materials and said clearly that, in general, predominately natural fibres burn with less heat than synthetics. That seems to be the major or almost the only issue on which the Opposition are homing in. When one decodes their comments one sees that they are probably—dare I say it—content with the import of what we are doing.

Mr. James Cran (Beverley): I congratulate my hon. Friend on his statement, and especially on what he said about the caravan industry which will have heaved a sigh of relief at what he had to say about the possible effects of the draft regulations on the new and used caravan markets. So that I may confirm my understanding, will he confirm the nature of the exemption for second-hand caravans because, as I think he knows, a slowdown in second-hand sales has a detrimental effect on new sales?

Mr. Butcher: Second-hand caravans will be excluded, because inclusion would mean that traders would have to change the built-in furniture at a cost disproportionate to the value of the caravan itself. That would force business into private or pseudo-private sales which would escape important safety checks that the majority of caravan dealers are obliged to carry out by virtue of their membership of the National Caravan Council. My hon. Friend will know that those safety checks on important matters such as gas and electricity are undertaken by dealers in second-hand caravans. Because of the importance of those and other tests, we would not want to do anything that diverted caravans out of that route.

M[illegible]am Dalyell (Linlithgow): Could we hark back to the question put by my hon. Friends the Members for Stretford (Mr. Lloyd) and for Makerfield (Mr. McCartney)? They ought to be added to Mr. Speaker's list of those Back Benchers who altered events by their actions. The Minister has a PPS and nine expert civil servants in the Box. Before the end of questions on this statement, could he get an answer to the issue about testing of standard polyurethane foam? This is a crucial matter.

Mr. Butcher: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman. Before I agreed to make the statement I gave instructions to the Box that I wanted no pieces of paper fluttering along the Bench. I do not know whether the people in the Box are complying with that regulation. We came to the view that for covering fabric and foam, this would be an inappropriate test for the great majority of furniture which usually contains other filling materials. I now clearly understand the hon. Gentleman's point and I shall come back to it later.

Mr. Peter Thurnham (Bolton, North-East): I thank my hon. Friend for listening to representations. Will he bear in mind the interest being shown by overseas regulatory agencies in the British-manufactured Firesafe carbon fibre and wool blocking agent, which has considerable advantages not only in terms of safety but of utility and economy?

Mr. Butcher: Yes, I shall certainly consider that.

Mr. James Couchman (Gillingham): I have not heard my hon. Friend mention the reupholstery trade, which is carried out by small traders—often single traders. How will he bring the new regulations to their attention and how will the new regulations affect them? Upholsterers who deal with my trade—hotel and catering—are concerned that they will not have ready access to the new materials, which may be in short supply because the major manufacturers will take up most of what is available in the early stages.

Mr. Butcher: My hon. Friend will have heard my earlier comments about the pre-1950 and post-1950 regimes. My major concern is foam, which is the most dangerous modern development that we seek to tackle in the proposals.

We are prepared to test mixtures of materials, such as those used in reupholstery, to ignition source 2 because we believe that the properties of non-foam when it burns are different, so that test is more relevant.

Mr. Kenneth Hind (Lancashire, West): I congratulate my hon. Friend on the regulations. In his statement, he referred to miscellaneous matters, including cushions. Does he intend to include cushion covers sold separately from cushions or does he intend to include cushion covers, which are normally upholstered material of the same type as curtains, in the curtain regulations that his Department is considering?

Mr. Butcher: There will be no requirement for the outer decorative cover of cushions, but the pillow or cushion interior will be required to pass ignition source 2. For that test, the fillings may be tested separately or in combination with an interliner or primary cover. Curtain material, even used over cushions, will not be covered.

Mr. Richard Holt (Langbaurgh): I am a parliamentary spokesman for the furniture manufacturers, and I thank my hon. Friend the Minister for his consideration in the consultation period. I also thank his officials for working closely with the furniture manufacturing industry. That has resulted in the date for implementation being brought forward. I hope that my hon. Friend will accept that the industry is very grateful to the Government for bringing in the regulations at the first opportunity when foams of a fire-resistant nature were available.

The industry has one concern; my hon. Friend did not make one point quite clear. If the regulations are not acceptable within the European Community in the future, will we have to go back a pace for the sake of harmonisation? Will he make it clear that the investment, work and research that the industry has put into reaching these conclusions will not be hammered on the head at some future date in Brussels?

Mr. Butcher: The well-managed and more positive firms in the industry will see this as a marketing opportunity. There are already signs of a positive reaction in anticipation of the regulations.

The European Commission has not entered a formal objection to the draft regulations, but it has requested us to allow equivalent European standards to be used where available. It has also requested that we take account of comments made by member states. We already have the most rigorous regime in Europe. If the Commission seeks a European consensus on minimum requirements, we are well placed to meet those requirements.

Mr. Ray Whitney (Wycombe): Does my hon. Friend accept that the recognition that he has given that the new measures will impose costs on the industry and the public is important and that his acknowledgement that the time scale is short is also crucial? Will he continue—as he has done since he took over responsibility—to maintain close contact with the industry and to take account of technical developments and possibilities and of the concern that still exists about the attractiveness, or lack of it, of the new materials that meet the standards? Finally, and very importantly, will he ensure that the new standards that are to be set for British domestic furniture manufacturers will also be rigorously applied to imported furniture?

Mr. Butcher: There will be equal vigilance to ensure that imports comply with the regulations. I shall, of course, maintain close contact with the industry.

In response to the earlier question raised by the hon. Members for Makerfield (Mr. McCartney), for Stretford (Mr. Lloyd) and for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell)—the only question that I have not been able to answer—fabrics will be tested over standard foam because that will distinguish better between acceptable and non-acceptable materials.

5.23 pm

Housing (Scotland)

Mr. Nigel Griffiths (Edinburgh, South): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. A statement was made to the House on 29 March by the Minister responsible for housing in Scotland. That statement affected 800,000 tenants in Scotland who fear the forcible transfer of their tenancies to speculative landlords. He said:

> "No solution will be forced on anyone against his or her will."—[*Official Report*, 29 March 1988; Vol. 130, c. 1003.]

Earlier this week, however, he said of tenants:

> "it is possible that a minority might have to transfer against their will."—[*Official Report*, 27 June 1988; Vol. 136, c. 138-9.]

In view of the fear and alarm that that is causing among Scotland's tenants in the council sector, tenants of the Scottish Special Housing Association and other public sector tenants, there is an urgent requirement for the Government to make their position crystal clear. I wonder whether you, Mr. Speaker, will use your influence and permit the Minister to make a statement today.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. I should genuinely like to answer the hon. Gentleman's point. There has been no reduction in secure tenants' rights and no shift in Government policy on this matter.

The remarks to which the hon. Gentleman referred, which my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State and I made during the Commons stages of the Housing (Scotland) Bill, related to the transfer of SSHA tenants to Scottish Homes and to the tenants' choice provisions in part III of that Bill. There is absolutely no question of the Government retreating from the commitments that they gave to tenants on this matter. SSHA tenants will not lose any rights on transfer to Scottish Homes and no tenant will be forced to change to another landlord under the tenants' choice provisions against his or her will.

My remarks during the Report stage of the Housing Bill on Monday night related solely to large-scale voluntary disposals by local authorities. It has always been the case that public sector landlords can dispose of stock to another landlord provided that they have the consent of the Secretary of State, and it has always been possible that some tenants might be transferred against their will. That is one reason why we consider it so important that the Secretary of State should have the ability to examine very closely every possible voluntary request from a local authority to dispose of stock. Consequently, we took the opportunity to make absolutely clear the considerations to which the Secretary of State would have regard in examining voluntary applications for disposals, and the protection of tenants will, of course, be a central consideration.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I hope that this will not develop into a debate. The hon. Member for Edinburgh, South (Mr. Griffiths) sought clarification.

Mr. John Maxton (Glasgow, Cathcart): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. I thank the Minister, but find it astonishing that he should have made a statement in this way. Surely it would have been better for the Minister or the Secretary of State—who seems to prefer cavorting round Scotland on photo opportunities to answering Scottish questions—had applied to you to make a statement.

Mr. Speaker: The Minister did not ask to make a statement at all. It was on a point of order.

Mr. Maxton: The Minister has made a statement, which we now cannot question.

Mr. Michael Fallon (Darlington): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. My point of order arises directly from Scottish questions. It is your normal practice, quite rightly and fairly, to give preference to hon. Members who represent Scottish constituencies before calling those who take an interest in Scottish affairs but who represent constituencies in England and elsewhere. I wonder whether you will be prepared to vary that practice on occasion. This afternoon, no fewer than 21 Scottish Labour Members failed to turn up—a truancy rate of 40 per cent. Alternatively, perhaps Scottish questions could be rearranged for a day on which Scottish Labour Members are more likely to show up.

Mr. Speaker: I am not responsible for who turns up.

Points of Order

5.29 pm

Mrs. Maria Fyfe (Glasgow, Maryhill): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I draw to your attention the conduct of a Conservative Member earlier today. When I asked a question in my Scottish accent during Scottish Question Time, this hon. Member had the effrontery to shout, "Speak in English." Such conduct does nothing for what is supposed to be a unitary Parliament. If hon. Members do not understand my accent, that is the least of the things that they do not understand about Scotland.

Mr. Speaker: I am sure that like me, all hon. Members find the hon. Lady's accent entirely charming.

Mr. Tom Clarke (Monklands, West): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. This is a serious point, and you know that I would not be raising it were it not so. I attended the whole of Scottish Question Time, having tabled a question, as I normally do. I was astonished, as I think all hon. Members were, to hear the Under-Secretary, the hon. Member for Edinburgh, West (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton), in a reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Hillhead (Mr. Galloway), refer to a case in my constituency which I have been pursuing for over six months. In his remarks, the Minister——

Mr. Speaker: Order. This seems to be a continuation of Question Time. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will come to his point of order.

Mr. Clarke: I am seeking your guidance, Mr. Speaker, on a serious matter. When the Minister said that I had sought political asylum for this person, he gave the House the impression that I had agreed that the man should stay in Barlinnie prison for six months. I did no such thing. Can the Minister now be asked to make a statement about that?

Mr. Speaker: I was listening carefully and I heard what the Minister said. Had there been time, I would certainly have called the hon. Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke) so that he could make his point.

Tenancies of Brewery Companies (Regulation)

5.31 pm

Mr. Speaker: We come now to the presentation of a Bill. Second Reading what day?

Mr. Graham Allen (Nottingham, North): With permission of the House, now Sir.

Mr. Speaker: No; that cannot be done.

Mr. Allen: In that case, Friday 8 July.

Mr. Graham Allen, supported by Dr. David Clark, Mr. Ron Davies, Dr. Norman A. Godman, Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours, Mr. Dennis Skinner, Mr. Eric Martlew, Mr. Joseph Ashton, Mr. Alan Meale, Mr. Harry Barnes, Mrs. Margaret Beckett and Mr. Frank Haynes, presented a Bill to regulate tenancies of brewery companies; and for other purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 8 July and to be printed. [Bill 178.]

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Ordered,

That, at this day's sitting, Standing Order No. 93 (Public bills relating exclusively to Scotland) shall apply to proceedings on the Electricity (Financial Provisions) (Scotland) Bill with the substitution of the words 'committee of the whole House' for the words 'Scottish Standing Committee' in paragraphs (4) and (5) of the Standing Order. —*[Mr. Ryder.]*

Child Benefit (Forfeiture)

5.32 pm

Mr. Barry Field (Isle of Wight): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to provide for child benefit to be forfeited by or suspended from parents of persistent truants and vandals.

I thought that I was in grave danger of making parliamentary history by introducing the first ten-minute Bill to be filibustered.

Child benefit costs £4·6 billion every year, one tenth of the entire social security budget. Of that sum, £1·3 billion is paid to 1,790,000 families with an income in excess of £20,000 a year. That is a quarter of the entire expenditure on child benefit, and I cannot accept that collecting taxes and employing an army of civil servants to distribute this universal benefit regardless of need can be justified.

The Bill will begin the process of a long-needed reform of this ludicrous anomaly whereby we spread a little jam thinly rather than concentrating it where it is needed. This measure will establish and highlight the trinity that leads to good citizenship. It consists of: parental responsibility, a sound education and pride in the community.

The forerunner of child benefit was the family allowance, and when he introduced it, Beveridge said that it was a financial aid to parents in meeting their responsibilities and in recognition of certain responsibilities on behalf of the state. The Bill will focus attention on the need for parents to meet those responsibilities in the way in which they bring up their children. Parents and the part that they play are directly related to the way in which children grow up.

In the Home Office report published in 1985, entitled "Parental Supervision and Juvenile Delinquency", of 10 recommendations to parents, number 9 said:

> "Turning a blind eye to truancy and unauthorised absences is unlikely to encourage a positive attitude to school."

A recent operation by the West Midlands police, called "Operation Sweeper" returned more than 100 children to either their schools or their parents. Many of the latter were surprised that their children were playing truant, because the school had not informed them.

The Bill requires schools to notify the DHSS when children are absent from school without good cause and this will, in turn, lead to the notification of parents that continued absence could lead to the suspension or forfeiture of child benefit. The point is that parents will no longer be able to plead ignorance as to where children are or what they are up to.

The report into delinquency concluded that a particularly noticeable characteristic of the parents of many of the delinquents was carelessness or laxity in matters of supervision. It found that these parents were less concerned than others to watch over, or know about, their children's doings, their whereabouts or their companions. They failed to enforce or to formulate fixed rules about such things as punctuality, manners, bed time, television viewing or tidying-up. The West Midlands police operation picked up children as young as eight and I cannot and will not accept that it is impossible to regulate the life and actions of children so young.

A recent survey of 10,000 children by the National Housing and Town Planning Council suggests that up to 100,000 schoolchildren are missing school every day to play fruit machines. Later this week, we shall see the publication of the Home Office report on amusement machine dependency and delinquency. My Bill will bring to light those parents who are failing to ensure their children's regular attendance at school.

The education authorities are responsible for dealing with truancy and because of this, no national statistics are available. Through my introduction of the Bill, I have been led to conclude that schools are not doing enough to notify parents when their children are absent. Parents have expressed to me surprise and disquiet that they have not been notified, and there is undoubtedly a direct relationship between truancy and crime. During the Birmingham operation, reported crime fell from 82 incidents in April to 46 in May. Children will listen to their parents and copy their example.

A survey commissioned by Blyth Valley council for the Northumberland police and the Keep Britain Tidy Group, found that children blamed their parents for not being strict enough. Of the 2,500 children interviewed, 52 per cent. replied that they would listen to their parents, and only 50 per cent. said that they would listen to the police. Some 40 per cent. said that they would listen to pop stars and only 8 per cent. said that they would listen to the advice of youth club leaders. That was 1 per cent. less than those who would listen to Church leaders or politicians. Parents have power, if only we could encourage them to exercise it.

The final part of this measure would require magistrates to notify the Department of Health and Social Services of children convicted or cautioned for acts of vandalism. Vandalism is estimated to cost the country up to £30 million a year and cleaning up graffiti is costing £23 for every man, woman and child. Let no one suggest that these are problems of poverty. Spray cans of paint, that most popular tool for the graffiti gorilla, cost money, as do the fish and chip papers and Coca-Cola cans that litter the streets, and the over-loud transitor radios. All this behaviour is a manifestation of anti-social behaviour. It is the product of an affluent society in which children are all too often, to use the modern phrase, allowed to do their own thing.

Only yesterday, my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary at the London conference on vandalism revealed that more than 4,000 vandals were aged between 10 and 13. That shows that they often start their careers at 10 or younger.

I do not propose that the money saved by my proposal will be returned to the Treasury. It will go to finance the working and administration of the measure, and to be distributed to local charities and social workers who specialise in helping children with behavioural difficulties. This would strengthen the tie between the community and the child. The current universal payment by the state is too remote.

There is little that is revoluntionary in the Bill. Since 1983, the DHSS has funded over 100 projects serving juvenile offenders to seek to provide alternatives to custody and care. Suspending child benefit, which in many cases benefits everyone except the child, will, I hope, bring the child and parent back into partnership so that we bring up better Britons for a better future for our nation.

In the 1920s, and 1940s, Eleanor Rathbone wrote "The Disinherited Family" and "The Case for Family Allowances". Her campaign led ultimately to child benefit as we know it today. She said:

"Children are not simply a private luxury, they are an asset to the community."

My Bill will ensure an end to parental disinterest. It will ensure that children are an asset to the community. The Bill is not an attack on the poor because child benefit is counted as a resource for families on income support, but it is an attack on parents who fail properly to bring up their children.

Question put, pursuant to Standing Order No. 19 (Motions for leave to bring in Bills and nomination of Select Committees at commencement of public business):—

The House divided: Ayes 37, Noes 123.

Division No. 391] **[5.39 pm**

AYES

Alexander, Richard
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Boswell, Tim
Brazier, Julian
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nicholas
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carrington, Matthew
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Devlin, Tim
Farr, Sir John
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gow, Ian
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Holt, Richard
Hunter, Andrew
Janman, Tim
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Mans, Keith
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Paice, James
Redwood, John
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Strang, Gavin
Watts, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Winterton, Mrs Ann

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Irvine Patnick and
Mr. David Evans.

NOES

Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashton, Joe
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Battle, John
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Beckett, Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blair, Tony
Boateng, Paul
Bradley, Keith
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buchan, Norman
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Canavan, Dennis
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dalyell, Tam
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Dixon, Don
Douglas, Dick
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fearn, Ronald
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Flannery, Martin
Foster, Derek
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Gordon, Mildred
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Haselhurst, Alan
Heffer, Eric S.
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hood, Jimmy
Howells, Geraint
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hume, John
Kennedy, Charles
Kilfedder, James
Kirkwood, Archy
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Livingstone, Ken
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Loyden, Eddie
McCartney, Ian
McGrady, Eddie
McKelvey, William
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mallon, Seamus
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Maxton, John
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Mullin, Chris
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
O'Brien, William
Pike, Peter L.
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Rhodes James, Robert
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Robertson, George
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Strang, Gavin
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wall, Pat
Wallace, James
Wareing, Robert N.
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Frank Haynes and
Mr. Alan Meale.

Question accordingly negatived.

5.50 pm

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Has anyone informed you in the last few minutes that there may have to be an interruption in the Government's proceedings, because the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie) voted in both Division Lobbies? We want to know now what is the Government's policy on child benefit, in view of the fact that the hon. Lady voted in both Lobbies.

Are you also aware, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that there was a bit of a schemozzle when the Under-Secretary of State, having voted for the motion, was then confronted by a set of pickets in excess of six against the Tory code of practice? They tried to stop her entering the Lobby because they had captured her vote. She then proceeded to enter and vote in the other Lobby. That calls for a statement of policy, so that the House may know exactly where the Government stand on child benefits.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): It is not at all unusual to have a little schemozzle in this place. As to the Minister having voted in both Lobbies, that is not unique or without precedent.

Northern Ireland Act 1974

5.52 pm

The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Mr. Tom King): I beg to move,

That the draft Northern Ireland Act 1974 (Inteim Period Extension) Order 1988, which was laid before this House on 7th June, be approved.

This is the fourteenth time that such an order has been moved to extend further the operation of the Northern Ireland Act 1974. It provides an opportunity to review the events and developments of the past year and to examine some aspects of particular concern in the coming year. I intend to speak first about the economic situation, secondly about security, and thirdly about political developments.

The House will know that the steady improvement in the British economy has been reflected by much greater buoyancy this year in Northern Ireland. We can take some encouragement from the significant fall in unemployment. There are about 10,000 fewer unemployed than there were when we met to debate the order last year, and employment, and within that manufacturing employment, have both increased. To all those who have been in contact with them, there is much greater buoyancy and activity in both the Irish Development Board and the Local Enterprise Development Unit than there was two or three years ago, because of the number of active inquiries being pursued.

Significantly, the IDB is dealing substantially less with rescue cases and maintaining jobs and more with the creation of additional new jobs. I think of the headlines of the past few months and of the announcements that there have been about further investment and expansion. I know some of the names by heart; Herdmans, Moy Park, Norbrook Laboratories, Ormeau, Glen Electric, Du Pont, STC and a number of others, which include two major carpet investments. They are all very encouraging in the development of the Northern Ireland economy.

We are conscious that while there has been that improvement, the level of unemployment remains unacceptably high throughout Northern Ireland and appallingly high in some parts of the Province. We still have a long way to go, and I recognise that, although I can point to a much happier prospect across the breadth of a wide range of industries in Northern Ireland—and the fact that it is much more diversified than it was is encouraging in itself—in some of the largest engineering companies—particularly in Belfast—unemployment remains a matter of continuing concern. The Northern Ireland Economic Council drew attention in its report to some of the problems.

At the same time, the skill and resilience of Northern Ireland industry and commerce has been encouraging, even against the background of difficulty in some major firms. The British economy is now into its eighth successive year of growth and we now see all the signs of economic improvement. In the south-east, there are shortages of skilled labour and of accommodation for workers and management, which make Northern Ireland an increasingly attractive location.

My own view is that Northern Ireland now has the best opportunity it may ever have had for attracting new investment into the Province. I believe that I speak regardless of party and of political attitudes to other matters, and for every hon. Member representing a Northern Ireland constituency and for every Minister in the Northern Ireland Office, when I say that we have a total commitment to achieving whatever improvements we can in investment and employment in the Province.

Sir John Farr (Harborough): Before leaving that very important subject, can my right hon. Friend say whether he will be able to respond favourably to the opportunity that has presented itself for building the largest passenger ship in the world in Belfast? If that opportunity can be seized, it will transform the whole of Ulster's economy.

Mr. King: That project is of the greatest interest and if it can be achieved for Northern Ireland on a satisfactory basis, it will be of considerable benefit not only to Harland and Wolff but also to a wide range of subcontractors throughout the Province and in the United Kingdom. However, I cannot today comment further on that matter. We are just starting to receive the detailed costings and are examining the figures. We shall make a further comment about the approach to the situation at Harland and Wolff and to that project shortly.

Mr. Peter Robinson (Belfast, East): The Secretary of State will know that there has been considerable speculation in the Province, not only in the media but generally, concerning the possible privatisation of Harland and Wolff. Can he say whether he or any of his Ministers has had talks recently with any shipowner or potential shipyard purchaser, and whether that is the direction of Government policy on Harland and Wolff? Can he also say whether he would make subject to the purchase of Harland and Wolff the giving of finance to Ravi Tikkoo for the Ultimate Dream?

Mr. King: I have referred rather obliquely to that important aspect, and I understand why the hon. Gentleman has pressed me to be a little clearer. I hope that we will be able to say something about our approach very shortly, possibly in the next couple of days. I can say now that we have made it clear, as it is Government policy, that we are seriously interested in any possibilities for privatisation. We believe philosophically that it is the right way to proceed, and we are also interested in it as a possible way forward for Harland and Wolff. The hon. Gentleman knows very well the considerations that would have to arise and the problems that would have to be tackled.

Sir Michael McNair-Wilson (Newbury): Will my right hon. Friend also include Short Brothers in any statement that he makes about privatisation?

Mr. King: I shall not do so immediately, but Northern Ireland Questions are first in tomorrow's business, and the matter may arise then.

This better economic prospect—this chance to see at last a real future for many young people in the Province, who may have thought not long ago that they had little prospect of employment and a future—is there. The risk that is posed to it, however, is all too clear. We now face a possible threat from the recent terrorist outrages to any further investment that we might seek to achieve. This puts into the starkest relief the point that if terrorism continues—if those who pretend to be concerned about employment and a better future for young people continue their terrorist outrages—they will destroy the future that those young people might be justified in expecting. That has always been of concern to us, but it is of particular concern now.

Mr. David Alton (Liverpool, Mossley Hill): Before the Secretary of State leaves the subject of the economy in Northern Ireland, may I look forward to his White Paper on fair employment, to be published on Friday? Does he not accept that in the context of 18 per cent. unemployment in the Province, where unemployment is two and a half times higher among young Catholics than among young Protestants, the timetable that he has set is probably not ambitious enough? Will he tell the House how long he thinks it will be before that ratio changes?

Mr. King: In the interest of time, I hope that the hon. Gentleman will excuse me. We have a full day's debate on the subject on Friday, and today's debate has been appallingly truncated by all the statements.

Whatever policies there may be to seek to end discrimination and provide more opportunities and more fairness, those policies all depend on the creation of more jobs. That is at the heart of them, and it is why in my time as Secretary of State I have laid such emphasis and worked so hard on the economic aspect, trying to get more jobs into Northern Ireland. The skills, opportunities, talents and facilities are there; it only takes persuasion, in a sense, along with an understanding of the realities of life in the Province and, above all, a major reduction in terrorist activity.

I do not wish to dwell too much on the statistics for the deaths and apalling injuries that have occurred, awful as they are. But in all the years of violence in the Province, the past year has been marked by the peculiar awfulness of some of the atrocities that have occurred. It has also been marked by the clearest confirmation that the terrorists now have no inhibitions about the targets that they are prepared to attack, or the consequences of their attacks. Considering the events that in the past year have been considered perfectly acceptable occasions for the committing of atrocities—a Remembrance day parade, two funerals, a charity marathon and now a school bus run —that shows more clearly than anything that could be said that there is no longer any inhibition or restraint, but an acceptance of casualties wherever they may occur.

The blind hatred for one school bus driver that made terrorists willing to cause death and suffering to any of those children—Protestant and Catholic as they were—beggars description. I do not believe that we have yet heard one of those nauseating excuses such as the claim that someone else detonated the bomb at Enniskillen. The truth is that no excuse can justify what happened yesterday, or any other atrocity. If there was some malfunction of the detonation device—or whatever other nauseating excuse may be given for yesterday's incident —the fact remains that anyone who plants explosives on a school bus, unless he is mentally deficient, knows perfectly well that there is a risk that children may be killed or maimed.

From the events of the past year, we see beneath the balaclava the true and evil face of those who seek to take power in Ireland. They are striving to reach their objective over the bodies of their fellow citizens, wading through the blood of grievously injured children. Those events are the clearest possible reinforcement for the determination that we need to ensure that the men of violence shall not win.

Our prayers must now be for Gillian Latimer, who at this moment is fighting for her life in the royal Victoria hospital.

Rev. Ian Paisley (Antrim, North): Does the right hon. Gentleman not think that the time has now come for him to take steps to keep from the council chambers of Northern Ireland the godfathers of the murderers? Does he not realise that Unionists find it very difficult to have to sit in a council chamber with those who will not even rise to their feet to express their sympathy, and who support and try to justify what happened in that school bus yesterday? Does not the right hon. Gentleman also think that the Unionist people are right in their contention that the SDLP should now cease talking to the representatives of Sinn Fein?

Mr. King: The hon. Gentleman knows that I have made absolutely clear my understanding of the deep feeling of Unionists about having to sit in council chambers with people who behave in the way that he has described, and who support and subscribe to the use of violence. The truth is that there is no clean or selective use of violence. The sadness of the awful injuries suffered by Gillian Latimer is that that is what will happen if people go out with guns and bombs and place them wherever their targets may be. In many cases, inevitably, those will be the consequences.

I am very sympathetic to the point made by the hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley) about people who support the use of violence sitting on councils. In answer to the second part of his question, I am extremely concerned that Sinn Fein, which is so totally identified with the IRA, should not, in any talks which may be taking place, on which I have made my views absolutely clear, be allowed somehow to dictate the terms in Northern Ireland, and become the obstacle to sensible, constructive discussion between the democratic constitutional parties.

Sir John Biggs-Davison (Epping Forest): I am grateful to my right hon. Friend, who has been very courteous to the House. Since the hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley) mentioned the attitude of the SDLP, perhaps one could say a word of commendation to the SDLP councillors in Fermanagh who voted with the Unionists to unseat the Sinn Fein chairman of the council because he had refused to condemn the Enniskillen atrocities.

Mr. King: We noted that. One of the encouraging developments in the last council elections—I am sorry to say that it was not universal, as there were one or two appointments about which I have considerable reservations—was that there was a willingness to recognise that another constitutional party that had a point of view was in the council chamber, and a recognition that senior posts such as the mayor or the chairman could be held by different parties. That development gave many people who care about Northern Ireland real encouragement.

Mr. Seamus Mallon (Newry and Armagh): I thank the Secretary of State for giving way. So that we may have a total view of the situation in councils, will the Secretary of State confirm that in Newry and Mourne council Sinn Fein is in an unholy alliance with members of the DUP

[Mr. Seamus Mallon]

and the Official Unionist party in opposition to the party which I represent, and that that unholy alliance has existed for the past four years?

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. I am not sure how these matters relate to the motion before the House. We should direct our attention more closely to the motion.

Mr. King: I shall not respond to the hon. Member for Newry and Armagh (Mr. Mallon).

Rev. William McCrea (Mid-Ulster) *rose*——

Mr. King: I am sure that the hon. Member for Mid-Ulster (Rev. William McCrea) wishes to cite another council where there would be very strong reservations about the decision that was taken. I said that in certain councils I welcome the development of recognition by one party that there was another party in the council chamber.

Rev. William McCrea: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. King: With great respect, in fairness to the House I must make progress.

As the House knows we are facing a serious situation on the security front. Into the hands of evil men—and there are evil men on both extremes in Northern Ireland—have come additional sources of weapons, which, in certain respects, have a capability well in excess of that held by terrorists in previous years. We know that the terrorists are determined to intensify their campaign.

Perhaps against that background we recognise best the enormous debt we owe to the courage, skill and professionalism of the security forces. In the past year there have been some absolutely appalling and tragic incidents in Northern Ireland, but in many cases they could have been very much worse and a number of dangerous incidents have been prevented by the skill, intelligence, ability and courage of the security forces.

We have the skills to defeat the terrorists. Those skills must be deployed within Northern Ireland, but we need the fullest support and co-operation from the Republic. It is a matter of the greatest importance that those arms shipments that we believe are in the Republic of Ireland now, and that include certain additional elements that could cause great suffering, are recovered at the earliest opportunity. I reaffirm the words of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister to the Taoiseach yesterday and the commitment to the very closest co-operation in this field. I particularly welcome the new appointments and the reorganisation in the Garda, which I hope will be helpful in that respect.

As for our own security efforts, in which my right hon. Friend the Minister of State has been extremely active, we are seeking to apply across the whole range of opportunity every weapon that civilised democratic society can bring to bear against the evil of terrorism. It involves the security forces and their professionalism and arrangements for a new brigade covering the border area, the determination to retain the additional two Army battalions in the Province, and the excellent work and close co-operation between the RUC, the RUC reserve and the UDR.

We are determined to bring every weapon to bear on the industry that supports the terror campaign and to improve the chances of conviction. The amendment to the Criminal Justic Bill to introduce the potential for genetic fingerprinting in Northern Ireland may be very helpful in getting proper convictions, given the difficulties of obtaining evidence. Undoubtedly, public emotions aroused by the recent atrocities can be best harnessed to the support of the security forces by the new freephone —with an easily identifiable number for the confidential telephone that has proved extremely effective in increasing the flow of information and help to the security forces.

We are seeking to restrict the funds available to terrorist organisations by tackling the resources gained from smuggling, racketeering, fraud and protection rackets. We are determined to tackle from every possible aspect ways in which we can bring extra pressure to bear gradually to tighten the net around the terrorists in the interests of a better future for all people in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): Does the House have an assurance from the Secretary of State that he himself knows on whose authority and under what authority that bug was placed in the hay yard where Michael Tighe met his death? Do we have an assurance that the Secretary of State approves of the way in which that was done?

Mr. King: The hon. Gentleman has tabled a question to me precisely on that matter tomorrow and I shall answer it then.

While I have talked about the vigorous pursuit of effective security, we are determined to fight terrorism under the law. In the past year we have been concerned to take every step we can to help increase throughout the communities of Northern Ireland confidence in the effective and fair operation of the law. It is worth noting that since we last met we have published and made publicly available the code of conduct for the RUC. We have also established the independent Police Complaints Commission. A complaints procedure in respect of the Army is now in place and we have taken a number of steps relating to the operation of the courts in the treatment of accused persons and their rights.

One step to which I pledged myself soon after taking on my present responsibilities, was an attempt to reduce the tremendous time it took for cases to appear for trial and the considerable delays affecting people who wanted to appeal against conviction. We have made considerable improvements, but we are anxious to ensure that any other steps which help are carried through so that people get fair treatment.

Another matter has attracted considerable attention. I undertook, in my statement of 17 February, to keep the House informed about matters arising from the Stalker-Sampson inquiry in respect of matters which fall within my responsibility. The House will be aware that the Police Authority for Northern Ireland has today issued a statement on its consideration of matters arising from observations made by Mr. Sampson in connection with the Chief Constable, the deputy chief constable and Assistant Chief Constable Forbes of the RUC. It has resolved that no disciplinary proceedings should be taken in respect of those three senior officers. I shall arrange for copies of the authority's statement to be placed in the Library.

As to the other ranks, the Chief Constable of the RUC announced last week that he has now received the report from Mr. Charles Kelly, and a decision on the nature of any charges and their preferment is likely to come shortly.

Rev. Ian Paisley: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. King: I have already given way to the hon. Gentleman, but I shall give way to the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara).

Mr. Kevin McNamara (Kingston upon Hull, North): The right hon. Gentleman said, "charges and their preferment". Surely the burden of what the Attorney-General said is that they should be disciplinary offences and that there are no charges in the sense of criminal charges, which is how it might be misunderstood outside.

Mr. King: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman. If there is any misunderstanding, I should make it clear that, if there are any charges, this is a matter for disciplinary charges. It is certainly not one for criminal charges. As the hon. Gentleman said, that was made clear by my right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General in his statement.

Rev. William McCrea: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. King: If the hon. Gentleman will forgive me, I should like to get on with my speech.

Mr. Mallon: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. King: I hope that every hon. Member will have an opportunity to speak, and my hon. Friend the Minister will deal in his winding-up speech with any matters that arise. I have given way a lot.

During the debate on the order one year ago, I talked about the lack of democratic involvement of the people of Northern Ireland in the government of the Province. I also talked about the need to discuss ideas which might be helpful to get a dialogue going. I looked not just to the Unionist parties, but also to the constitutional Nationalist parties for a constructive response. I noticed that, during the debate, the hon. Member for Antrim, North acknowledged that the task would not be easy, but he pledged himself to working for a Northern Ireland

"where there can be real peace, real stability and real reconciliation".—[*Official Report*, 7 July 1987; Vol. 119, c. 215.]

The right hon. Member for Lagan Valley (Mr. Molyneaux) spoke of

"feeling our way forward . . . not engaging in any high-wire acts, but building solidly on constructive approaches and workable and realistic suggestions".—[*Official Report*, 7 July 1987; Vol. 119, c. 253.]

The hon. Member for Foyle (Mr. Hume) said:

"the only way in which we can build trust among ourselves is by working together to administer the place. Through working together we will build the trust that has been missing over the years and diminish the distrust and prejudice."—[*Official Report*, 7 July 1987; Vol. 119, c. 245.]

I was encouraged by the very positive tone of those speeches. They were the starting point for me in my efforts, during the past year, to see whether we can make some progress.

I have had a number of bilateral meetings with the political parties to discuss the future government of Northern Ireland. There have been many signs of a new approach, which the House will welcome. I sense a much greater acceptance now among the political parties of Northern Ireland of the need for political dialogue and constructive thinking about the future.

I held several meetings with Unionist leaders. Earlier this year, the right hon. Member for Lagan Valley and the hon. Member for Antrim, North outlined their proposals for changes in how Northern Ireland is governed. The Unionist leaders were frank that they would show how far they would go only in proper negotiations with other political parties and that our dialogue was not such a negotiation. The ideas put to me were a starting point—an earnest of the intent of Unionist parties and confirmation of their interest in moving towards devolved government.

I very much welcome the fact that Unionists have something constructive to say and that they have shown that they have ideas which could be put on the table for discussion. In the light of my exploratory talks with Unionists, and in the same spirit, I sought from the SDLP leadership a statement of their attitudes towards the government of Northern Ireland. They told me that they support devolution and are willing to talk to other constitutional parties about political progress. I look to them in the spirit of last year's debate to find ways in which to carry forward their anxiety to work with Unionists.

I should add that the Alliance party of Northern Ireland and others not represented in the House have also told me that they strongly support movement towards devolution and are ready to contribute towards wider discussions.

I noticed from the speech that the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North made in Belfast yesterday that, while he supports the unification of Ireland, he recognises that the Irish Government accept, through the Anglo-Irish Agreement, that the reform of Northern Ireland should take precedence over any political ambitions.

The House will be aware that there has recently been speculation that some other way forward than devolution may be found. I do not wish to restrict the scope of future discussion, but I shall explain why I still believe that movement towards devolution is the right course. In all my talks recently, I have made clear the continuing commitment of both Governments to the Anglo-Irish Agreement, which commitment was repeated yesterday by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and the Taoiseach.

The agreement embodies certain fundamental principles which are vital to Northern Ireland's future. They include the affirmation by both Governments that the status of Northern Ireland can be changed only by consent, acceptance of the need for close security co-operation with the Irish Government in our common cause against terrorism, the need to increase confidence among the minority community in the administration of Northern Ireland affairs and support for progress towards devolution. Those are the principles to which both Governments are committed.

I have also made it clear in discussions with the political parties that I remain ready to listen to and to consider concerns about the agreement, which I know are widely felt. I have made it clear that any wider discussions between the parties should take place without preconditions—I stress that again—and that such discussions are quite separate from the workings of the agreement.

[Mr. King]

We and the Irish Government are due to review the workings of the Intergovernmental Conference later this year. A devolved settlement would have major implications for the agreement, as devolved matters would be removed from the ambit of the conference. The greater the devolution, the wider the impact.

The thrust of my discussions with the parties to date has been to seek movement to or towards devolution. It is clear from the history of the past 15 years that lasting agreement on devolution is difficult to achieve. It requires adjustments on the part of everyone. Those adjustments will not be easy to make or to make quickly. Nevertheless, I continue to believe that movement towards or to devolution would best serve the interests of all the people of Northern Ireland.

There are three fundamental reasons for my belief. With every year of direct rule that passes it becomes ever clearer that the elected representatives of the Province lack adequate opportunity to participate in and take responsibility for decisions about the future of Northern Ireland. A devolved legislative assembly would offer people from Northern Ireland control over local services across the Province and real authority over, for example, priorities for education, industrial development, personal social services and the environment. Those are all matters for which local elected representatives should take responsibility.

The second fundamental point is that my talks with the parties have confirmed that devolution is the form of government most likely to command widespread acceptance and support in the community. I do not underestimate the wide differences of perception nor the past difficulties in seeking to achieve devolution. The parties tell me they support the objective of devolution and I believe that they are more likely to agree on steps in that direction than any other.

One of the most important reasons for seeking movement towards devolution—the hon. Member for Foyle got to the heart of this in the quotation I gave earlier—is that two traditions have to live together in Northern Ireland. Sectarianism must be rooted out of the Province. It is no good political leaders criticising sectarianism on the streets when all too often the main political parties appear to be trapped within its confines and are not seen to be giving any leadership in working constructively together with the other tradition.

Movement towards devolution would demonstrate that leadership and would return to Northern Ireland a much greater measure of responsibility for its own affairs. I have noticed comments recently about Northern Ireland being treated as a colony and people have complained about its status as a colony. Yet those comments are made by people who have consistently refused to pursue the opportunities for much greater responsibility for the affairs of the Province.

I do not suggest that a devolved form of government will be established easily or overnight. It is probable that, initially, it may be easier to reach agreement on steps towards devolution which might provide for a greater local input to decision-making. I see the next positive step as being for the political parties to start talking about those things together with the Government. With the benefit of the bilateral exploratory discussions behind us I believe we should now be looking for ways of quickening the pace and making further realistic and sustained progress. The next step is clearly inter-party dialogue about the future arrangements for Government in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Ian Gow (Eastbourne): Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Mr. King: If my hon. Friend will forgive me, I will not give way.

I know very well that those suggestions can immediately give rise to every sort of problem and difficulty. The most amateur politician in Northern Ireland has no difficulty inventing or identifying an obstacle to any course of action. We ought to take as our text for today the remembrance that this is the 14th occasion on which the temporary provisions have been renewed. It is the 14th occasion on which we have failed to make progress because on every occasion somebody has managed to find an obstacle or a difficulty or present a reason why nobody is willing to talk.

I say to all hon. Members who will take part in this debate, we have had problems about maintaining a dialogue. We are now, I hope, going to see part of the dialogue take place. That is what the United Kingdom Parliament should make possible. We shall see now whether people wish to identify the obstacles or whether they wish to move forward and see whether there is some way in which we can make a constructive contribution.

I cannot compel agreement but I can certainly do all I can to point the way. I have had the honour of being Secretary of State for nearly three years and I hope that hon. Members will concede that I have sought to show my commitment to the Province and my admiration for the people who live there for their courage and resilience against what is often appalling provocation and trial. We owe it to the people of Northern Ireland, who are my great encouragement in my work, to see whether we can point the way forward. It is what the people want and I hope that this 14th renewal debate can be the occasion on which we respond to their cry. I hope that every right hon. and hon. Member who takes part in the debate will see ways in which, instead of identifying the obstacles, they can recognise where there may be bridges to cross so that we can embark on a more constructive phase.

6.36 pm

Mr. Kevin McNamara (Kingston upon Hull, North): For the 14th year in succession we are being asked to renew direct rule in Northern Ireland. On the previous such occasion the Secretary of State, newly reconfirmed in his position, said:

> "I am moving for the 13th time an interim extension order."—[*Official Report*, 7 July 1987; Vol. 119, c. 205.]

I interpreted that, I hope charitably, as a slip of the tongue. Perhaps, carrying his awesome responsibilities, he felt that he was moving the order for the 13th time. If the former was correct, it was the third such order. If the latter was correct, perhaps he should have thought that it was the 19th or 20th time. Perhaps that is the reason why the press have been unkindly suggesting that the right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine) is waiting in the wings to do for Northern Ireland what he did for Liverpool—one garden festival but the basic problems left unsolved. The thought of the right hon. Member for Henley as the McClark Kent of Stormont castle boggles the imagination. I hope that we will hear no more of it.

What worries me is that there may come a time when the House is asked to renew direct rule for the 19th or 20th time. I am sure that if those who took part in the debate on 15 July 1974, when the legislation that we are renewing went through all its stages in one day, had known that they would have been extending the extension 15 years later, they would have reacted differently. The Bill went through all its stages without a Division on a point of principle. On the one Division that did occur, the Ayes were a mere 11.

It was clear at the time that the Bill was generally welcomed by the Unionists, but there were serious misgivings by the Nationalists. My then hon. Friend the Member for Belfast, West, now Lord Fitt, said:

> "I cannot pretend to welcome the Bill, coming as it does in the wake of the downfall of the Executive, the power sharing Government and the Sunningdale Agreement which I believe had the support of many people in Northern Ireland who wanted to see justice and a fair Government."—*[Official Report, 15 July 1974; Vol. 877, c. 66.]*

The direct provision in the Bill was incidental to its central intent, which, as hon. Members will recall, was the establishment of the constitutional convention

> "for the purpose of considering what provision for the government of Northern Ireland is likely to command the most widespread acceptance throughout the community there."

After 14 years of direct rule, and knowing the lack of success of the Convention, we can only conclude that, although the people of Northern Ireland are united in their dislike of direct rule, it is at present—regrettably—the only type of government which is tolerable for most in both traditions; it is a highest common factor form of government. If that is the case, so far as I am concerned it sticks in the throat. I dislike the concept of direct rule and I am sure that most people in Northern Ireland—Unionists and Nationalists alike—regard it as second best. It is patronising, undemocratic, unaccountable, remote and inefficient, and it has gone on for too long.

It was interesting that the Secretary of State referred to some powers which could return to Northern Ireland. One is no doubt education. We are imposing on Northern Ireland an education system designed for England and Wales when every voice of popular opinion in Northern Ireland—I stress, every voice—is against the bulk of those provisions and proposals. However, what is even more interesting is that it lies within the powers of the Members of Parliament of both communities in Northern Ireland to take those provisions from the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State and to decide their own future in the Six Counties of Northern Ireland.

It often seems that for Northern Ireland, legislation which is intended to be permanent proves temporary, and legislation which is intended to be temporary, distressingly, becomes too persistent. The emergency provisions legislation has been with us since 1973. The temporary provisions of the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1972 have been with us since and the emergency provisions of the Payments for Debt Act 1971 have been with us since. We have been renewing interim period extension orders for 14 years.

Surely it is time that everybody involved made a determined effort to get rid of all the apparatus of extraordinary legislation relating to Northern Ireland. Opposition Members would be happy if we could begin with direct rule and transfer much of what we discuss here to representatives of the people of Northern Ireland, sitting in Belfast.

Perhaps we should take a few moments to review some of the ways in which during the past year the Government have exercised the authority that was vested in them by the Northern Ireland Act 1974.

The Secretary of State referred to a number of security measures as items for possible future legislation. Subject always to examination, we will give our full support to anything that can stop the godfathers: the trafficking in drugs; extortion; and the falsifying of accounts. We will support such measures, always subject to the content of the legislation and the way in which it is to be implemented.

I hope that when the Minister replies he will respond to my next point. At the time of the Private Thain matter, the general impression was that the position of prisoners held at the Secretary of State's pleasure, and especially those convicted between the ages of 18 and 21, would be carefully examined. In a recent letter to me, the Secretary of State said that he was still considering what to do about that. It would be helpful to the House if we could have some announcement on that.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Leicester, South (Mr. Marshall) will talk about economic matters, I should like to refer to some other events of the past year which the Secretary of State glossed over to some extent. It was announced in 1987 that the Secretary of State was considering the reintroduction of an oath against violence as a condition of election to local government, a requirement specifically outlawed previously by the Conservative Government in 1973.

The Government have refused to repeal the Payments for Depts Act 1971 under which, in the first three quarters of 1987, they clawed back £1,023,053 of invalidity benefit from disabled people in Northern Ireland relating to an emergency dating back to internment and Stormont legislation. In 1987, the Government also announced their intention to end single payments for social fund payments. That step will have a disproportionate effect on Northern Ireland, where unemployment and poverty are greater than in any other part of Britain.

The Government displayed an extraordinary mixture of arrogance and insensitivity in their inept and craven response to the Stalker-Sampson report. Opposition Members demanded a judicial inquiry at the time. Civil liberties organisations, such as the National Council for Civil Liberties in London, and the Committee on the Administration of Justice in Belfast, also called for a judicial inquiry, joining our demand. Now Amnesty International, an organisation which produces reports that the Government respect when they apply to the Soviet Union, Uganda or Indonesia, has called for a judicial inquiry into the disputed killings in Northern Ireland—a call which the Secretary of State has rejected.

There is also today's surprising report from the police authority which the Secretary of State glossed over quickly. That is an extraordinary and amazing situation. By a majority of one, the police authority concluded

> "that it was not necessary to appoint an investigating officer to enquire further into Mr. Sampson's observations",

and resolved that no disciplinary proceedings needed to be taken in any of the three cases.

It is extraordinary how that majority of one in that police authority should come to back three senior officers. I would have loved to be a fly on the wall and to hear how that majority was achieved and what happened. By no stretch of the imagination can that majority of one be

[Mr. Kevin McNamara]

regarded as a unanimous decision and vote of confidence in the three senior police officers of the most controversial police force in the United Kingdom. Of course, it was democratic and it was a majority of one, but let us see what that majority of one decided that they would not inquire into.

The police authority stated:

> "Mr. Sampson commented that the conduct of the three Chief Officers justified criticism and referred to short-comings in both operational and administrative matters. The criticisms revolved around operational planning, operational procedures, the conduct of an investigation into certain matters arising out of two of the shootings and an alleged lack of assistance to the Stalker/Sampson enquiry team. The officers concerned strongly denied that these criticisms were valid."

There was a majority of one in a police authority of 16. Was that majority of one achieved by the casting vote? How many people were present and voted on that occasion? A planted question was tabled today about what is to happen to the new police authority. It would be nice to know how many of that minority will be reappointed and, for that matter, how many of the majority.

The one thing that is certain is that that vote by the police authority will not do anything to restore confidence. If the three top officers are still not to be investigated—I should state immediately that the authority said that it was not culpability that was at issue, but a possible further investigation, presumably to find whether they were culpable, in view of what Mr. Sampson said and in view of their escape by one vote—that is scarcely something that will give confidence about the administration of security in Northern Ireland.

That issue raises questions about the other matters into which Chief Constable Kelly has been looking because if those three senior officers have got off without even an inquiry, by a majority decision, democracy is working for those three senior officers for whom there was a vote, but for other officers there is straight disciplinary procedure —although it would look most unfair if strong disciplinary charges were preferred lower down the line. If disciplinary charges are deserved—and we do not yet know what is in the report—they should be preferred, but if they are preferred against the juniors, their superiors should be investigated for culpability. If there are two standards in this matter, it cannot be a good omen for morale within the force or for the general organisation and support for the rule of law in Northern Ireland.

In a sense, all this was to be expected when the Government did not support the rule of law and, for reasons of national security, the Attorney-General, or the Director of Public Prosecutions following the advice of the Attorney-General, decided not to prefer criminal charges. That was straight Government interference, which is why we need to have a proper judicial inquiry. What happened just does not stand up.

The country will face widespread and sustained national and international criticism and the Government will no doubt persist with their transparent arguments against a judicial inquiry. We in the Opposition have not changed our minds, and perhaps the Government will reconsider and change their position, for it is certain that the killings in Armagh and the inquiries and procedures that followed will not go away; they will continue to haunt the Government, to undermine confidence in the security forces and to demonstrate the Government's spurious claim to adhere to the rule of law.

The Government's insensitivity to Irish sensibilities has been called into question in other areas. Events in Gibraltar and what followed undid what progress had been made following the adoption of more sensitive policing methods for Republican funerals. Timidity in relation to reforms in the administration of justice resulted in a general perception among Nationalists that nothing had or would change.

There was a most extraordinary exchange between former members of the Fine Gael Government, who negotiated the Anglo-Irish Agreement, and the British Government, alleging bad faith, failure to live up to undertakings, and misrepresentation. The collapse of the supergrass system was seen as a defeat of Government policies, rather than as a concession to Nationalist and international feeling.

Only the Government tried to have it both ways. To the Unionist parties they said, "We cannot interfere with the judiciary," and to the Nationalist groups they said, "This is all part of the Anglo-Irish Agreement. It shows that it is working and supergrasses have gone." The Government have refused to budge on the Diplock courts and internment powers. The improvements made—and some have been made—are simply viewed with a degree of cynicism and indifference. Over the past year the Government cannot claim much to their credit on those matters.

We welcome the progress that has been made in conjunction with the Irish Government, and the steps taken by the security forces in finding arms and the proper apprehension of people involved in violence. We rejoice when people are brought to trial and convicted, and we are sad when the Government seem to embark on other courses of action which bring Britain's reputation and the rule of law into question.

In November 1985, when we discussed direct rule, my right hon. Friend the Member for Islwyn (Mr. Kinnock) said of the people of the Unionist tradition in Northern Ireland:

> "I recognise their fears, I know they feel beleaguered, and excluded from designing their own destiny, that they live in constant anxiety about a sell-out and that any failure by a British Government to explain their intentions heightens those feelings of fear. I know that they feel that deals have been done behind their back, and some will feel deep and genuine resentment at that . . . I plead with the majority of non-Nationalists not to be blinded by prejudice. I ask them to see that the sole beneficiaries of a breakdown would be the terrorists, that the objectives of the constitutional nationalists for the foreseeable future are limited to reconciliation and stability, and to see their acceptance of consent as the absolute precondition of any change. I ask them to see that the common cause of peace is a greater cause than the preservation of this miserable murderous status quo."—*[Official Report*, 26 November 1985; Vol. 87, c.753.]

It was in such conciliatory terms and with an impassioned plea to both sides to try to break out of their ideological prisons that my right hon. Friend called for support for the Anglo-Irish Agreement. He saw it as an opportunity for all parties in Northern Ireland to think again and as an agreement which offered something to all sides. It offered them then, as now, a real alternative to direct rule.

The problem with the Anglo-Irish Agreement in so far as it affects these issues is that it seems to have closed off in people's minds the ability to see the opportunities for a devolved Administration which existed long before the agreement was invented. Since 1969 there have been a series of major initiatives. Sunningdale and the power-sharing executive collapsed in 1974, the convention of 1975 failed, the Atkins conference was abandoned in 1980 and Prior's rolling devolution scheme, out of Mawhinney, produced no power sharing.

Mr. James Molyneaux (Lagan Valley): But he was promoted.

Mr. McNamara: That may yet happen to the right hon. Gentleman.

All those constructions were attempts to find a basis for a devolved Administration in Northern Ireland. All necessitated reaching an agreement between Nationalists and Unionists, and with the British Government. But because the possibility of devolution was written into the Anglo-Irish Agreement, suddenly for those opposed to the agreement the concept of devolved government seemed tainted in a way that it had not been before, at least in principle, except perhaps in the Sunningdale agreement.

As an example, I wish to consider briefly what seemed to be the essence of what the hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley) said on this matter. If I am inaccurate in summing up what he seemed to say on "Panorama", I am sure that he will forgive me and explain his comments to me. I am considering the possibilities of devolution as an alternative to the direct rule provisions in the order.

The hon. Gentleman seemed to be saying that there were three preconditions for talks between himself and the right hon. Member for Lagan Valley (Mr. Molyneaux), on the one hand, and the Taoiseach, Mr. Charles Haughey, on the other. First, he said, there would have to be an internal settlement in Northern Ireland so that the talks were between Dublin and representatives of both traditions in Northern Ireland. Secondly, there had to be a suspension of the Anglo-Irish Agreement, so in practice, an end to meetings of the Intergovernmental Conference and the closure of the secretariat. Thirdly, there had to be an end to talks between the Social Democratic and Labour party and Sinn Fein.

Rev. Ian Paisley: The hon. Gentleman does not have that right, but I shall correct him in my reply. I made it clear that the internal settlement had to come first; that there could be no negotiations until the other prerequisities, for which we have a mandate in our election manifesto, are carried out, and that any talks between Dublin and Belfast would be on a plain of equality with the people responsible for the government of Northern Ireland dealing with matters of mutual interest with the Government in Dublin.

Mr. McNamara: I gave a fair summary of what the hon. Gentleman said, although perhaps not in the order that he would have wished. The problem is that, whatever the talks with Dublin, those representing the North would be speaking from a devolved government position. Although I want talks to take place between all parties on the island of Ireland, the correct people to talk to Dublin are Her Majesty's Government.

Ms. Clare Short (Birmingham, Ladywood): Surely we would all welcome talks between Unionists, Nationalists, Dublin and Belfast and encourage any agreement that they can reach, rather than get in the way of it?

Mr. McNamara: I was not saying that. My speech in Belfast yesterday made it clear that I would welcome talks among all the constitutional parties, North and South, to work out their future government. That is the whole essence of Labour party policy and it is our position. My hon. Friend, at least on this occasion, has correctly stated our policy.

In summing up the position of the hon. Member for Antrim, North, my argument related to the talks that my hon. Friend the Member for Foyle (Mr. Hume) and his party are having with the Provisional Sinn Fein. Their success will obviously depend on whether he can persuade Sinn Fein to end its support for the campaign of violence being conducted by the Provisional IRA and to recognise the significance for all in Ireland of article 1(c) of the Anglo-Irish Agreement, in which the two Governments declare:

"if in the future a majority of the people of Northern Ireland clearly wish for and formally consent to the establishment of a united Ireland, they will introduce and support in the respective Parliaments legislation to give effect to that wish."

In that sense, there is no way that our party, in supporting the agreement—and interpreting it generously for the Government—would stand in the way of the wishes of a majority in Northern Ireland if they wanted to work towards constitutional unification.

Mr. Peter Robinson: Would the hon. Gentleman clarify his party's position? If a majority in Northern Ireland decided upon some course of action other than entering into an all-Ireland republic, would his party stand in the way?

Mr. McNamara: The provisions of the Anglo-Irish Agreement, to which we adhere, and to which our Government and the Republic of Ireland Government were signatories, stated clearly, directly and specifically that Northern Ireland remains part of the United Kingdom until such time as laid down in paragraph 1(c).

Rev. Ian Paisley: Read it.

Mr. McNamara: I do not have a copy with me. If the hon. Gentleman is trying to tease out of me whether we would go along with the idea of an independent Northern Ireland, the answer simply is no. We do not think that that would in any way help the people of Northern Ireland, the people of Ireland or the people of this country. However, if the Democratic Unionist party is now in favour of an independent Six Counties, perhaps it should make that clear.

Rev. Ian Paisley *rose*——

Mr. McNamara: No, I shall not—*[Interruption.]*

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): Order. The hon. Gentleman is not giving way.

Mr. McNamara: If the hon. Gentleman was stating that as his party's position, we know where the Democratic Unionist party stands. If it is not, when he makes his speech he can say so. In his "Panorama" performance, when driven on that particular point, he said, "If needs be, that is it," or words to that effect.

[Mr. McNamara]

My hon. Friend the Member for Foyle and his party are seeking to bring an end to violence in the island of Ireland and to influenc the Provisional Sinn Fein to achieve that with the IRA. If that aim is achieved, all hon. Members should applaud and welcome it, because it gets rid of one of the major difficulties to progress in Northern Ireland for the good of the people of Northern Ireland and, especially, for the Nationalists.

The Opposition hope that my hon. Friend the Member for Foyle will be successful in his discussions with the Provisional Sinn Fein because we believe that—*[Interruption.]* Does the Minister of State want to make a comment?

The Minister of State, Northern Ireland Office (Mr. John Stanley): No.

Mr. McNamara: We believe that anything that is likely to end violence is important.

Mr. Alton: Before leaving that point, I am sure that the hon.Gentleman would wish to clarify his position. Surely he is not suggesting that it is proper or sensible for people from Opposition parties to have direct talks with Sinn Fein.

Mr. McNamara: The hon. Gentleman must speak for his party, but I shall make the Labour party's position absolutely clear. The Labour party will not share platforms or talk to people who advocate a policy of the Armalite on the ballot box. In my first speech on Northern Ireland matters, after my right hon. Friend had given me the honour of Front Bench responsibility, I made that point clearly. That is the Labour party's position; it is committed to seeking a united Ireland by consent.

If my hon. Friend the Member for Foyle and his colleagues who are living in and representing people in Northern Ireland, feel that they can bring those who are indulging in some of the most horrific forms of violence —some of which we witnessed yesterday—to stop and instead to pursue a constitutional and democratic way of seeking to achieve their aim, I do not think anybody should seek to prevent them from doing that. We have every confidence that our sister party in the Socialist International is taking the best road for all the people in the island of Ireland.

The second argument of the hon. Member for Antrim, North was that the Anglo-Irish Agreement should be suspended, which is the point from which I started a few moments ago. The important point is that he is looking at the agreement in the wrong way. The agreement carries at its heart the seeds of its own destruction in many of those clauses that are most objectionable to its Unionist opponents. The Opposition support the agreement and will continue to do so until there is something wider, better and in concrete terms that is acceptable to both communities. When that becomes available we will, quite properly, accept it, but until then we shall support the agreement.

This is only our third debate on the review of direct rule since the agreement was made. In all the previous 11 debates, Opposition Members wrestled with the problem of how to end direct rule and to arrive at an internal settlement for Northern Ireland. Surely, after all that time, we should not countenance the argument being moved back, so that instead of being, "We must have an internal settlement before we can end direct rule," the argument becomes, "We must have a suspension of the Anglo-Irish Agreement before we can have an internal settlement before we can end direct rule." If we are not careful, such an argument could regress indefinitely or become circular —something, I fear, that might already have happened.

Unionist Members have argued repeatedly for increased security in the Province, and have condemned the Anglo-Irish Agreement as a failure because it has not ended the violence. There is some irony in their argument, for while violence has undoubtedly continued, and the latest horrific, frightening episode was in Linaskea yesterday—it is a strange policy to unite Ireland by blowing it apart and destroying its young people—the agreement has clearly led to improvements in security and security co-operation. In fact, security has been on the agenda at 15 of the 20 meetings of the Intergovernmental Conference, and in the majority of them it has been the major item for discussion.

I have no criticism of that; I welcome any discussion on security and also the increased evidence of co-operation on both sides of the border in the determination to defeat those engaged in violence for political ends. However, I would not minimise, to the extent that the Secretary of State might have done, the ability to do it on an all-Ireland basis. We would welcome the prospect of the reduction of the remit of the Intergovernmental Conference as a result of an agreement on a devolved administration in Northern Ireland.

Let me end with a brief mention of the review of the working of the Intergovernmental Conference. There is no reason to believe that those who are not party to the review —everyone, that is, other than the two Governments—will be able to have a direct and immediate input. Yet I would like to see both Governments using the November review to encourage the Unionists to come in out of the cold and to see whether they can find a way in which those parties can have an input and a say in matters which come before, and are discussed in, the Intergovernmental Conference, and in matters which come before the civil servants in Maryfield.

The approach of the third anniversary of the signing of the agreement could serve as a catalyst for the review by all parties of past attitudes to the agreement. Out of that may come the potential for political movement.

All hon. Members owe it to the people of Northern Ireland to find a way out of the impasse which continues. We need to remind ourselves that, quite apart from the security matters, dreadful and important though they are, and the constitutional matters that are also important, there are social and material matters unrelated to the national question which are of importance to the people of Northern Ireland—concern for jobs, education for their children, security, decent housing and an opportunity to live in peace. Those are the issues that we should be talking about which could properly be the subject about which representatives of the people of Northern Ireland could talk about in a devolved Assembly in Northern Ireland.

If we take the steps necessary to end direct rule, we shall also have moved some distance down the path to peace and reconciliation; to normality in Northern Ireland. We on the Opposition Benches are committed to working for that. We urge the Government and all hon. Members to bend every effort in that direction. If the 13th debate on an interim period extension order led eventually to talks without prejudice with the Secretary of State, let us hope that the 14th will lead to an agreement without any prejudices.

7.11 pm

Sir John Biggs-Davison (Epping Forest): That this is to be, as the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara) has just reminded us, the 14th interim period extension order, illustrates the truth of the French saying that nothing endures like the provisional. Apart from the post-Sunningdale period of the power-sharing Executive, Northern Ireland has been subjected to quasi-colonial rule by mainland Ministers, and I share some of the criticisms made by the hon. Gentleman of the system of direct rule.

The hon. Gentleman also referred to the extension of abortive—I would say lethal—political initiatives. Three Assemblies have been convened and done away with. I say three by including the Constitutional Convention, which was the scene of turbulent events. I recall a friend of mine who was an Assemblyman and was asked by a friend of his what had gone on during the riot in the Constitutional Convention. He said that he was sorry but he could not help. He could not say anything about it because Mrs. Paisley was sitting on his head—Mrs. Paisley being a member of that Constitutional Convention as well as the hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley).

A hard-pressed Province is now threatened by another Assembly—a legislative assembly, which means an assembly that will make laws separate from this sovereign Parliament. I am disturbed, dismayed and distressed by the insistence of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State on devolved government as distinct from devolved administration—the phrase used in the Anglo-Irish Agreement. My right hon. Friend's predecessors have pursued the will-o'-the-wisp of a form of devolved government acceptable to both Unionists and Nationalists.

I wish that Her Majesty's Government would not persist in policies and aims that distance Northern Ireland from the rest of the United Kingdom. How many decades will have to pass before a Conservative and Unionist Government return to the general election commitment drawn up by Airey Neave? He had the workable alternative to direct rule. I am surprised to hear my right hon. Friend say that devolved government had the backing of both Nationalists and Unionists in the Province. Perhaps the right hon. Member for Lagan Valley (Mr. Molyneaux) can help the House on that matter if he catches your eye, Madam Deputy Speaker.

When it is argued that devolution, in the sense of devolved government, is what the people of Northern Ireland want, I would ask my right hon. Friend whether he has noticed and studied the high degree of support in both parts of the community revealed in public opinion surveys for what is loosely described as integration, by which we mean not governing Northern Ireland as if Belfast were the same as Finchley—not at all. By integration we mean a distinct system of administrative devolution from this Parliament appropriate to Northern Ireland. Can we not get out of the rut of failed policies and work to bring Northern Ireland into the mainstream of United Kingdom politics so that in time Right and Left can replace orange and green, as has happened over the years in the mainland cities of Irish settlement?

Were we to do that we would be serving notice on the terrorists that their separatist game was up. Then again, it would remove the fear that closer partnership between the United Kingdom and the Republic spelt the betrayal of Unionism—the fear of deals behind Unionist backs, to use the phrase of the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North.

The hon. Gentleman and I both want something better than the Anglo-Irish Agreement. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State was looking forward to the November review of the working of the Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Conference. I am glad of the growing support for an idea which I think I was the first to put forward in the House months ago, for the replacement of what one might call Hillsborough Mark I by Hillsborough Mark II—the replacement of an unequal treaty by a fully reciprocal treaty.

I am one of those who would welcome the setting-up of a parliamentary body representing the Parliament of the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland. I have always hoped for a still closer link between two sovereign states already in unique relationship. A united Ireland is not on, except within united islands.

7.18 pm

Mr. James Molyneaux (Lagan Valley): The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara), who I appreciate has another engagement and must leave, quoted the Leader of Her Majesty's Opposition as saying that the Unionist representatives of Northern Ireland would have a say in our own destiny.

I must respectfully qualify that, because if we go for devolution, as the Leader of the Opposition and the hon. Gentleman seemed to be suggesting, we would not have a say in controlling our destiny. I am not saying that we should be in absolute control of our destiny—none of my hon. Friends would say that—but the Anglo-Irish Agreement makes it clear that, in the event of any level of devolution being installed, only certain matters will be devolved. The phrase that appears in every other item of legislation affecting Northern Ireland—"transferred matters"—is not used.

There was meant to be a world of difference, because those certain matters would be decided upon by the Anglo-Irish Conference. It would not be decided en bloc that these transferred matters would be automatically devolved as from the date of implementation. The conference would decide that certain matters—and decide which ones—would be devolved to a structure at Stormont. What it gives, it can take away. That is why devolution under the auspices of the Anglo-Irish Agreement is unacceptable for us.

I want to be generous to the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North because he did the House a real service. I shall return later to something that he said. Suffice it to say for the moment that I am sure that my hon. Friends on both sides of the House are grateful to him for the Opposition's assurance that there will be no political or military withdrawal from Northern Ireland. I am also grateful for the assurance—it was implicit and deliberately inserted in his speech, so I am certain that he meant it —that the people of Northern Ireland will never be thrust out of the United Kingdom against their wishes. Those are valuable reassurances.

[Mr. James Molyneaux]

Hon. Members who entered the House after the general election last year may be somewhat puzzled by the charade in which we are engaged. They have the opportunity to come here—not many of them have availed themselves of it, and I do not blame them—to take their seats in the circus for the first time in their lives. It is a circus to which they will be invited every year of their political careers unless—this is an important proviso—the House at long last decides that enough is enough.

Proof that this is a circus can be found in the *Official Report* of 2 July 1984, when the then Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, now Lord Prior, said:

> "the Government hope in the coming months to have detailed discussions with the Northern Ireland parties. Our purpose will be to see whether agreement can be reached on arrangements for enabling locally elected representatives in Northern Ireland to exercise at least some of the functions which are currently discharged by Ministers answerable to this House."—[*Official Report*, 2 July 1984; Vol. 63, c. 107.]

I do not think the present Secretary of State would disagree if I said that his words tonight roughly followed those lines. He did not depart from them to any great extent.

For 14 years, successive Secretaries of State have been persuaded, or perhaps programmed, to churn out this sort of phrase. They do not believe one word of it. True to form, the Northern Ireland Office is yet again asking the House to renew a temporary interim order for the 14th year. We owe it to the honour of the House to consider whether we can, with any justification, continue to append the adjective "temporary". It is wearing a bit thin after 14 years.

For the benefit of those who consider this ritual to be necessary, let me explain that it is nothing of the sort. Today's exercise is not the inevitable consequence of the removal of Stormont in 1972, when there would have been no difficulty in Parliament saying that it had removed devolved government and proposing then to govern Northern Ireland like Scotland, for example. But Whitehall opposed such a course, for a sinister reason. Northern Ireland had to be kept detachable. So this Heath Robinson tumbril was wheeled out and kept in readiness —it still is—to trundle Northern Ireland out of the United Kingdom when the opportunity presents itself.

If anyone doubts me, he need only look at how the Order in Council procedure fits so neatly into the halfway house that we know as the Anglo-Irish Agreement. Northern Ireland has been kept separate from the rest of the Kingdom. It is simplicity itself to exercise joint London-Dublin control over the Province without the House of Commons even being aware of it. Decisions can be made in the joint conference, so let us have none of this nonsense about sounding out, expressing views and considering this, that and the other. We know perfectly well that decisions are reached in the joint conference which override submissions from the natives of Northern Ireland and from those of us who represent them.

Unlike the Prime Minister and other senior Ministers who make statements after ministerial meetings and summits, the Secretary of State—it is not his fault; he is caught in the tram lines—does not make a statement to the House after each meeting of the Anglo-Irish Conference. He dare not do so, because Parliament would then be alerted to what is being done behind its back. I am glad to see the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, the hon. Member for Peterborough (Dr. Mawhinney), on the Front Bench. On 30 March this year he published his proposals for educational reform in Northern Ireland. As happened with the parallel proposals for England and Wales, his proposals have been opposed by the Churches in Ireland—they are all-Ireland Churches, so we can call them that.

Before the Churches could receive a response to their submissions they read in the newspapers and in the communiqué issued on 17 June that the Anglo-Irish Conference had discussed those proposals. The communiqué states truthfully and bluntly:

> "The Conference discussed also the Consultative Paper outlining proposals for education reform in Northern Ireland. The Irish side drew attention to concerns which had been expressed in the nationalist community about certain aspects of the proposals."

No doubt that intervention by the Dublin Government was welcomed by one of the Churches, but what about the other three? It is true that they can make representations and lobby hon. Members who represent Northern Ireland, but the Minister will not heed what is said in the House.

For that matter—this may not have occurred to hon. Members—the Minister is not even bound to heed the clear view of the House. But he is bound, through his right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, to—I quote the agreement—

> "make determined efforts to reach agreement on proposals put forward by Dublin".

So he can make determined efforts and reach agreement with Dublin, and the House is utterly impotent. Take it or leave it, the Order in Council procedure will ultimately be seen through in 90 minutes flat by the payroll vote.

Many other examples from the communiqué of 17 June illustrate all too clearly how the democratic processes are being bypassed and rendered invalid. For example, appropriation orders and debates on them are rendered utterly pointless. The Anglo-Irish Conference has discussed, and presumably agreed, how British taxpayers' money will be spent in west Belfast. I am not opposed to that. I suppose that the taxpayer will learn in due course of the amount expended on his behalf in that operation. I do not know whether it is intended eventually to extend the scheme to the other 16 constituencies, or whether this is a specific privilege to be accorded to the one constituency in Northern Ireland whose Member of Parliament never takes the trouble to take his seat.

Another item of expenditure is mentioned in a mysterious reference to the economic and social problems of what is called the north-west of the island. That topic has never been mentioned in the House, as far as I can remember. So what need is there for appropriation order debates, including the one that is due to follow tonight?

The inherent defects of the 1974 Act as an instrument for government have been compounded by the imposition of the Anglo-Irish Agreement. What was objectionable in 1974 has now been made completely unacceptable, not just to Northern Ireland but surely to a Parliament which serves as a model for democratic structures everywhere. Northern Ireland Office Ministers are not required—nor, for that matter, are they permitted—to come to the House to explain the views put to them by their Dublin counterparts on any given clause or section of a Bill, let alone on an Order in Council.

When under pressure from a Dublin Government to

> "make determined efforts to reach agreement",

the Order in Council process is a godsend for Northern Ireland Ministers. They need only gloss over the awkward points in a very brief opening speech in a 90-minute debate. In an even briefer winding-up speech, perhaps only 10 minutes, they can with no difficulty ignore searching questions. As I have said, at the end of one and a half hours the payroll vote will see the Government home and dry.

As long as that utterly pernicious system is sustained, it is idle and useless to follow the Secretary of State into discussions on wider issues. That is because the truly monstrous combination of the Order in Council system and the Anglo-Irish Agreement will continue to strangle all democratic development. Either of those monstrosities makes progress and good government impossible.

Ms. Short: I understand the right hon. Gentleman's frustration at the Order in Council procedure. Those of us who have worked in Standing Committees have the same experience. It does not matter how telling the point or how rational the argument, because the Government's vote can push anything through and there is no respect for the quality of the argument from the Opposition. I fear that if the right hon. Gentleman succeeds in getting legislative change other than by Order in Council, he will have exactly the same frustration as he has now.

Mr. Molyneaux: I am grateful to the hon. Lady for her intervention because it gives me an opportunity to point to one or two occasions on which, because there was a certain co-ordination and cohesion on the Opposition Benches, we were able to make a dent in a Government with a majority of a 100. I mention, if I may dare, the Firearms (Amendment) Bill on which my party played no small part. We can make the Government listen and I am not as pessimistic as the hon. Lady seems to be about the possibility of our combining forces. The job of Opposition parties in any Parliament is to scrutinise, criticise and oppose the actions and decisions of the Government of the day, whatever their complexion. That is our role and I hope that in the days to come we will have a rather more effective combined Opposition.

Mr. Alton: I agree with the right hon. Gentleman. Does he agree that Orders in Council are brought before the House in a peremptory and rapid way and that that leaves so little time for debate that people end up being frustrated? Does he agree that the process does not leave much scope for rational politics?

Mr. Molyneaux: I agree entirely. In certain cases, where the order is of some importance, the process allows for what is called a consultative period. Submissions are made by all sorts of bodies and normally Members of Parliament and parliamentary parties make submissions as well. Education is one such important matter. However, I suspect that in the end the Minister with responsibility for education makes up his mind with the benefit of the advice he obtains from Dublin. All of us on the Opposition side will do our best to introduce some flexibility into his thinking, but unless the Opposition parties stick together and speak with a united voice, I doubt whether we will have much influence over the Minister.

Needless to say, my hon. Friends and I have no intention of giving any credibility to this phoney annual circus act beyond registering our disapproval in the Division Lobby. I shall end on a rather more positive note. The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North did us another service. I welcome his declaration as spokesman for the Opposition that he does not regard the Anglo-Irish Agreement as being written on tablets of stone. I understand that he said that in a speech published yesterday in Belfast.

Mr. Mallon: It was Charlie Haughey who said that.

Mr. Molyneaux: I understood from the hon. Member from Kingston upon Hull, North just before he left the Chamber that he had repeated it yesterday. That in itself is good news. However, the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North went beyond that and, as I recollect, he said that he was quite prepared to consider an alternative agreement, a wider and more workable agreement. The hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley) will agree that he and I have been saying that privately and then publicly for 10 months. We have said that our two parties are prepared to be positive. We are prepared to assist, to make our contribution to the design of a much wider, more workable and more practical agreement. We are genuine in saying that we regard such an agreement as a prerequisite.

That must be the starting point for everying else that has been talked about in the three speeches that we have heard so far. I hope that we can now persuade the Government to fall into line with the Opposition, with the three parties in the Dail and to say that they, too, are prepared to be flexible and to consider a more workable agreement.

7.35 pm

Sir Michael McNair-Wilson (Newbury): I should like to start by expressing my horror at the bombing of the school bus in Lisnaskea. I hope that the young girl who was so seriously injured will be able to overcome her injuries and resume a normal life. I should like to add my words to those of the Secretary of State in expressing my admiration for the way in which the security forces handle this most difficult and intractable problem of terrorism in Northern Ireland. We owe them all a huge debt of gratitude.

As we know, the debate is taking place against the background of the possible attempt to recreate some form of regional administration which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State outlined in his speech. We have just heard the reaction of the Leader of the Ulster Unionist party. What the right hon. Gentleman has said is of the greatest importance and must be taken very seriously by the Government if they want any attempt to create a devolved administration to have any success.

As hon. Members have said, the debate is taking place after almost three years of the Anglo-Irish Agreement and 14 years of direct rule. During all that time the emergency has continued. Instinctively, I welcome attempts to create a more effective system of local government in Northern Ireland, for I think it is generally agreed that since Stormont was taken out of the structure of government in 1972, the Province has had less local government than any other part of the United Kingdom. As we know, that serious deficiency continues from year to year.

After so many failed attempts to create new institutions —sometimes, I suspect, because the House refused to show proper sensitivity to the attitude of Ulster politicians—I am sure that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State is right to prepare the groundwork away from the gaze of the

[Sir Michael McNair-Wilson]

media and the public. I hope that he will not restrict himself to those policies put forward by his predecessors, which have so far yielded results of no consequence to the future good government of the Province.

In the course of his speech, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State seemed to be putting forward two ideas. In one he talked about the dialogue on Northern Ireland politics that this debate represents—as it should, for this is the Parliament of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. What is more, we know that that dialogue takes place in an assembly where sectarian, ethnic and religious differences play no part and where the issues involving the other regions of the United Kingdom are similarly discussed.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State then went on to talk about a devolved legislature in the Province of Northern Ireland. I repeat that we have been down that road before. That is why Northern Ireland has no local regional administration, that is why this debate is taking place 14 years on and why we shall continue to have these debates annually if we pursue a will-o'-the-wisp that is beyond catching and which will always elude us.

Sectarianism still exists in Northern Ireland. There are still two traditions and no legislative assembly can succeed while the two traditions have such basically different objectives. On the other hand, a devolved administration committed to local government could handle the local affairs of the Province and implement legislation passed in this House in a way in which sectarian and traditional differences would play only a small part.

As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State developed his ideas, I wondered whether he was not just picking up what had gone before over the years in the initiatives for Northern Ireland, and whether the Anglo-Irish Agreement was not the unseen hand manipulating the thinking of the Northern Ireland Office. Of course it is true that Northern Ireland is markedly different from other regions of the United Kingdom, not just because it is separated by sea and has a border with another state but because it has a divided population with one half—the larger half, if I may use that expression—bending towards Westminster and the minority leaning towards Dublin.

To that extent, the Anglo-Irish Agreement may seem to mirror the two traditions. No doubt that is why an impartial observer might expect peace, stability and reconcilation to be its natural outcome. As we all know, that has not been the case. In reality, the image in the mirror looks different according to who is holding up the looking-glass.

To Whitehall, the recognition by Dublin that the Province of Northern Ireland is part of the United Kingdom has been seen as such an important gain that Her Majesty's Government felt the South could have a say in the affairs of the North. In Dublin, the agreement represented an opportunity—the first that the Irish Government have had since the creation of the Province—to have a say in the affairs of the Province and, as the agreement states, to enable the Government of the Republic to put forward proposals for major legislation and on major policy issues where the interests of the minority community are significantly or especially affected

"if it should prove impossible to achieve and sustain devolution on a basis which secures widespread acceptance in Northern Ireland."

There are others who look into the glass. The Ulster Unionists, I suggest, see only English and Irish Ministers looking back at them and wonder why their own reflection is not there although they represent the overwhelming majority of people in Northern Ireland. Members of the SDLP are as happy to see the Taoiseach looking back at them as one of their own. As for Sinn Fein, if it looks at all, it would happily smash the mirror with an Armalite round or a bomb, because its political aims do not lie within the status quo and certainly do not include a British presence in Ulster. The mirror charms or repels each who looks into it according to his viewpoint but does little, if anything, to reconcile anyone to anyone else. It does not even reconcile Dublin to London.

We should not forget that the Prime Minister of the Republic, Mr. Charles Haughey, recently stated that his intention was

"to correct the historic inability of the British to understand Irish feelings."

With such a view, is it to be wondered that in recent months the Irish Government have taken a bolder and more interventionist approach in Northern Irish matters—as they did, for example, over the Stalker-Sampson inquiry and over the case of the Birmingham pub bombers? The Anglo-Irish Agreement gives them that say while devolved government is absent from the Province.

What now worries me is whether devolution, as spelt out in the agreement or as referred to by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State this afternoon, is to be what the British Government say it is to be or whether it must meet a formula made not only by the Government with the Northern Ireland political parties but by agreement with Dublin. Who is to decide what

"widespread acceptance in Northern Ireland"

means? That is the only condition on which the Anglo-Irish Agreement will not give the Dublin Government the right to put forward proposals for legislation and so on.

Surely, if there is enough common ground between the political parties in Northern Ireland—always excepting Sinn Fein—for the creation of a devolved administration it would not be right for Dublin to put a spanner in the works simply because it forgoes its right to put forward proposals for major legislation and on major policy issues.

I am convinced that an effective local administration in the Province, to which the community could bring its problems to have them discussed and solved, is far more likely to bring peace, stability and reconciliation than anything that representatives from London and Dublin could hope to achieve, particularly while Belfast seems to be the pig in the middle. No consultation machinery is built into the Anglo-Irish Agreement to enable local politicians to have a say about the vital policies affecting the place where they live and the people whom they represent. That cannot be right.

This is the Parliament of the United Kingdom. As we all know, Northern Ireland legislation is treated in the most arbitrary way possible. It is appalling to realise that the Northern Ireland Committee last met to discuss business on 26 June 1985, when it considered the draft gas order. In the past three years, a great deal of legislation affecting the Province has gone through the House but, as we all know, those orders were dispatched in the space of 90 minutes each.

I know of no reason why the Northern Ireland Committee should not be reconvened. It is in the Government's power to reconvene it. It would be a poor substitute for the legislative survey that a Second Reading debate provides, but it would at least allow Northern Ireland Members to consider legislation affecting their Province in more detail and with much greater care than can ever be done in those brief 90-minute debates on the orders.

I do not object to the debate on the extension of direct rule. If tonight we were debating an order that was to extend direct rule for another five years, I should not object, because I want to see this Parliament remain the sovereign Parliament of Northern Ireland, where its legislation is settled and where its great issues are debated. I also want to see, running alongside it, a local administration in the Province that gives Northern Ireland a local government structure on all fours with all the other regions of the United Kingdom. Without that, we are guilty of preventing democracy from playing its proper role in the governance of Northern Ireland.

7.50 pm

Mr. David Alton (Liverpool, Mossley Hill): I agree with what the hon. Member for Newbury (Sir M. McNair-Wilson) said about the need to use again the Northern Ireland Committee, which is allowable under Standing Order No. 99. That would be sensible, and I hope that it would not be long before it would have the chance to sit in Northern Ireland as well, as the Scottish Grand Committee sits in Edinburgh. However, I disagree with what the hon. Gentleman said about a rather diminished form of devolution, perhaps in the form of a regional assembly, running alongside Parliament. I should like to see full-blooded devolution, not just in Northern Ireland but in Scotland, Wales and the English regions.

The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara), speaking on behalf of the official Opposition, spoke about the outcome of the inquiry into the Royal Ulster Constabulary. That outcome, passed by a majority of one, is the worst of all worlds. I strongly support his call for a judicial inquiry. The House should give serious and urgent consideration to the establishment of a Select Committee to oversee the security services and the policing arrangements in a tense situation such as that in Northern Ireland.

The House is faced with several options. The first is the Government's option for steadfastly pursuing the objectives in the Anglo-Irish Agreement. Then there is the option that, to some extent, is favoured by the right hon. Member for Lagan Valley (Mr. Molyneaux), which is going back to pre-1985 direct rule and the mythology of a Northern Ireland that is as British as Finchley, to borrow a phrase used by the hon. Member for Epping Forest (Sir J. Biggs-Davison). The third option is that which I am sure the hon. Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short) will put forward if she catches your eye, Madam Deputy Speaker. That presents the idea of removing British troops and creating a united Ireland. That is a fairy-tale solution, which would simply replace one aggrieved minority with another.

I support renewal of the British commitment to Northern Ireland, because to do anything less would be to condemn the Province to even greater instability and to civil war. The first of those options, the one that the Government are presenting to the House, is the only realistic one. Any fundamental shift in our approach would be music to the ears of all the paramilitaries in Northern Ireland and any pretence at easy solutions, whether military or otherwise, is a lie. There are better and worse options and the development of the British-Irish Agreement, which is what I wish it were called, and the understanding that there now is between the British and Irish Governments, has created the best mechanism for achieving the reconciliation that I am sure is the objective of most hon. Members.

None of this should be shorthand for complacency. We must admit that the agreement has defects. It was born in a climate of secrecy and perceived treachery. Its biggest defect remains the exclusion of the Unionists, excluded initially by an over-secretive British Government and then self-excluded subsequently. For three years, the Unionists of Ulster have said no, but have largely failed until recently to offer constructive ways forward, with the exception of the task force report, with which the hon. Member for Belfast, East (Mr. Robinson) was associated.

Rev. Ian Paisley: Will the hon. Gentleman explain something to us, because we are in complete ignorance? I have read and re-read and parsed the Anglo-Irish Agreement, and that is something that many who have spoken in the House have not done, because they read into it things that do not occur in it. Where in the Anglo-Irish Agreement is there any provision for any contribution from the Unionists?

Mr. Alton: What the hon. Gentleman says is valid in the context of this arena and this Parliament, where he makes his contribution. If, instead of boycotting the agreement, he and others were to become participants in it, there is no reason why he should not make his contribution, in the House, to the Intergovernmental Conference. That is the way in which the Government speak directly to the Irish Government. If he is saying that, alongside the Intergovernmental Conference, there should be a new mechanism which allows for the Unionist Members of Northern Ireland to be able to make their input into that agreement, I would support that view.

Therefore, I hope that the hon. Gentleman will come forward with a constructive proposal, setting out in detail how he sees that working in practice. I hope that Unionists will end their boycott of the agreement and exercise their imagination in responding to Mr. Haughey's invitation to open-ended discussions.

I regret the outright refusal of the hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley) to take part in that process. However, I was pleased to hear the right hon. Member for Lagan Valley legitimately and reasonably ask to see the colour of the Taoiseach's money, so that we can see what he has in mind, rather than just accepting the invitations that he has issued from locations all over the world.

It is inevitable that, before the review of the Intergovernmental Conference and the agreement, there will be some manoeuvring, but if that degenerates into a game of hide and seek, the fragile prospect of historic direct talks will be dashed. There is a new mood in Ireland, and I was heartened when I was in Cork recently at the conference of our sister party in the Republic, the Progressive Democrats, to hear its leader, Mr. Desmond O'Malley, say:

[Mr. Alton]

> "Mutual suspicion in Northern Ireland is so deep that no agreement could possibly manage at once to satisfy all sides. But there can be no taking away from its fundamental achievement of creating a dynamic climate for change.
>
> That is why Nationalist politicians who only grudgingly accept the agreement are being totally ungenerous. They fail to appreciate the catalyst it has been in breaking the logjam of generations. That is why it was so sad to see it devalued by the present Taoiseach on his recent American fund-raising trip."

Mr. O'Malley went on to make a point that it is important that Unionists should hear:

> "The operation of the Agreement is due for review by the Dublin and London Governments by next November. That review is a glorious opportunity to extend the scope of the dialogue beyond the two Governments, and to involve also the constitutional representatives of both communities in the North.
>
> What the outcome of such talks would be is hard to forecast. But if it could lead to that elusive goal of Nationalist and Unionist agreeing on a form of Government in Northern Ireland, nobody should stand in its way . . . As political intransigence in the North begins to defrost, I want to say to the Unionist community: You are not without friends on this side of the border. I have already spoken of this party's commitment to a tolerant, pluralist Republic.
>
> There is a deep and growing appreciation throughout the Republic of the terrible suffering you have endured, not least in the border areas, where a virtual campaign of genocide has been waged against you by the IRA."

I know from my visit to Enniskillen last month that, in the aftermath of the atrocity there, the Unionists were extremely grateful to the Progressive Democrats who had visited the community and stood beside them in their grief and bewilderment at what had taken place there in the name of a political philosophy based on the gun. Instead of scoffing and being cynical about such remarks, let us examine the new mood inside the Republic and welcome such a constructive approach.

I have great admiration for the hon. Member for Foyle (Mr. Hume). He said that he had given endless time and energy to his talks with Sinn Fein over the past six months. I hope that he will put the same time and energy into discussions with the constitutional parties of the other side of the divide.

As long as Sinn Fein is wedded to unity by force it will sustain and not end the divisions in Ireland. Mr. Gerry Adams's admission in the aftermath of Enniskillen that military victory is impossible did not prevent the bombing in Lisburn. Public admissions of the futility of these atrocities have not stopped the cycle of violence. Talking to Sinn Fein while it condones the violence of the IRA is to lend it the clothes of constitutionality. It should stand for what it is, an organisation of brutal killers which uses sickening and bestial methods.

Amnesty International is an organisation for which I would have respect, but it falls into the same trap when it refers to Sinn Fein as an armed opposition group. That is a euphemism and an entirely inadequate description which is grossly offensive to the victims of every outrage committed in the name of Republicanism. If the IRA really wants the troops out and an end to the violence that has disfigured the affairs of Northern Ireland, it must forswear terrorism. Constitutional parties should have no part in dealing with it until it does that.

I have said that the agreement has defects. However, there are things that can be done during the next 12 months to help it develop. The prerequisite to that must be full Unionist involvement. I should like to see moves towards the establishment of a joint security commission that will involve both the Irish and the British Governments.

It would be welcome to see the extradition fiascos put firmly behind us. Rules should be established so that we shall no longer have to go through an endless game of charades every time extraditions are attempted. Similarly, there should be joint British-Irish anti-terrorist legislation to demonstrate that the Prevention of Terrorism Act is not a piece of anti-Irish legislation, which is the view of some of those who live in the Irish diaspora in this country. Unlike the hon. Member for Epping Forest, I should like to see the establishment of a British-Irish parliamentary tier.

On Friday, we shall be considering one of the benefits of the Anglo-Irish Agreement when we turn our attention to the White Paper on fair employment. I welcome that initiative, which is a step in the right direction. It will be good news for some of those who feel, quite justifiably, mthat they have been discriminated against for many years purely because of their religion.

I have said that there were better and worse options available. If Britain walked away from Northern Ireland, we would condemn its people to civil war. It would be irresponsible to do that and a capitulation to violence. Unionism, however, must appreciate that the old catch-cries of not an inch and no surrender are no substitute for political endeavour. If movements that offer the illusory but seductive solution of withdrawal without tears are not to be given momentum, constitutional parties must break out of the straitjacket of tribalism.

The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland has the most difficult job of all the members of the Cabinet. There are no prizes and only few chances of spectacular success. There are many wooden spoons and no shortage of heartbreak. The right hon. Gentleman is entitled to the full support and gratitude of the House for undertaking his task, and he will receive it from my right hon. and hon. Friends.

8.5 pm

Rev. William McCrea (Mid-Ulster): I rise once again to discuss an issue which has caused the people of Northern Ireland heartbreak and a continuation of sorrow. If we have direct rule in its present form, with what has gone forth for the past 14 years, my constituents who live along the border will have a continuation of sorrow, murder and destruction.

Some of those who have participated in the debate seem to live in a world that is separated from the realities of Northern Ireland. I cannot object that some of them are living in that world. They have not visited the Province frequently to see the situation for themselves. If and when they do come, they do so at the invitation of a party that has no representation in this place. They usually parrot out some of the speeches of that party, including one from the east Belfast area, which I thought that we were going to hear again today. The hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton) is seeking to uplift Mr. Alderdice as much as he can, although Mr. Alderdice has no elected position on behalf of the people of Northern Ireland.

The people of Northern Ireland are dismayed and distressed by those who pontificate about the Province. They try to give the impression that the Members of this place have all the answers and that the people of the Province are the numbskulls who need to be beaten into subjection. They suggest that at some stage the people of Northern Ireland will surrender their rights as individuals to speak as a democratic people, with a right to vote and for their votes to count in the same way as those in any other part of the United Kingdom.

I know that there are many in the Northern Ireland Office who have no desire to see the end of direct rule. Many of the civil servants in the Northern Ireland assembly objected when members of the Northern Ireland community dared to ask them a question. They objected when they dared to bring them to account. They did not want to answer for some of the decisions that they had taken.

It annoys the people of Northern Ireland that civil servants have more power than the elected representatives of the people. I can assure the House that the civil servants in the Northern Ireland Office will do all in their power to hold on to their authority rather than allow the elected representatives of the people of Northern Ireland to speak for the people of the Province.

I listened carefully to the Opposition spokesman, the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara). We receive lectures on sectarianism. We are told that we are not to have a closed mind and that we are not to be biased. We are told by Opposition and Government Members that the Anglo-Irish Agreement is leading us in only one direction. If the people of Northern Ireland really want to go into a united Ireland, then both Governments will run through the legislative process to ensure that we get into an all-Ireland situation.

That is the only direction permitted. No other alternative is permitted under the Anglo-Irish Agreement. No other alternative will be listened to by those on the Government Benches. We are clearly told that there is no other alternative from the Opposition. That was made clear by the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North. The hon. Gentleman made it clear that the majority view will be heeded when there is a rigged majority in one direction, and that must be towards Dublin.

It is about time that the Government told us how much they feel for the people of Northern Ireland, especially the hard-pressed people in the border areas. I have in mind a constituent of mine who lies buried tonight, Michael Darcy, and his mother, who is left broken-hearted. I feel for these people and others like them.

It is about time that the Government said, "We are for the Union." I have never heard that said since I became a Member of this place. I have not heard that said from the Government Dispatch Box or from those who sit on the Conservative Back Benches. The Secretary of State has said personally that he is for the Union, and I accept that. I am talking about the Government and those who speak on behalf of them. They have not said that they want the people and the Province to be a full part of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Tom King: I am a member of the Government, and I have made the point that the hon. Gentleman raises absolutely and abundantly clear. Does the hon. Gentleman actually want to go somewhere else? A sort of fear seems to pervade these interventions. Actually the Anglo-Irish Agreement says—it is an act of generosity and clear commitment by the Nationalists as well—that Northern Ireland, we accept, is part of the United Kingdom and will remain so. *[Interruption.]* Do not argue. I say to hon. Members, do not argue because the reality is, as everybody knows, that there will be no change.

Rev. Ian Paisley: Do not lie about it.

Mr. King: I am not interested in abuse. I am interested in the people of Northern Ireland and in them knowing the facts. The fact is the Anglo-Irish Agreement states that there will be no change in the status of Northern Ireland without the agreement of the majority.

I often think that I have more confidence than many others in the majority in Northern Ireland. I have made it abundantly clear that I do not believe that their views will ever change. However, I accept as part of the reality of a democratic life—and this is part of the Anglo-Irish Agreement—that if the majority of people in Northern Ireland wanted to change the situtation, no Government would refuse to accept a democratic view. Hon. Members sell themselves short if they keep seeking to pretend that they have no confidence in the majority in Northern Ireland wishing to maintain their present status within the United Kingdom.

Rev. William McCrea: I thank the Secretary of State for making another speech. I need no lectures from anyone to know exactly where the Unionists stand. Hon. Members would do better to read the agreement. It is most misleading to lecture my hon. Friends, because we have read the agreement from beginning to end, which many Conservative Members have not done—otherwise they would not have gone into the Division Lobby to support it.

As far as the Anglo-Irish Agreement is concerned, there is no change in the status of Northern Ireland. The question is, what is Northern Ireland's status in the eyes of both Governments? We found out exactly what it is in the Irish Republic's constitution, which claims jurisdiction over Northern Ireland. For the Irish Government, there is no change in Northern Ireland's status, because they believe it is still within their jurisdiction.

The Secretary of State may fool certain Members of his own party, as he has in the past, but he should not come to this Chamber and try to ram his views down the throats of the people's elected representatives. It is our future that is at stake. It is not a part of England, of Scotland or of Wales that is up for sale—it is Northern Ireland, as a part of the United Kingdom. We are British citizens, and we prove that by the way in which we seal our love for being a part of the United Kingdom with our blood. We shall take lessons from no one.

The Secretary of State can sit and mutter away but my constituents derive no comfort from the words that are said from the Dispatch Box time and time again, as to how sympathetic are the Government and how they feel and pray for the people of Northern Ireland. The Government could do more than pray. They could put feet on their prayers and give action to their prayers. They have the power to reach a solution and to stop the IRA from murdering the people of Northern Ireland.

Seated next to the Secretary of State is the Minister with responsibility for defence matters. Quite often in these debates, he sits with a smirk on his face, but he does not know how the people living along the border feel. Never once has he visited them. Never once has he walked into the home of a person who has suffered tragedy and whose

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future is at stake. Those people ask their elected representatives, "Why isn't something done?" When we, as their elected representatives, make speeches, it is easy for others to say, "You shouldn't worry and shouldn't get heated," but it is we who have to walk into home after home.

I assure the House that if any hon. Members representing constituencies in England, Scotland or Wales had to walk behind coffin after coffin, and had to face widows and orphans, it would not be smirks that they would have on their faces but expressions altogether more serious. They would surely return to their Ministers and say, "Something must be done."

If the policy on security has not put an end to terrorism after 20 years, there is something wrong. It would not be dishonourable to change course and to introduce something more effective to stop the IRA's murdering gangs. It is totally misleading to suggest that the Irish Government recognise Northern Ireland as a part of the United Kingdom. They state that there will be no change in Northern Ireland's status without the will of the people, but the status they are talking about was established in the past week in the Dublin court. We shall learn with interest the evidence that was given in the Dublin court concerning the McGimpsey case, and the court's ruling on the status of Northern Ireland. Perhaps the Secretary of State will return to the Dispatch Box and explain away the evidence that was given on behalf of the Dublin authorities.

Rev. Ian Paisley: As it seems impossible for me, as the leader of the Democratic Unionist party, to be called to speak in this debate, and as I have no intention of taking any further part in it, I wish to ask my hon. Friend if he agrees with me on this point. If, as the Secretary of State said, it is right to legislate for a majority and recognise their wishes if that majority is a Republican majority, is it not right that the Secretary of State should also put it on record that a Protestant majority wanting an arrangement other than the present one should also be legislated for?

The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara) told the House that the Protestant majority in Northern Ireland will never have a say. Should not the Secretary of State, knowing very well that both the Democratic Unionist party and the Ulster Popular Unionist party want Northern Ireland to remain within the United Kingdom, face up to that? However, we do not want Dublin to have a say over us, or a situation in which we are pushed down the street into a united Ireland. That we will not wear.

Whether or not the Minister with responsibility for education smiles, for he has already forsworn his Ulster heritage, does not matter. The Secretary of State cannot always take the majority with him. He says that he knows what the majority believe. He should resign his seat, and I will resign mine, and then we could both fight. He would lose his deposit, because he does not know what the majority want in Northern Ireland.

Rev. William McCrea: I thank my hon. Friend for his intervention. I wrote down the Secretary of State's words as he was speaking: "I believe this is what the people want." That was a very interesting statement, and I would like to know how the Secretary of State has found out the will of the people. He has not found it out on the ground—from the ordinary man and woman in the street who elect representatives to the House. I would be happy for the Secretary of State to come to Northern Ireland, seeing that he is so sure that he knows what the people want, and accept the invitation that has been extended to him.

One of his hon. Friends has decided to take an active interest in the Province and may try to stand in North Down. We were listening to lectures from her and perhaps the Secretary of State will come to Northern Ireland, and to North Antrim, and take up the challenge that has been made to him.

The will of the people is expressed at the ballot box. Despite all the rigging and attempts to change it, the fact remains that the Unionists have given their backing to their leaders. The right hon. Member for Lagan Valley (Mr. Molyneaux) and my hon. Friend the hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley) have the backing of the people and speak with the authentic voice of the people: let no Minister tell us that he knows better than the elected leaders of the people. It would have been appropriate for my hon. Friend the Member for Antrim, North, as leader of our party, to put forward his points of view in a Northern Ireland debate, but he has not been called.

Mr. Jim Marshall (Leicester, South): The hon. Gentleman claims to have written down the words of the Secretary of State. It is perhaps unfortunate that he failed to write down those of my hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara), who made it clear that the official Labour view on Northern Ireland was and is that no majority in the North of Ireland will be forced out against their will—or thrust out, which I think was the word used by the hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley).

Rev. William McCrea: I thank the hon. Gentleman for his contribution. It is very kind of Her Majesty's Opposition to be willing not to kick us out and to let us stay for a little longer. *[Interruption.]* I have the Floor.

Mr. Mallon: We noticed that.

Rev. William McCrea: That is very kind of the hon. Gentleman. He will know more, because I shall deal with the SDLP in a moment.

It is the will of the people of Northern Ireland that will keep Northern Ireland within the United Kingdom——

Mr. Martin Flannery (Sheffield, Hillsborough) *rose*——

Rev. William McCrea: I have a problem, Mr. Deputy Speaker. One the one hand I have heard an objection that my speech is going on too long and that others want to intervene. On the other hand, I would not like to stop a moderate from speaking.

Mr. Flannery: I made up my mind that I would not intervene, because I want to speak later, but my chances of doing so are becoming slimmer and slimmer as the hon. Gentleman's speech continues.

Let me refer the hon. Gentleman briefly to the contribution of the hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley), to whom I always like to listen. I had the general impression that he really wants an independent Northern Ireland with him leading it. Will the hon. Gentleman make it clear whether the Unionists want an independent Northern Ireland or want to stay in the United Kingdom?

Rev. William McCrea: The people of Northern Ireland desire to be full members of the United Kingdom. We do not want to sit on the periphery of the United Kingdom, to be kicked out whenever someone decides on it; we want to be active members of the United Kingdom.

The Anglo-Irish Agreement is nothing better than joint sovereignty between London and Dublin. It does not give Northern Ireland full and equal membership of the United Kingdom. No other part of the United Kingdom suffers the interference of any foreign and on many occasions hostile Government. If this is what is known as equal membership of the United Kingdom, the Unionist majority in Northern Ireland are not willing to accept it.

I say without apology that if that is what is being forced on the people, the Unionists will not walk down the Dublin road. If a choice is to be made, the Unionists can make an alternative choice. If it is right for a majority to choose a united Ireland, a majority can choose some other administration to take over the running of the country. That is the will of the people. That is the route that the Unionists and those living on the border are willing to take if the Government will not give them equal rights as members of the United Kingdom.

I do not know whether it is a deliberate twist of thinking, but people are trying to suggest that Northern Ireland Unionists do not want to remain within the United Kingdom. That is not true. They want to remain, but to do so on the same grounds as everyone else. The Prime Minister herself said that we would be as British and as much a part of the United Kingdom as Finchley. To the best of my knowledge, Finchley has no agreement with any foreign Government to rule its citizens—although I am not sure about that: it may have happened before the House met today. Such circumstances can change very quickly. Liverpool, for example, contains many minorities with different backgrounds, and may desire the intervention of some foreign Government. To the best of my knowledge, however, it has no agreement or joint authority to run its affairs.

All that we are saying is that we seek equal rights as equal citizens in the United Kingdom. That is not too much to ask.

Mr. Alton: Surely the point is this. The hon. Gentleman protests his loyalty to this country and its institutions. If he is loyal to this Parliament, why is it so impossible for him to concur with its majority wishes? The Anglo-Irish Agreement was passed with perhaps the biggest vote in the lifetime of the last Parliament.

Rev. William McCrea: The thinking behind that amazes me. Not one Northern Ireland Member has ever given his allegiance to this Parliament in relation to a particular party or decision. Our allegiance is to Her Majesty The Queen.

Mr. Flannery: What about democracy?

Rev. William McCrea: It is a mockery for the hon. Gentleman to talk about democracy. Democracy in the House is majority rule, and that is what is being denied in Northern Ireland. That is what is being thrown out each time. Let no one sit on his rear end and try to insult the people of Northern Ireland by telling us that this is democracy. It is not. It is an abuse of the democratic rights of the people of Northern Ireland to refuse to listen to their elected representatives.

I challenge the Government, if they feel that the people have changed their minds and want to go along with the Anglo-Irish Agreement, to put it to the test of the ballot box. The Secretary of State knows that the people will come out with a resounding no. The three principles of the agreement—the rest of the United Kingdom had better realise this—are peace, stability and reconciliation. It is interesting to note that in all the recent debates about the profit of the agreement, Ministers have now moved off those three principles. We never hear them say that the agreement is bringing peace, stability and reconciliation. The most recent statement that I heard from a Minister was that it had brought realism to the Unionist leaders, and the knowledge that they would have to do something other than simply say no: they would have to accept the agreement.

That shows how much Her Majesty's Ministers have learnt. Of course, it is difficult to learn such a lesson sitting behind barbed wire in Stormont; it is difficult to get the message from ordinary citizens in the community. But that can be resolved if the people change their minds. The House had better wake up to the fact that if this is put to the people through the test of the ballot box, the people will reject it. Instead of peace, it has led to turmoil; instead of stability, it has led to further instability; instead of reconciliation, as many Ministers—not in the Northern Ireland Office but in the Cabinet—have admitted, it has not succeeded. A senior member of the Cabinet admitted that in a recent interview.

Let not hon. Members live in cloud-cuckoo-land. Let them face reality. I am an ordinary Ulsterman. I am not a professional politician and I have no desire to be one. I am concerned simply about the future of my children in Ulster. Hon. Members sit down with representatives of the murderers of our children and our people in Ulster.

I listened carefully to a recent debate about Northern Ireland to which the hon. Member for South Down (Mr. McGrady) made an interesting contribution. He stated:

> "No member of my party has ever donned a balaclava or uniform, has ever manned a barricade or carried a coffin of a leader of the Ulster Volunteer Force."—[*Official Report*, 16 June 1988; Vol. 135, c. 580.]

That is an insult to the integrity and the knowledge of the people of Ulster. It is common knowledge in Ulster that Gerry Adams is not only the leader of Sinn Fein. A recent programme on Northern Ireland showed that Gerry Adams was not only the leader of the political party, but he was an active terrorist in Northern Ireland. Gerry Adams was the leader of a group that organised a bombing in the city of Belfast. There are many more godfathers.

I can give a direct challenge. In the district that I come from, John Joe Davey—and I have to sit in the same council chamber as him—did the final run when Kenneth Johnson was murdered. The Sunday before the murder, John Joe Davey, the Sinn Fein councillor, chose the spot where the bicycle was left for the person who had done the murder to get away. He was followed on the Sunday before the murder. I have given that information to the police, including the timing, the place selected and the rest of it.

Let not the SDLP get off the hook. The representatives of the Sinn Fein with whom they speak are not just members of the Sinn Fein. Someone in the Northern Ireland Office told me that practically every Sinn Fein councillor came from the military wing of the IRA. The SDLP sit down with Gerry Adams. Let them not say that

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they have never donned a balaclava or uniform or manned a barricade. They are sitting down with the men that carried the bombs and executed the murder of people in our Province.

Those hon. Members had better examine their consciences. It is not enough for them to say that they are sorry for the young girl who is fighting for her life. Pious words are past going into the ears of the people of Ulster. It is not enough for hon. Members to come to the House and condemn murder after murder. We have consigned the people of Northern Ireland to 20 years of murder. If it were on the mainland, more than 100,000 people would be dead. Does the Secretary of State believe that hon. Members would be saying nice little words and making nice little speeches to the Secretary of State? He knows that there would be a demand for action, and furthermore, he knows that action would be taken.

We in Ulster are sick of listening to people saying, "We condemn." We are asking for an aggressive policy against terrorists in our country to stop terrorism and bring us the peace that we need. No matter what form of government is adopted in Northern Ireland, and no matter what decision is taken, let no one think that the IRA will fold its arms and go to sleep. Whatever Administration takes over in Northern Ireland—the British Government have the authority and the ability to do that—they will have to defeat the IRA. They will have to take military measures to defeat the IRA, because for 20 years the IRA has carried on a campaign of murder and destruction in our Province. It has safe homes all over the place. Let us not forget that 100,000 people went to the ballot box and voted for Sinn Fein.

If anyone thinks that the SDLP has gained ground, all I can say is that in recent talks the SDLP has lifted Sinn Fein out of the gutter and tried to give it an air of respectability, with the idea that together they will stop the murders. But since those talks more murders than ever before have occurred. The IRA has slaughtered young soldiers; now it is attacking young children. It is all covered over by words of sympathy.

In this debate I heard the hon. Member for Newry and Armagh (Mr. Mallon)—the hon. Gentleman should blush—tell the House very piously that the Unionists, the Democratic Unionists and the Official Unionists in Newry and Armagh joined to appoint an IRA man. He said there was an unholy alliance with Sinn Fein. That is totally untrue. The hon. Gentleman knows that it is untrue. The person who was elected is an independent councillor. The only reason why the hon. Member for Newry and Armagh is crying is because the SDLP candidate was beaten to the chair. It is only sour grapes that led him to mislead the House.

The hon. Member for Epping Forest (Sir J. Biggs-Davison), who unfortunately has left the Chamber, said that he was delighted that in the council chambers in Northern Ireland the SDLP had turned its back on Sinn Fein and removed its representatives. There is nothing further from the truth. The SDLP in Enniskillen council, after the murder of 11 innocent people, was shamed into dropping the Sinn Fein member that it had appointed in the first place as chairman of the council. But what did it do? If it was shamed in Enniskillen, it shifted the shame to Strabane. It swapped the area in which it gave Sinn Fein control. In Strabane every SDLP councillor voted for the Sinn Fein chairman of Strabane council, another godfather of the terrorist group in Strabane. The SDLP put him in power.

In Magherafelt the SDLP joined with Sinn Fein to elect a Sinn Fein vice-chairman. Did it have to do that? Was it under attack? Did the Unionists oppose the SDLP chairman? Not at all. The Unionists decided that they would be smart for the SDLP and put them to the test as they had five members of the council and were the big power-sharers in the community. The Government have always spoken about the kindness of the SDLP in reaching out olive branches and have said that everything was beautiful from the SDLP point of view. What happened when it came to the election of the chairperson in Magherafelt? A lady took the chair. That lady was proposed and seconded, and no Unionist opposed the SDLP election.

This is an important matter for the hon. Member for Foyle (Mr. Hume), as his party is under scrutiny. Perhaps it is best that he remains in the Chamber. In that council there was no opposition to Sinn Fein. Indeed, the SDLP did not need Sinn Fein to get the chair. There were five SDLP council members and three Sinn Fein representatives. But when it came to the election of the vice-chairman, every SDLP member voted for the Sinn Fein vice-chairman against the Unionists. Why? That is the new olive branch, that is the new moderate image that is being shown by the SDLP.

Ulster Unionists are not blind to what is going on in our country. Because of the smartness of Gerry Adams, the SDLP has been led like little puppets along the route. The SDLP is now doing the bidding of Sinn Fein because it has been outwitted and outflanked by Gerry Adams. The Sinn Fein is ready and prepared for the next local government election because it has been given its best bonus in years for success for the future. It is only right that we put the situation right.

We then listened to the Secretary of State today. I am interested in how the Minister will reply on behalf of the Government. The Secretary of State said today that the SDLP has put forward proposals in favour of devolution and that it is working for devolution, as are the Official and Democratic Unionists. That is interesting as, a matter of weeks ago, in a radio interview Danny Morrison, Sinn Fein's spokesman and one of those involved in the secretive talks with the SDLP, said for all the people of Northern Ireland and, believe it or not, even the Northern Ireland Office to hear, that, in all its talks, the SDLP had told Sinn Fein that it was not interested in devolution. Since that revelation, there has been not a word of denial from the SDLP. Nevertheless, the Secretary of State told the House today that the SDLP wants devolved government. We hear a different story from a party to the secret negotiations. They have to be secret, and we find that Sinn Fein releases just what information it wants to release about the talks.

I shall be happy to give way if an hon. Member who represents the SDLP wants to correct me. This is a vital matter, and the SDLP should come clean. Perhaps Danny Morrison is doing the dirt on the SDLP. If so, that should be made clear to everyone. If, however, he is speaking the truth, someone else is speaking with a forked tongue.

The SDLP must not leave its new-found friend. It dare not because it knows that Adams has the party where he wants it—he can say just what went on, which is not in the

SDLP's interests. It was reported in a Belfast newspaper that the SDLP has stated that its policy is not to stop violence but to curb it. That reminds me of a former Minister speaking of an acceptable level of violence. We need an answer to that too.

The Secretary of State said today that the SDLP wants to stop the violence. The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North said today that he wished the SDLP well if it wanted to stop the murders and the violence. An SDLP spokesman said that the SDLP wanted only to curb the violence. In other words, the SDLP is telling my constituents that it does not accept the number of people who are at present murdered along the border, and that it wants to cut the number a wee bit. That is the truth, as the SDLP and other parties have used the violence committed by the IRA. There never would have been an Anglo-Irish Agreement if it were not for the murders. The Government were forced to negotiate with Dublin under the shadow of the gun.

There have been calls for inquiries. There are those among the Loyalist community who, under our present system of direct rule, are sickened with the biased calls for inquiries. I am sure we all remember the great hullabaloo about the McAnespie case along the Aughnacloy border. The SDLP ran to Dublin. It has no confidence in itself or in its ability to speak for the minority community, so it has to seek support. A young lad was castigated throughout the country. It was said that he had committed murder.

The Southern Government jumped into the act. Charlie would have to back up the terrorists. He demanded that the body be exhumed. There have been no calls for an inquiry since. There have been no calls for an inquiry into why the SDLP and others agitated to get the body lifted. Why? The answer was not to their liking. The soldier could not be charged with deliberate murder, which was the first charge laid against him. Nobody saw it happen, but everybody was there to make their condemnation.

The cardinal jumped into the act. Why not have everybody in the act? When people want to condemn the British Army, get everybody into the act. He flew home. He did not fly home on account of the murders in Protestant areas, but he flew home and made his speech, in which he said the killings of McAnespie was deliberate murder. When the body was lifted they found that it was not done that way, but a young British soldier had been castigated throughout the world. He has been put on an IRA list. His name has been pulled through the gutter. When threatened and frightened, any young lad can make a mistake. Even Opposition Members can make a mistake. Not so a young British soldier. It is good enough to condemn him before he has been tried properly.

As to the Stalker inquiry, in a newspaper this morning, the Northern Ireland Office is reported as saying:

> "a judicial inquiry would not be helpful. But the possibility of bringing disciplinary procedures against officers concerned"—

listen for it—

> "was being vigorously pursued."

We are talking about using lads, who were sent out to do a job, as scapegoats. We are being told, "Let's castigate them, for who will be concerned about a young policeman?" Certainly not members of the SDLP.

Mr. Mallon *rose*——

Rev. William McCrea: The hon. Gentleman will have to contain himself a wee bit. The police authority said today that no action will be taken against the Chief Constable and two other senior officers. We have heard that no action will be taken against them in court. What about the ordinary officer? He is expendable. Let us use him as the butt of it all. Let me make it clear in the House that there are persons who, if they are used as a scapegoat, will tell the full story.

Mr. Mallon: Why do they not tell it anyway?

Rev. William McCrea: The hon. Member for Newry and Armagh and his hon. Friends know the names of the Birmingham Six. Why do they not give their names? A member of Her Majesty's Opposition says that he knows the persons who murdered the people in Birmingham but he thinks too much of the Republicans to announce their names. I do not believe that it is right to use young, ordinary policemen as scapegoats. If heads are to roll it should be those of the political leaders higher up the line who gave the instructions in the first place, rather than the young lads who simply carried out their instructions.

Mr. Mallon: Apart from the obvious harm that the hon. Gentleman is doing to the British parliamentary system, he should be concerned about the damage he is doing to the truth. Twice today, once in the House, I said that it is scandalous that the Chief Constable and his two deputy assistant chief constables should be exonerated and that people lower down the line should have to carry the can —those are the words I used—for decisions they made. I will, with the same vigour although perhaps not with the same verbosity as the hon. Member for Mid-Ulster (Rev. William McCrea), defend the right of any single policeman. Today I asked the Police Federation to take an interest in this so that we would not find the men at the top going scot-free while ordinary constables suffer for them.

I will go even further. The hon. Member for Mid-Ulster said that there are people in the police force who could tell all. Would he adjust that to say that they would tell the truth? If they would do that, they would have the support of everyone in the Nationalist community and everyone who values truth in our community. Let us put the right people in the dock. It should be the Chief Constable of the RUC who is responsible, the deputy chief constable who was responsible for the E4A unit and the other deputy chief constable who was in total charge of the special branch.

Rev. William McCrea: I have learned something today. I have learned that the hon. Member for Newry and Armagh has such a love for the British parliamentary system that he is worried about it. That will be news to the people in Newry and Armagh. Gerry Adams will be interested in that as well. It is the first time that I have ever known the hon. Gentleman be concerned about or interested in the British parliamentary system. He has been interested only in using it. I am taking this opportunity to make a few necessary remarks because misleading statements were made in the House earlier. We had better get the facts out in the open. An Ulsterman would rather be told the truth than be told some made-up story just to please him and then be kicked on the pants when he is out the door.

The hon. Member for Newry and Armagh has called for the resignation of the Chief Constable and two other senior officers of the RUC.

Mr. Mallon *rose*——

Rev. William McCrea: I am not surprised at that, because the hon. Gentleman has called for the resignation of the entire Ulster Defence Regiment. Three resignations from the top of the RUC will be nothing when one considers that he wants every UDR man to go.

I do not believe that the Chief Constable made the decision on his own. The decision went into the higher reaches of the political arena. Therefore, we should not use anyone as a scapegoat. The House is supposed to be responsible, and there are bound to be people in the House who must bear the responsibility for any action taken. I am convinced that there are Front-Bench members of Her Majesty's Government who know more about this incident than the ordinary wee man or ordinary wee officer who carried out the instructions.

The statement from the Northern Ireland Office said that

"disciplinary procedures against officers concerned"—

that is, the smaller officer down the line—

"were being vigorously pursued."

No doubt those officers will have stripes removed and there may be demotion and so on if the Government can get away with it. However, the people at the top will not suffer.

I speak on behalf of the Unionist population, especially along the border areas which are under constant attack by the IRA. The Loyalists do not believe that the RUC has a shoot-to-kill policy. The shoot-to-kill policy in the Province is the policy of the IRA. Every bullet fired by the IRA is shot to kill and every bomb it sets is a bomb to kill, including the killing of the young girls on the bus yesterday. We do not hear about inquiries for those. I have never heard the SDLP ask for an inquiry into how the IRA murdered so many young policemen in Newry. I never heard the hon. Member for Newry and Armagh request such an inquiry.

Mr. John Hume (Foyle) *rose*——

Rev. William McCrea: I will give way to the hon. Gentleman, do not worry.

I have never heard a call for an inquiry into the bombing at Enniskillen. The Roman Catholic Church authorities objected to the searching of the building on the day of the remembrance parade in Enniskillen. For the first time in seven years there was no search of the building, because of objections from the priests and 11 people were murdered. There has been no call for an inquiry as to how that atrocity was able to take place. There has been no inquiry into the incidents at Cappagh when the hunger strikers were buried. There were photographs in the newspaper of the priests clapping at the graveside as the IRA fired the shots. There was no inquiry and no intervention by the security forces to stop that fiasco from continuing.

The only time that the SDLP will call for an inquiry is when it is against the security forces which are trying their best to fight the murderous bunch of rascals in the IRA. The IRA has no qualms about shooting. It never asked Michael Darcy in my constituency to put his arms up. The IRA shot him in the back, as it usually does, while hiding behind a hedge. He is only a UDR man and his life is expendable. It is more important to stop IRA men who are carrying out dummy runs or the full run of their weaponry of disaster and destruction.

Let us have the full details and facts clearly stated in this House. Along the border people are calling upon the Government to carry out a policy that will bring an end to the years of trouble and allow everyone in the Province to live in peace.

We have been talking about direct rule. Some months ago 11 people were murdered at Enniskillen. A few weeks ago six soldiers were killed. How did the Government handle that under direct rule? How have they got to the bottom of those murders in our Province? The answer is that the Secretary of State makes a statement. That stops a debate because after his statement a Northern Ireland Member—or any other Member of the House—is permitted to ask only one supplementary question. There is no chance of getting a debate on security even after 11 people have been killed. Even with six soldiers dead, we did not get a security debate. What we got was a short statement from the Dispatch Box which was a cover-up and one question each so that no hon. Member can get to the bottom of the things that trouble the community in our Province.

Direct rule is a fiasco. It is not the answer. The people of Northern Ireland should have the power back in their own hands to decide their own future and should not be run down the Dublin road by an Anglo-Irish so-called Agreement, which is soaked in the blood of the innocent. There have been more deaths in the first year of the Anglo-Irish Agreement, which was supposed to be about security and supposed to bring peace, than there were for possibly two years before it.

The IRA are on the offensive and the Government are making the security forces go on the defensive. It would be right and proper if the security forces were given backing and assistance. Other things that I have said when putting the record straight have been controversial, but I hope that the House will unite in giving its unreserved support to the security forces in their fight against the terrorists. They have a difficult, even impossible, job and deserve the support of all right-thinking people in the Province, whether they are the UDR, the RUC, the RUC Reserve, or the young lads of the British Army—our Army. They have done an excellent job and are trying their best under difficult circumstances. I suggest that, instead of some hon. Members sniping at them, it would be better if the House gave them its support.

I notice that the spokesman for Her Majesty's Opposition, the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North has returned to his place. While he states that his policy and that of the Labour party is that they do not take platforms with the IRA or Sinn Fein, the hon. Gentleman would do well to tell some of his hon. Friends that that is the rule of the game for Her Majesty's Opposition. It is a fact that some of his hon. Friends, be they renegades on the periphery of the party and about to drop off it, or others, have campaigned with Sinn Fein representatives and have brought them to this House while that organisation was backing the murderers of people in Northern Ireland. It is not enough for the hon. Gentleman to state his policy. When is that policy to be adhered to throughout his party, because that would bring some encouragement to the people of Northern Ireland?

9.2 pm

Mr. John Hume (Foyle): Many people will have found the remarks of the hon. Member for Mid-Ulster (Rev. William McCrea) depressing. They will not have any difficulty in understanding why we have a serious problem in Northern Ireland when they consider that the hon. Gentleman is also a clergyman who is supposed to be committed to the basic Christian message of loving his neighbour. When we hear such sentiments from that sort of source, no one should be in any doubt why we have a problem in Northern Ireland.

I should like to clear up one or two matters before continuing my speech. We do not need public inquiries into killings by paramilitary organisations because murder is murder. It is as clear-cut as that, so we do not need an inquiry to prove it.

Several hon. Members have referred to the fact that both myself and my party are engaged in direct talks with Sinn Fein, the political wing of the Provisional IRA——

Rev. William McCrea: It is not the political wing.

Mr. Hume: It is the political wing of the Provisional IRA.

Ever since I was elected 20 years ago to represent the people of Northern Ireland, I have made it clear that I would talk to anyone if it would contribute to peace and stability. I have talked to everyone—Loyalists and paramilitary members—at their request and there has not been a whimper of complaint from those sources. The SDLP and the Alliance party alone have remained wholly committed to the democratic process and have never had any alliance of any description—*[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Mid-Ulster spoke for exactly one hour. He bored me stiff for most of that period and disgusted me for the rest of it. I have no intention of letting him interrupt my brief speech. We have never had any alliance with any paramilitary organisation. We are wholly opposed to violence. *[Interruption.]* I shall not take lessons from the hon. Gentleman's party—*[Interruption.]*—which on numerous occasions has sat down with masked men and paramilitary organisations, not to tell them to stop their violence, but to co-operate with them to achieve political objectives. My party has never done that and has no intention of doing it. We are committed to bringing violence to an end.

Life would be much easier for my colleagues and me if we took the self-righteous stance of simply seeking to maintain our position, and did not in any way engage in the art of politics to persuade others what they should or should not do. We knew from the start that we would be criticised from that source, and if we do not succeed in our objective, it will undoubtedly intensify. If, however, we succeed, there will be silence and that, as well as ending violence, would be a great achievement.

In view of the tenor of the Secretary of State's opening remarks I hoped that this debate would concentrate on the problem that we are all trying to solve. It has been easy to state party positions.

Mr. Peter Robinson: The Secretary of State said that there was a desire to move to talks among all constitutional parties. The hon. Gentleman must know politics in Northern Ireland well enough to know that his present dialogue with representatives of Provisional Sinn Fein, whether he agrees with this or not, forms a barrier for Unionists in any dialogue with his party. Even if his party's aims in those talks were to convince Sinn Fein, and through it the IRA, that there was another way to make progress in Northern Ireland, the events of the past months must show that he cannot fulfil that task. There must come a moment when he has to tell us candidly that they will not stop their violence, and it is far better to work with those who want to make progress through the constitutional and democratic process.

Mr. Hume: My party and I have been waiting for the past three years to talk to the hon. Gentleman and his party. If they wish to talk to us tomorrow, we shall talk to them. We shall tell them exactly what we have said to Sinn Fein so that they can make up their minds. We do not change our attitudes to problems according to whom we are talking to, because the problems remain the same.

I hoped that this debate would be about the problem that we are trying to solve. I have noted in the past that when the different parties have defined the problem they have all defined it differently, and they pass one another on the way to the solution.

It is easy for parties in Northern Ireland to whip up emotions based on sectarianism, hatred and bigotry. That is a symptom of what is wrong; that is the problem we are trying to address. Hon. Members have used phrases such as "an internal settlement". What does that mean? The only people who want an internal settlement in Northern Ireland are those who want an independent Northern Ireland. I understand that the Unionists want the problem to be settled in the context of the United Kingdom, but that would not be an internal settlement.

It is clear that there are different dimensions to the problem. There is a clash of relationships in the community in Northern Ireland, but that reflects another clash of relationships in the island of Ireland and another between the two islands. Those three relationships combine to make the problem that we must solve, and we must deal with all of them. We have only to listen to the two extremes in Northern Ireland—one says, "Brits out" and the other says, "No Dublin rule"—to understand that the other dimensions impinge upon the problem and must be dealt with if we are to solve it.

My party has given solid support to the Anglo-Irish Agreement because the framework of the problem, being the British-Irish framework, should also be the framework of a solution. However, it is only a framework. Movement can take place only if the different sections of our community are prepared to work together and break down the barriers between them. In the meantime, the two Governments are working together to deal with that problem.

Can anyone suggest a better and more peaceful way of dealing with the problem than the two sovereign Governments working together as closely as possible? That does not mean that they will always agree—if they did, there would be no need for them to sit down together—but they will do their best to agree on an approach that will bring the problem to an end. I cannot envisage any better way of dealing with the problem than that. If those who oppose that method of dealing with it can suggest a better way, we shall all listen.

By dealing with the problem in that way, the two Governments deal with the day-to-day problems on two levels. One level is what I call the symptoms and the other is the disease that gives rise to those symptoms. The symptoms of the Northern Ireland problem that spring from our division as a people and from the prejudices of centuries are all over the place—for example, discrimination from the past and policing. As we have repeatedly said, policing is not a problem of policemen. The absence of political consensus on how Northern Ireland should be

[Mr. Hume]

governed means that until that is solved, there will always be a policing problem. The administration of justice and all the other matters that we complain about are also symptoms of the underlying problem. Progress is being made on some fronts, but not on others.

My hon. Friend the Member for Newry and Armagh (Mr. Mallon) will deal with those matters in more detail if he catches your eye, Mr. Speaker. If all those symptoms and the disease—the underlying division between the people that has given rise to it—were satisfactorily cured tomorrow, they would recur in another form. The agreement has made major progress in dealing with that disease and the rigidity that has paralysed the North of Ireland for most of this century.

If we stand back from the problems, we see among the relationships the central one of the Unionist people to the remainder of the people of the island. For their own reasons, they have decided to live apart from the remainder of the island, and they have done so by holding all power in their hands. That position no longer exists; it was not an approach designed to produce peace and harmony. But every time a British Government moved to make the situation fairer, dire consequences were threatened by the leadership of the Unionist people and on each occasion the British Government backed down—the most recent being in 1974.

The consequence of that surrender of responsibility by British Governments was that the leadership of the Unionist people remained in uncompromising hands, in the hands of people who refused to address the fact that they were living in a divided society and had to come to terms with their neighbours and the people with whom they shared a piece of earth. In the Nationalist community it gave encouragement to those who say that the only thing that the British understand is force.

That vicious circle of threats of force from Unionism and actual force from the IRA has paralysed Ireland for most of this century. Now at last that vicious circle is being cut through because the Government have stood firm against those undemocratic threats, and the Secretary of State, who has been in the front line, has taken a great deal of personal abuse in standing up to those threats. But that has made the most significant advance in dealing with the problem since 1920 because the Unionist people are now facing up to the reality that in a divided society one must sort out one's relationships with the people with whom one differs and one cannot for ever seek to hold all the power in one's own hands and use blackmail whenever someone steps in to demand fair play.

That has been a painful experience for the Unionist people because of all that has gone before, but it has also been a healthy one for them and for the community as a whole because now we are all on an equal footing and that is the basis on which real dialogue should begin.

We are willing at any stage, with no preconditions, to enter into dialogue with the Unionists on any matter. We are willing to enter into dialogue about how we should run our community in Northern Ireland without any pre-conditions. We, from our experience, have recognised, and we have told the Secretary of State and have said so in public, that there have been five attempts—the fifth was announced today by the Secretary of State—to create devolution in Northern Ireland. We have participated in most of them and we have learned why they have failed. They have all failed for precisely the same reason.

Stormont, which was majority rule, failed because the majority held all the power in their own hands. Why? Because they were afraid to give the minority anything because of their fear of their relationship with the rest of the island. Power sharing was brought down in 1974. Why? Because those of us who were sharing the administration of Northern Ireland with the Unionists were regarded as fifth columnists who were acting on behalf of the rest of the island.

That is still the basic fundamental suspicion of the Unionist people in sitting down to talk to us—the relationship between the Unionist people and the rest of the island. Until they sort out that relationship to their own satisfaction—I am not suggesting any conquest—as well as to the satisfaction of the rest of us, that lack of relationship will always be a destabilising factor. I ask them to sort that out to their own satisfaction by sitting down with the representatives of the rest of Ireland.

I am suggesting that the subject of conversation be how we live together on this island. It is a simple subject. In advance of that, it must be clear that we cannot live together unless we both agree. There can be no conquests, no victories. There has to be agreement. The people of Cyprus will never sort out their problems until the Turkish and Greek Cypriots agree that there can be no victories.

Until now, the Anglo-Irish Agreement has focused on the challenge that it has given to the Unionist people. But, in fairness, that agreement has also thrown down a serious challenge to the Nationalist people. That challenge is a simple one. It says, "We recognise that the Nationalist-Republican tradition in Northern Ireland wants to see Ireland united and the people of Ireland united." We must tell the Nationalists that the agreement really means that the Irish people who want unity must persuade those who do not, and that is the challenge.

This task can never be achieved by the gun or bomb. That must be learned by the Nationalist-Republican tradition in Ireland. Something else must be learned, too. The Government have stood firm against blackmail, and the IRA and its supporters must realise that the past 15 or 20 years have cost the people of Northern Ireland, including many who support the IRA, dearly. In what it calls a war, 3,000 people have lost their lives—the equivalent of 40,000 on this island. Twenty thousand have been maimed; three new prisons have been built and they are full of young people who have been sucked into the violence; 11 walls have been built in the city with the highest churchgoing population in Europe—Belfast—to separate one section of a Christian community from another and to protect the communities from each other. If that does not tell us that past attitudes have brought us to the present position, what else will?

After all this loss, is there anyone in these two islands, even in the membership of the IRA, who thinks for one minute that the British Government, led by the present Prime Minister, will surrender to blackmail? Everyone knows that that will not happen. So the question that IRA members must ask themselves and their followers is whether they will ask their people to pay this price for another decade. That challenge is thrown down and accompanied by the offer that if those people really want peace, stability and unity in Ireland, their task is to persuade those who do not—our Unionist and Protestant fellow citizens. That task has never really been faced with great integrity or dedication by Nationalists or Republicans. It will not be achieved in a hurry or easily.

It is about time that we at least started talking together about how to live together. There is nothing to be lost by that. Let us remember that we are doing so in the context of this Government and Parliament and the Irish Government and Parliament, together with 10 other Governments and Parliaments in western Europe, having taken a decision which is much more far-reaching in its effect on the lives of the people in Ireland than the Anglo-Irish Agreement. Not a whimper has been heard from anyone in Northern Ireland about that. It will transform relationships within Ireland and rapidly break down barriers that have gone up since 1920.

The challenge to us and our fellow citizens—the Unionists—is to put our stamp on this change. We can do so only by sitting down together and accepting the invitation that has been issued to us.

9.23 pm

Sir John Farr (Harborough): I hope that the hon. Member for Foyle (Mr. Hume) will forgive me if I do not follow him. I recognise the sincerity of his views about the island of Ireland, although most of the solutions that he recommended will probably not be received with sympathy by Conservative Members.

I wish to refer to some of what my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State said. My constituency and the whole House share his admiration for the courage of the security forces. I pay my own little tribute to the courage of the school bus driver who, despite the most severe incapacity after the dreadful bomb yesterday, almost managed to perform a miracle. We are all proud of him.

My right hon. Friend mentioned the opportunities for industry in Northern Ireland. Many efforts have been made over the years, but so many Secretaries of State have not been able to see round the corner. My right hon. Friend is lucky enough to be able to see round it—or, perhaps, to see over the hill—after many years of promises. We are delighted to know that industry is picking up and that job prospects are improving. That must have the approval of every hon. Member who is interested in Northern Ireland.

Over the years we have heard about the terrible problems that successive Secretaries of State have had to face. We can recall one Secretary of State after another having to make important speeches to the House and a sombre House receiving them with great gravity. The debate has properly been almost solely about security. Despite all the grave promises by good, bad and indifferent Secretaries of State in Conservative and Labour Governments, the security situation in Northern Ireland is at least as bad as ever. According to many experts it is probably worse today.

Before dealing with the possible cause of that, I should like to speak about the upsurge in industrial activity in Northern Ireland. We congratulate the Ministers who, over so many years, have put in such hard work. We know about the slog and the backroom work, and about the exhibitions that some of us have been lucky enough to visit to see all the wonderful plans for Belfast. Those plans are now coming to fruition.

I hope that the Secretary of State will seriously consider the possibility of Harland and Wolff building the largest passenger vessel in the world. That hope crosses party lines. There is no division about it, because it means jobs. There will be jobs in the building of the vessel, but, as my right hon. Friend rightly said in his analysis, there will also be jobs in the whole of the infrastructure of Northern Ireland. Those jobs will make an immense difference to Northern Ireland. To build the vessel in Belfast may be bending the rules and may involve a large sum that should be invested. But building it in Belfast will be a message of hope for the whole of the Province. When I say that, I bear in mind the farcical events and the big loss that was incurred in De Lorean.

I return to the cause of the present unrest and the terrible violence. As the Secretary of State said, every act of violence in Northern Ireland seems to plumb new lows. We have to face that, but what is the cause of the violence? It would be easy for some of my hon. Friends to say, although I am not saying it, "We told you so." Two or three years ago, some of us said that the Anglo-Irish Agreement would not work and that the trouble would get worse. I recognise that my right hon. Friend and the whole of his Front-Bench team are not only sincere Ministers but extremely conscientious and hard working. It is not because of their addiction to the Anglo-Irish Agreement that Northern Ireland is in its present position.

Some of us who objected to the agreement three years ago are justified in asking my right hon. Friend or the Minister who will reply about the effectiveness of the extradition procedures under the Anglo-Irish Agreement. Some of us, mistakenly or not, were against the Anglo-Irish Agreement or had severe reservations about it. One of them was that we thought that the extradition procedure that was supposed to apply to terrorists south of the border could never be made to stick. Our big regret is that that reservation has so far proved to be well-founded.

It is very difficult to extradite a wanted man from the other side of the border to a court in the United Kingdom. Last week, despite the Government of the Republic wishing a terrorist to be sent to Northern Ireland, a justice exercised his discretion and decided that there was something wrong with the evidence and that extradition should not go ahead.

That simply is not good enough. I ask my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and Northern Ireland Office Ministers to pay a little more attention to extradition and to examine how the extradition of terrorists from the Irish Republic to Britain works. I know the background, because I am lucky enough to have many good friends at the Dublin bar and on the Dublin law circuit. Many of them, whom I have known for many years, work for a company that is highly esteemed and has done a lot of work over the years for the Dublin Government. Several members of the company have become judges on the Dublin circuit.

For the past five or six years, members of the legal profession have had to have their names removed from the telephone book. Their addresses are so confidential that it is impossible to obtain them. The reason is that in the past five or six years the companies with good old indigenous Irish names, whose barristers, attorneys and so on have served the Dublin Government through difficult times for many years—particularly in the past 10 or 20 years—and have done their will have been subject to the most dreadful intimidation. It is as bad as anything in the North of

[Sir John Farr]

Ireland. They have often had to have Gardai or special branch protection and in some cases they have had to leave the district where they have lived for 40 years.

We must realise that when the justice made his decision last week, he may have had to bear in mind what had happened to many of his colleagues in Dublin legal circles. When we apply for extradition, we must appreciate the problems that justices in Eire, and in Dublin in particular, face if they are honest and brave enough to send a murderer back to face just retribution in Great Britain.

9.33 pm

Mr. Martin Flannery (Sheffield, Hillsborough): When I listened to the hon. Member for Mid-Ulster (Rev. William McCrea) engaging in his hour-long tirade, I wished that the British people could have heard him. If ever a person did a great disservice—even to his own cause—it was the hon. Gentleman by his tirade. *[Interruption.]* He makes everybody in the Chamber feel moderate. *[Interruption.]* He will not even shut up now and let me speak. That is his way, but I shall get on with what I want to say.

Direct rule was introduced precisely because of the attitude that had been manifested tonight. Some Unionists are not quite like that. There seems to be a forgetfulness about what they did. In all my years in the House I have never heard the Unionists admit that they ever did any wrong to the minority community. Never do they admit it. They are so self-righteous. I do not know whether the hon. Member for Mid-Ulster frightens the IRA, but by God, he frightens me. His attitude is the attitude that resulted in direct rule.

One or two points have been made here on many occasions, but they should be repeated, because they must not be forgotten. The Unionist majority in the North came about only because a line was drawn by the then British Government, who gave way to blackmail and the threat of violence. That line satisfied the Ulster Unionist leaders at the time because it gave them an inbuilt majority. Those people were not like the ordinary people on this side of the water. There were two separate communities—one the oppressed and the others the oppressors. There is every sign that, but for direct rule, that oppression would still be going on.

On Friday, we shall be debating the White Paper on unemployment. I was looking at it only a short time ago, and it bluntly says that the oppression still goes on. The right hon. Member for Lagan Valley (Mr. Molyneaux) spoke to me before he left and I told him that I am not religious, so I am not fighting for the Catholics or for any other religious group. I am fighting for justice and I would fight just as hard for a Protestant minority that was subjected to such oppression. There seems no desire to give justice. The right hon. Member for Lagan Valley said that we should set an example and that instead of there being only 14 candidates for the Northern Ireland ministerial posts, there should be 36.

Direct rule came about because of the appalling lack of democracy exercised over the minority by the majority. That had the inevitable result of violence. After pressure from the Unionist leaders, there was a civil rights march, which was attacked by a bunch of thugs. That thuggery against the minority is still latent. After 1969 and the attack on the civil rights march, it became obvious that the North could no longer be ruled in the old, undemocratic way, and that it was not willing to be ruled in that way. Those of us who have always believed in a united Ireland know that, ultimately, that must come about. However, we are a long way away from that because of the implied threat of violence, the same threat that occurred in the 1920s. The minority community, which has chafed against the sectarian anti-democracy of the Unionist majority since it all began, reacted against the violence, but it is clear that nothing will change.

The IRA and the opposing paramilitary groups have been given a reason for their resistance. After 1969, when nothing happened to give the oppressed justice, it became clear that paramilitary groups would emerge and a new IRA came about. To this day, paramilitary groups abound, and we must be aware that paramilitary groups on the other side from the IRA carry out exactly the same depradations. We have made it clear that we are appalled by what the IRA has done recently. To accuse my hon. Friend the Member for Foyle (Mr. Hume) of colluding with any form of violence is an insult, and a low and nasty abuse. We all know that the SDLP is doing its best, in the interests of justice, peace and fairness, and that its members would deplore, and have deplored on every possible occasion, violent acts such as those that occur all too often.

What are the conditions for devolved government, devolution or whatever it is called? There is no sign that devolved government would do anything to rectify the situation if it were introduced now. The Unionists have been split wide open under the hammer blows of the Anglo-Irish Agreement. Most of them want to return to the old Stormont that created the mess that now confronts us. They want to do exactly what they have done in the past. Whenever we attempt to make them acknowledge that their actions in the past were wrong and created all the problems that we face, they refuse to say one word about the lack of justice for the minority community.

That minority community is ready for reconciliation, but not one word that could be construed as a sign of reconciliation has come from the Unionists tonight. It is clear that the Unionists wish to return to the old Stormont with the same old Stormont mentality. That cannot be done, and for as long as that is the position there must, sadly, be direct rule.

The Unionists think that any democratic practice that helps both communities means that we are heading towards a united Ireland. I believe that that will happen, and to seek to stop any democratic move now because it is thought to be leading towards a united Ireland shows a disgraceful blindness that worries us all. The Unionists are extremely angry whenever these issues are raised. They refuse to admit that something went wrong in the past. That is a clear sign that nothing would be changed if they were left to their own devices.

We are trying to persuade all the communities in Northern Ireland to enter into discussions. Unfortunately, there are divisions, and that fact became as clear as daylight when the hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley) the leader of the Democratic Unionist party, argued in the most sectarian manner for a statelet independent of the rest of the United Kingdom as a means of escaping the realities.

Where do we go from here? The obstacles are tremendous. One side in Northern Ireland would suggest that they cannot be overcome, but a failure to do so will sustain the paramilitarists on both sides of the community. It is in the interests of us all that we should try to ensure that there are regular discussions. I often say to those who are involved in the troops-out movement that the troops will leave only when there is a political situation that admits that no one will be killed when they are withdrawn.

The arguments advanced by the Unionists strengthen the troops-out movement as well as the attitudes of the paramilitarists on both sides of the community. Every gesture of reconciliation is interpreted by the Unionists as a treacherous act. That is their reaction to the honest folk who are trying to engage in reconciliation. Do they believe that reconciliation and democratic procedures are steps to a united Ireland? It is not clear to me and many of my hon. Friends that we are anywhere near anything of that sort. To struggle against democratic practices on that basis involves the use of unacceptable excuses. If the Unionists believe that reconciliation and democratic procedures will lead inevitably to a united Ireland, we shall never have reconciliation.

At some stage, all the parties in Northern Ireland must enter into discussions. That must occur. A large measure of agreement will have to be arrived at before devolved government of any form can be considered. It is time that we proceeded with reconciliation, as that is the deadly enemy of the paramilitarists. Democracy is their deadly enemy. It is sad that there is little democracy flowing to us from the Unionists.

9.44 pm

Mr. Peter Robinson (Belfast, East): In some respects the debate is a fraud. We are purportedly debating an interim period extension, but everyone knows that Northern Ireland is governed under an arrangement that was entered into without any legislation appearing before the House and without any accountability to the House. That was the result of the Anglo-Irish Agreement. There is not an absolute system of direct rule. The interim period extension that is proposed cannot be taken in isolation from the Anglo-Irish Agreement, which means that the decision for the House will be based very much on the agreement itself. That is currently the position of my colleagues.

I should like to respond to certain of the comments made by the hon. Member for Foyle (Mr. Hume)—though unfortunately in his absence. He sought to give an analysis, albeit a brief one, of the position as seen by the nationalist community. I follow him by giving an equally brief analysis of the Unionist perspective. Although it will be readily recognised that the two do not coincide, the fact that we can hear, or at least read, what the other section of the community sees as being the problem and its solution might in itself be a starting point.

I speak as someone who may be described as a child of the troubles. I entered politics at almost the very time when the first stone was thrown, when the first injury occurred, and when the streets were filled with people unhappy at the arrangements then pertaining.

I joined a party that was not the Government party and which has never been in government. Therefore, it is removed from much of the criticism that was voiced by the hon. Member for Sheffield, Hillsborough (Mr. Flannery)—criticism which, if he thought about it for a moment, has been levelled against the Government. They are still being accused of discrimination. The cries have not stopped from those same sources because the Unionists are not in control in Northern Ireland. There are more calls for inquiries now than when there was a Unionist Government. However, it is not my task to defend past Unionist Governments. As I have said, my party was the official Opposition, so I can safely leave any such defence in the hands of others.

As someone who grew up in those years, I know that there are certain lessons of history that one cannot deny or escape. If one tries to do so, it is at one's peril. Whether or not Unionists like it—and the likelihood is that they will not—there are facts relating to the fall of the Stormont parliament that stand at this moment in time. The reasons why it fell are not to be found in the comments of the hon. Member for Sheffield, Hillsborough (Mr. Flannery) concerning alleged discrimination. It fell because it did not have the consent of the whole community.

That consent was withheld for one reason or another by the minority. Many an institution has followed since then. There was the power-sharing executive, which fell because it did not have the consent of the majority. One initiative after another has been scuppered because one section of the community could not gain the consent and support of the other. We could go on until the present generation dies out and our descendants take over, and if we do not achieve a system of government that has the consent of both sections of the community, no doubt the hon. Member for Belfast, East in the year 2020 could make a speech almost identical to that which I am making now.

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): Does the hon. Gentleman accept that when he speaks about "alleged discrimination", he is speaking about the heart of the matter? It is not a question of alleged discrimination but of real discrimination that has built up over a long period. It is precisely the policies being pursued by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, and in particular that which we shall be debating on Friday regarding fair employment, that offer a degree of hope within the framework of the Anglo-Irish Agreement.

Mr. Robinson: I could follow the hon. Gentleman down that line. I could tell him that more than 50 per cent. of the houses in the public sector were inhabited by members of the Roman Catholic faith, and that therefore there was discrimination against the Protestant community. I could say that after three years of touting for business in the form of people claiming that they had been discriminated against, the fair employment agency could find only five cases—and they were not all members of the Roman Catholic community.

The purpose of my speech, however, is to deal not with discrimination but with our constitutional difficulties and the security problems that flow directly from them. The failures are caused not so much by discrimination as by a difference of identity. The hon. Member for Foyle said that the Unionists had chosen to live separately from the other people on the island, whatever their reason. A Unionist would say that the nationalists had chosen to live separately from the rest of the people in the British Isles. How we see the problem depends on our angle of vision. What cannot be escaped is that a problem of identity exists, as does the problem of creating a system of government in Northern Ireland with which the two sections of the community can identify, and to which they can give allegiance and support.

[Mr. Robinson]

It is not particularly difficult to analyse the problem in simple terms. What is difficult is achieving that system of government. I must tell the House, and particularly the Government Front Bench, that no agreement between London and Dublin—however well-meaning either or both of those parties may be—can ever achieve agreement for the people of Northern Ireland.

In the past I have used the analogy of a dispute within a marriage. If a husband and wife are not getting on well, the in-laws can meet as often as they want and arrive at whatever conclusions they please, but unless the couple themselves sit down to work out their differences and the solutions to their problems, there will be no happy marriage thereafter. Similarly, London and Dublin will not solve our problems in Northern Ireland. The problem is in Northern Ireland, so the solution must be in Northern Ireland as well. That is why I urge, along with many others, that we find an alternative to the Anglo-Irish Agreement. For me the agreement does not provide a framework; it provides a straitjacket in which there is no possibility of achieving the flexibility that could bring agreement with other parties.

The Secretary of State should learn from the example of the Opposition Front Bench—and it is not often that I ask him to do that. The Opposition have a precise view about the future of Northern Ireland. They admit openly that they wish for a united Ireland; they recognise none the less that there must be stable government there. While they like the Anglo-Irish Agreement and would like everyone else to support it, they recognise that if agreement can be reached in a better way it is foolish to continue with an agreement that—in my terms at least—has failed. If the constitutional parties can come up with a better alternative, one that they are both happy to support, surely the Government must be prepared even at this stage to encourage it, or at least consider it constructively and positively.

That is what Unionists ask them to do. Until now we have had no clear and precise sign that the Government were willing to consider an alternative to the Anglo-Irish Agreement. If they were to say that, they would begin to transform the political situation in Northern Ireland. They would breathe into it some hope that an alternative could be achieved. Judging from the comments of people engaged in what are euphemistically known as the talks about talks, there is not an insurmountable problem in reaching an agreement or finding some formula whereby the various manifesto commitments of the Unionist party in relation to the non-implementation of the agreement during negotiations, can be agreed. If that is not a problem, surely we can move to agreement, or at least a meeting between the constitutional parties in Northern Ireland when the SDLP has concluded its dialogue with Sinn Fein.

I am not attacking the SDLP for the sake of it. I want to see a positive and constructive dialogue between the constitutional parties in Northern Ireland. I am sorry that the hon. Member for Foyle is not present. I am even more sorry that he avoided answering my intervention. Whether he likes it or not, dialogue between the SDLP and the Sinn Fein presents a difficulty and a barrier for Unionists. Unionists cannot be part of a dialogue with the SDLP while the SDLP is talking to Sinn Fein.

In laymen's terms, the SDLP will be seen as the intermediary between the IRA and the Unionists. Unionists are not prepared to have a dialogue, or even to be associated with a dialogue with the IRA. Whether or not SDLP Members understand our difficulties, I ask them to realise that it is a barrier to dialogue between the Unionists and the SDLP, and as such it presents a barrier to progress towards an alternative to the Anglo-Irish Agreement, and towards the peace, stability and reconciliation that the people of Northern Ireland deserve, and that I trust all politicians in Northern Ireland want.

They must recognise, although they are slow to admit it openly, that whatever the Anglo-Irish Agreement might mean symbolically to the minority communities, it has not achieved what they hoped it would achieve. Tonight its short-term goal of whether it has obviated the need for megaphone diplomacy—I think that those were the Secretary of State's words—is to be tested. It has not done that. The same difficulties exist between the Government of the United Kingdom and the Government of the Irish Republic. Those difficulties still pertain to the present day.

The agreement's long-term objectives were peace, stability and reconciliation. Before the Anglo-Irish Agreement was signed in November 1985, the graph of violence steadily and happily had been going down. From 1972 to 1985 the number of deaths occurring through terrorist violence had been decreasing every year. After the signing of the Anglo-Irish Agreement, the graph started to go up.

As for peace, the statistics bear evidence that we are not on the road to peace through the Anglo-Irish Agreement. The lack of political stability affects economic stability and it is quite clear that there is no strength within the Anglo-Irish Agreement to create stability in our Province. I believe that divisions have been greater during our recent troubles.

I do not believe that the Anglo-Irish Agreement ever could have been presumed to bring reconciliation, when it was created as a result of bypassing the Unionist community. Reconciliation with the Unionists cannot come from leaving them aside and refusing to consult them. The whole process of reconciliation involves bringing people along, but that did not occur. The excuse was, "If we had talked to them, they would not have agreed." That does not seem to be the way to achieve agreement or reconciliation between the communities of Northern Ireland.

The Anglo-Irish Agreement is a failure in its long-term and short-term objectives. I believe that there is no advantage for the SDLP within the Anglo-Irish Agreement. It might like to see the discomfort of Unionists, but the agreement has not achieved anything which it could not have achieved by negotiating with Unionists if there was administration at Stormont or if it had negotiated with the Unionist leadership.

I must tell Nationalist politicians and their representatives in the House that the way forward in Northern Ireland is to have agreement with the Unionist community, and the best way in which to do that is to conclude the dialogue with Sinn Fein, which cannot succeed on the basis of promises, or hopes, of the violence being stopped. The IRA has no intention of stopping violence voluntarily. Its raison d'être is violence. Its position in society and its clout comes through violence.

Sadly, much of the SDLP's clout comes through the IRA's violence. Whereas one can make concessions to the SDLP, one cannot to the IRA.

I want progress in Northern Ireland. I want it through the dialogue that the Secretary of State has suggested. I want it on the basis of an alternative to the Anglo-Irish Agreement and the SDLP ending its contact with the IRA. The Unionist leaders' outline proposals have been put to the Secretary of State. They do not set the clock back. The hon. Member for Hillsborough is time locked, but Unionists are not.

We have put forward positive proposals, and not for the first time. We asked to talk to the SDLP when it refused to talk to us. We were prepared to take part in the Government initiative in the Northern Ireland Assembly, when the SDLP boycotted it. We put forward proposals in the Assembly but, unfortunately, those who co-operated with the Government and tried to make the system work were punished, whereas those who boycotted the system and abstained were rewarded, just as those who bombed and shot were rewarded with concessions under the Anglo-Irish Agreement. The Government should include Unionists in the process to get an alternative to the Anglo-Irish Agreement which achieves peace and stability in Northern Ireland.

I ask the SDLP to end its flirtation with the IRA. It should start constructive dialogue with constitutional parties. It has indicated that progress can be made only by the agreement of the constitutional parties. I ask it to take that step. I trust that the next hon. Member to speak will be the hon. Member for Newry and Armagh (Mr. Mallon), and perhaps he will give us some clear idea that that is what will happen.

10.2 pm

Mr. Seamus Mallon (Newry and Armagh): I am grateful to the hon. Member for Belfast, East (Mr. Robinson) for catching your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for me.

I was accused earlier of having a great respect for British parliamentary traditions. I plead guilty. I come from an area and from a family which know only too well that Parliament is a substitute for war. I know that unless we have parliamentary democracy, however deficient we may regard this forum, with which to deal with problems, we will have war-war rather than jaw-jaw.

I have enormous respect for the parliamentary traditions of the House and its practices. That might be the key to some of the nastiness that we saw earlier. There is one thing which Unionists who remain in the House and I have in common—I do not include my colleagues, who can speak for themselves. While retaining that admiration and respect for the traditions of the House, I want not British troops to withdraw from Ireland but Irish political troops to withdraw from the House.

Part of the Unionist problem, and part of the Nationalist problem, is that we are not part of it here. We are not part of the tradition or the machinery. That shines through every time we hear a Unionist speak in the House. He is crying out, "For heaven's sake, will somebody please like me? Will somebody please treat me as the equal that you tell me I am?" But the House does not do that because the hon. Members for Belfast, East and, for Mid-Ulster (Rev. William McCrea) and myself are all Paddies here.

The Attorney-General (Sir Patrick Mayhew): Nothing wrong with that.

Mr. Mallon: I shall come to the Attorney-General later.

We shall be used when it suits the majority opinion in the House, whether that be Conservative, as at present, or Labour, which not so long ago was destroying the North of Ireland. That point unites us. It is one that we must remember when we approach the debate, because it is fundamental.

The hon. Member for Belfast, East said that he believed that members of my party like to see the discomfort of Unionists over the Anglo-Irish Agreement. Nothing could be further from the truth. I ask the hon. Gentleman to accept that with all the sincerity I can muster. Through the years we have lived with too much discomfort ourselves—we still live with it in many ways—to get any enjoyment out of seeing any other Irish Member suffering discomfort as a result of what the British Parliament has decided. That could be a bonding factor between us. We should realise that and stop the nonsense—some of which we saw today—which demeans not just the Unionist argument but the whole political process in which we are taking part.

I sought this opportunity, as I did during last year's debate, to speak to my colleagues of the Unionist tradition, not to Ministers. I seek to speak to them because, irrespective of what happens constitutionally or what is decided by Governments in Westminster, Dublin or Strasbourg, one thing will not change. I will be living beside the same neighbours from the Unionist and Protestant traditions. We have lived there all our lives and we shall continue to do so. That is an immutable fact and there is nothing that the Government can do to change it. There is nothing that an Irish Government or any political force on earth—be it a constitutional or paramilitary force—can do to change that.

If that is a basic fact, there must be a basic conclusion. The sooner we work out a means of living together with respect for both our traditions—a respect which will be to our mutual advantage—the sooner we shall be able to present our strength to this Parliament, the Dublin Parliament and everybody else who believes that, because of our divisions as a people, we are not seriously able to cope with our problems. That is our challenge—not the people sitting on the Government Front Bench or in Dublin. That is the reality we have not yet harnessed.

I take this opportunity to ask the people of the Unionist tradition and their public representatives; as Paddies, let us show the Government that we have two feet on which to stand, heads on our shoulders with which to think and certain political skills.

We do not have to live with the condescension that we often see in political life. We can tell the Government that we are tired of being patted on the head and told, "Good chappies, this will do you until next year," or, "You will get an hour and a half to debate something which is crucially important," or, "You can have a system of justice which is deficient or a job creation scheme which is a nonsense."

We do not have to take such things and we should not do so. That would be the real nationalism which is common to those who call themselves Unionists and those who at present call themselves Nationalists. Our political challenge is to harness that nationalism. If we do so, we shall become the masters of our destiny. We would then not be condescended to by anybody. No one would make

[Mr. Mallon]

decisions for us. We would be expressing for the first time the one thing in which I believe and which I hold dear in political life, which is that all people have a right to self-determination and that everybody has a right to determine their own future. As Irish people living in the north of Ireland, we have a right to do that. We should take that right and work on it in such a way that we can end the awful trauma that we have all lived through.

My hon. Friend the Member for Foyle (Mr. Hume) referred to some of the symptoms of the disease. They should not be dismissed easily, because many of the symptoms that we have seen and that we see today have prevented political development and dialogue. I refer to the findings of the Northern Ireland Police Authority. I shall not do so scathingly, as other hon. Members have done, and will not refer to the majority of one, but ask the House to consider whether it is not an absolute tragedy that the Chief Constable and two deputy chief constables of the police service in the north of Ireland do not have the respect or confidence of their own Police Authority or of a large section of the community.

I am not asking them to resign, as has been suggested earlier. However, the political decision should be taken to ask them to go because it is shameless and demeaning that those men remain in their positions, given the findings of their own Police Authority, which is very much biased towards their position. The decent and honourable thing would have been for those three men to resign immediately. I ask the Secretary of State, who is ultimately responsible for security and policing in the north of Ireland, to have the courage to ask them to leave because they no longer have the credibility to exercise authority.

If we are to have proper policing—I want to see that —and a proper system of justice—I want to see that also —let us get rid of the charlatans and those who, more than any others, have debased the name of policing. Let us not allow constables X, Y and Z, as they will be named, to carry the can for decisions taken by senior police officers. That is the sympton which is holding back political progress.

I have 20 parliamentary questions which, despite the political traditions, I cannot table. There is no way in which I can table them because they ask when the inquest on an innocent man who was shot six years ago will be held. There is no parliamentary machinery whereby I can do that. The first questions I would ask are, "Is there to be an inquest six years after that death? If there is, will a jury be called for it? Could we please be told the names of the witnesses who will be called? Will John Stalker be called? Will Mr. Sampson be called? Who will be called from the Greater Manchester police service or the West Yorkshire police service? Will sergeant X, Constable Y and Constable Z, who said in court under oath that senior police officers had asked them to commit perjury, be asked to give evidence? Will the Chief Constable and the deputy chief constables be called to give evidence? What will happen to that one basic piece of, let us call it, justice?" There is no way that I can table those questions.

Will the Secretary of State say what he will do about a Chief Constable who since 15 February has refused to give evidence to the coroner of Armagh? How many times has the coroner asked for that evidence since that date? With the weight of his political authority, what will the right hon. Gentleman say to the Chief Constable about that evidence? I suggest that he says, "Put that evidence on the coroner's desk tomorrow morning before you put your resignation on mine." I am angry about this, because it goes to the heart of all these relationships and all the political development that may be possible.

I have two further points to make, not harshly but forcefully. People of the Church of Ireland, the Catholic Church, the Presbyterian Church and others have been united by the education proposals. They have brought unity to the North of Ireland such as has not existed for years. They have surpassed anything that Barry McGuigan or Jack Charlton achieved. Those proposals have united the people of the north of Ireland. I do not want to make a meal of this, but for God's sake, the Government must listen: those people are not saying what they are saying because they do not like the education Minister or because of any prejudices. It is because the Minister is trampling on a fundamental part of their lives. He is importing an ethic into education which is frightening people of all denominations. He will not improve the education system by trampling on the dreams and fears of those people, and I ask him to think again.

Finally, will the Minister honour the commitments that he gave in this House to the hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley), myself and others about prison releases? We know their effect on the family, the street, the townland, the village and throughout the community. I am sorry to say that the Minister has not honoured those commitments given both publicly and privately across the table. He has let them slide and has not done what he should have done. He has not kept his commitment in relation to prisoners sentenced at the Secretary of State's pleasure and life prisoners.

Mr. Stanley: The hon. Gentleman was not present at the beginning of the debate when my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State made it clear that we would conclude our consideration of SOSPs and announce our conclusions shortly.

Mr. Mallon: I was here at the beginning and did not miss any of the debate. I heard what the Secretary of State said. The understanding—a substantial part of creating a thaw in the communities—has not been kept. With the greatest respect, I ask the Minister to proceed with it.

Throughout the debate we have heard about reconciliation, and I should like a definition of that word. I do not like it, because it does not mean anything any more. There is no problem in reconciling sections of the middle-class people in the North of Ireland, Protestants and Catholics. That is no problem on the Malone road. The Malone road and the Lower Malone road will be reconciled without any problems.

If the word "reconcile" means anything, it means reconciling those on the Falls road with those on the Shanklin road; those in South Armagh with those in Bangor; and those in the Creggan and Derry with those in Ballymena. If that is to be achieved, we have to talk even to those we would not wish to take tea with. If we avoid doing that, we are simply choosing the easy option—and none of us can afford to do that.

10.20 pm

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): The hon. Member for Belfast, East (Mr. Robinson) asked whether there was a better alternative to the Anglo-Irish Agreement. I have to ask him, and other hon. Members who asked the same question, whether there is a better alternative and what else could be put in its place in the light of the background to the problems of the English in Ireland, the Scots in Ireland and the United Kingdom's relationship with Northern Ireland. All that could be put in place of the agreement is hopelessness, despair and violence—the sort of terrorism that we witnessed only yesterday.

Listening to the speeches tonight——

Ms. Short: The hon. Gentleman has not been here most of the time.

Mr. Cash: That is not so. I have been here for a substantial part of the proceedings. I have taken a considerable interest in Northern Ireland affairs since I came to the House. I will not be diverted by the hon. Lady.

Part of the difficulty lies in the point made by the hon. Member for Belfast, East about discrimination and consent. I have no intention of making a long speech, but it is important that when the hon. Gentleman speaks of the need for reconciliation he—indeed, all hon. Members—should bear in mind the reality of what has lain at the root of the problems of Northern Ireland, not merely for the past 10 or 15 years or for decades or generations, but for hundreds of years. It is the problem of discrimination.

It is not enough to talk broadly and generally about solving that problem. The route chosen by the Government will, for the first time in the history of the Irish problem, attempt seriously to tackle the questions that lie at the root of discrimination and prejudice. It is a nuts and bolts procedure. When listening to speeches about the agreement, I am sometimes left wondering whether hon. Members have actually read it. The machinery exists for a practical step-by-step approach towards changing the manner in which the people of Northern Ireland treat one another.

Last week the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) and I were asked to go to Dublin to speak about the Anglo-Irish Agreement. It was rather more of a discussion than a debate. It was curious that in addition to the hon. Gentleman and me there were representatives from both the Government and the Opposition in Ireland. It had been intended that the audience should be composed largely of moderates, but it was significantly packed by members of Sinn Fein and the IRA. It was interesting that IRA members listened to speakers on the platform who, within the acceptance of the agreement, were prepared to put forward constructive ideas aimed at helping the people of Northern Ireland.

Before I went into that debate, I went to the Dail, where I heard a speech by two members on the question of extradition. They did not know that I was there and they were criticising in strong and vehement terms the failure of the extradition arrangements that we witnessed when McVeigh went free the other day.

The point in a nutshell is that on both sides of the water there are people of good will. On both sides of the border between North and South, in Northern Ireland and in Eire, there are people of good will. If we adopt the step-by-step practical approach of the Anglo-Irish Agreement, we shall solve those problems because there are people who are interested in achieving a reasonable settlement.

Therefore, I ask those who have criticised the agreement to bear in mind that centuries of prejudice and bias are at last being tackled with a step-by-step approach, to give it the support that it needs and also to support the order tonight.

10.25 pm

Ms. Clare Short (Birmingham, Ladywood): As has been said, we approach the 14th year of direct rule and this is the 19th year since troops were sent onto the streets of Northern Ireland following the civil rights movement which brought down Stormont and the rotten settlement that it represented.

The civil rights movement was completely peaceful, asking for an end to discrimination, justice in the allocation of housing, the end of gerrymandering, and so on. There was a brutal and violent response within Northern Ireland to those decent demands, and the police and other forces failed to protect the minority community.

It was because of the failure of that settlement that British troops went in. At that time Britain said that we were ashamed of what we had done since partition. We had turned our back on Northern Ireland and left it to Stormont. We had allowed discrimination and all the injustice to fester. Conservative and Labour parties are equally responsible for that. However, we said that it would go on no longer. We would have direct rule and start to put matters right. We would end the discrimination and injustice and have justice within Northern Ireland.

Here we are nearly 20 years later and what is the picture? The Secretary of State has tried to put a bright light on the government of Northern Ireland and what is going on there, but the truth is that the situation there is a disaster.

In those 19 years, 3,000 people have died, 20,000 have been maimed and injured, the discrimination in employment is serious and has got no better, the criminal justice system is not fair and cannot hold up its head in the world, unemployment in some areas of Northern Ireland is outrageous and there is recruiting of young people by paramilitary organisations on both sides of the sectarian divide. Britain has spent large sums on seeking a security solution in Northern Ireland, building prisons and recruiting security forces. Yet the economy collapses, nothing is any better and there is no hope of progress.

The Secretary of State, in a major part of his speech, advocated devolution within the terms of the Anglo-Irish Agreement. As he spoke, the leader of the Official Unionist party said, "No way. We will not go for devolution within the terms of the Anglo-Irish Agreement." I do not understand why the leader of the Democratic Unionist party was not called, to represent his party's position, but, as I understand it, that party will not accept devolution within the terms of the Anglo-Irish Agreement. So it is not on. It will not work, but that is what the Secretary of State advocates. It will not help, either. There is no chance of progress and there will be no solution in the method for which he argued.

It is the view of British generals and the British military that there is no military solution to the problem of Northern Ireland. They can never defeat, or be defeated

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by, terrorism. It is the publicly stated view of the IRA that it can never succeed by the use of force, or be defeated by it. Senior representatives of the IRA have stated that publicly. The dreadful future that confronts us is that the present state of affairs could continue indefinitely—with its bloodshed, death, cruelty, inequality and discrimination. That is the most likely prospect.

An important voice has not yet been expressed in this matter because of a malfunction in the democratic system of this country—the voice of the British people. There is a mounting desire and demand in Britain for withdrawal from Northern Ireland. Everyone knows that: it is heard in meetings and pubs around the country, and opinion polls have measured its strength for 10 years now.

No major political party in Britain advocates withdrawal; it is seen as illegitimate in the mainstream political debate. Yet more than half the British people say, time and again, that they want to get out of Northern Ireland. That is a growing part of the truth.

To the Unionist parties who say that we cannot force them out of the United Kingdom, I say: you cannot force us to stay in Northern Ireland. You cannot force us to send our troops there and to keep using plastic bullets to blind people and kill children. The British people are becoming unwilling to stay. That is part of the unspoken political reality that everyone knows.

The reason why I abstained in the vote on the Anglo-Irish Agreement was that the root of the problem is that the partition of Ireland, and the Northern Irish statelet, have no democratic legitimacy. The northern state was created because Unionism threatened violence to get it. That is part of the problem. The border was gerrymandered and the artificial majority there was maintained—because there was always the fear that the Unionists would not remain a majority—through crude discrimination and gerrymandering. Leaving aside the injustice of partition, if the people born in Northern Ireland since then had been allowed to grow up in equal numbers, and if discrimination had not done the job of forcing a differing emigration rate, there would now be a Nationalist majority there. That is why the poison of discrimination and division is part of the border and of partition.

I do not accept the legitimacy of the Six Counties or of partition, or the legitimacy of the way in which the majority has been kept a majority. So I am not willing to give it the respect due to a democratically legitimate group.

On present estimates, according to work done for the New Irish Forum by independent academic experts, there is likely to be a Nationalist majority in Northern Ireland in 2016, which, in terms of the history of Ireland, is not far off. My view, which is representative of the bulk of British opinion but which cannot be expressed in the House without attracting allegations that the person voicing it is somehow a covert supporter of the IRA, is that we should honestly tell the people of Northern Ireland the truth. I think it was the hon. Member for Mid-Ulster (Rev. William McCrea), who spoke at enormous length and showed the less attractive face of the Democratic Unionists, who said that Unionist people respect the truth. But they know that Britain wants to withdraw from Northern Ireland. The British people say so; so does the Labour party. Our policy is to seek the reunification of Ireland but not to leave unless a majority in the North accept that.

We say openly that we aspire to withdrawal. Conservatives would love to get out of Northern Ireland if they could do it without turning somersaults and leaving chaos behind. We want to get out. I say to the people of Northern Ireland, "You are not British, you are Irish and belong to the history of that country. There could be a much better country there for all of you if you worked together for a better future and better government."

We should say that we wish to withdraw and will back all initiatives that will bring the Irish people together. We should say that Britain will back anything that they agree on. We should use all our influence and resources and so on to seek to withdraw and to seek to encourage agreement between the Irish people about the future. We should come clean. There is no quick-fit simple solution. Britain cannot withdraw unless she leaves behind a stable settlement, because that would be worse than the current situation—if that is possible.

Democratic Unionist Members have hinted heavily that an independent Northern Ireland is seriously on their agenda, and if Britain will not give them everything, that is what they will go for. That was hinted at more than once in the debate. How irresponsible can those hon. Members be about their own people and the place in which they live? They should look at the present trouble in Northern Ireland and imagine how much worse it could be.

Everyone knows that as an independent country Northern Ireland would not be viable. Without the continuing subsidy, there would be terrible problems for the economy. Everyone also knows that the very forces that cause the violence and the bloodshed would be inflamed and enlarged by any suggestion of an independent Northern Ireland. There would be more violence and more exchanges of population and burnings out. How can responsible politicians who represent Northern Ireland constituencies possibly advocate a solution that will bring even more bloodshed, terror and death to their part of the world? It is deeply irresponsible and they should be ashamed of putting it forward.

It is interesting that in Ireland in the post Anglo-Irish Agreement context there are all sorts of strands that could point the way towards a new settlement. The talks between the SDLP and Sinn Fein are of enormous importance. *[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Mid-Ulster spoke for an hour at enormous volume. Perhaps he would sit quietly and let me express my few thoughts. How can he say he deplores the deaths and not say that these talks are worth a try? If the talks succeed and the IRA is persuaded to stop using violence in Northern Ireland, would that not be better for his people and for the people who live near the border? Should we not all applaud and welcome that?

Rev. William McCrea: Would the hon. Lady address her mind to the fact that Sinn Fein has said that in these talks the SDLP has not asked the IRA to stop its murder campaign? The SDLP spokesman told a Belfast newspaper that all the SDLP wanted was a sort of curbing of the present violence.

Mr. Hume: That is totally untrue.

Ms. Short: The hon. Member for Mid-Ulster tries to play games with words about an issue of such seriousness.

Rev. William McCrea: My people are dying.

Ms. Short: That is the very point I am trying to make to the hon. Gentleman. He says that his constituents are dying on the border. I know that there has been an enormous number of deaths there. That is dreadful. We have a chance for that to come to an end and the hon. Gentleman denounces it.

Mr. Hume: As an example of the integrity of the hon. Member for Mid-Ulster (Rev. William McCrea), I can tell the House that on the very day of the statement that he complained about in the Belfast *News Letter* he met me in the corridors of the BBC. I told him that no such statement had been made. I immediately rang the Belfast *News Letter* and asked whether if any SDLP spokesman had made such a statement the paper would please name him. I told the *News Letter* it could take it from me as leader of the SDLP that there was no truth whatever in the statement and I asked them to print that.

Ms. Short: There are some positive strands. The hon. Member for Mid-Ulster does not seem to be able to take them up, but others will. The first is the talks between the SDLP and Sinn Fein, and I do not see how any hon. Member could fail to wish those talks well. They will improve life for everyone in Northern Ireland if they succeed. We must all hope that they succeed. I certainly do.

The second sign of hope lies in the very alienation of Unionism from British institutions. The Unionists demand the right to remain British, yet they despise and hate the House of Commons and the way in which the Anglo-Irish Agreement was voted through. They rail and shout and demand the right to remain British, but only on their own terms; they must have it their own way. They shout and bluster, but they do not respect British institutions and they do not respect the decisions of the House. As that becomes clearer to them, they feel more and more alienated and separated from Britain.

At the same time, British public opinion sees the Unionists more and more clearly exposed as intransigent unreasonable people with whom it is impossible to deal. A poll printed on the front page of the *Daily Express* a year or so ago showed that about 60 per cent. of the British people polled wanted out of Northern Ireland. When asked who were the most evil men in Northern Ireland, 70 per cent. named the leader of the Democratic Unionist party, 50 per cent. named Gerry Adams——

Rev. William McCrea: What about the IRA?

Ms. Short: I am telling the hon. Gentleman what the poll said; perhaps he could listen for a moment. Those are the facts. That is how things are perceived in this country. The leader of the hon. Gentleman's own party is considered to be more evil and dangerous than the leader of Sinn Fein. I am not saying that that is true. I am merely saying that it is the perception—*[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Mid-Ulster shouted for an hour. Please could we ask him to stay quiet just for a moment, Mr. Deputy Speaker, so that I can finish my speech?

Consider the positive strands—the alienation of Unionism and the possibility of an end to the use of violence by the IRA. In addition, the Unionists are so annoyed by the Anglo-Irish Agreement and about the British Government's speaking over their heads to Dublin that they increasingly talk about talking to Dublin themselves. It seem to me that the ingredients are there for an agreement between the Irish people about the future government of Ireland. We in Britain should say openly that we will back such an agreement every step of the way with all our influence and all our resources.

I have no doubt that Britain will withdraw from Northern Ireland. I have no doubt that that is what the British people want, and I know that the Unionists know it. The Unionists live in fear. They rail and shout and are negative. They threaten the use of violence if a change is made against their will. Instead, why do not we all openly admit our aspiration and work for a new settlement in Ireland that will bring a better future for all the people of Ireland? Let us spend the resources that are now being spent on security on building up the economy of Ireland, and giving jobs, hope and a decent future to all the people of Ireland—Catholic and Protestant, in the North and in the South.

10.43 pm

Mr. Jim Marshall (Leicester, South): Those of us who have sat through the whole debate will agree that it has been a wide-ranging debate. It has had its highs and its lows—*[Interruption.]*—and the bit in the middle. Parts of the debate have been depressing. What impressed me was the way in which my hon. Friend the Member for Foyle (Mr. Hume) put his Nationalist position in a rational, dispassionate way. The hon. Member for Belfast, East (Mr. Robinson) argued his position equally rationally and dispassionately. That suggests that, if they have the political will, representatives from both traditions can come together to discuss the issues rationally. If a flicker of hope arises from this debate, it arises from those two speeches.

I should like to pay my respects to the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, whose sincerity in these matters always shines through. His obvious fervent desire for peace and reconciliation comes through, and I am sure that he works tirelessly—I was going to say ceaselessly, but I am sure that he has to sleep—to bring that about.

When I read the speech that he made during this debate last year, and listened to his speech today, I noticed that the Secretary of State has started to use this occasion—with due respect to the Ulster Unionists—as an occasion for a state of the Union message. He talks not just about direct rule but also about the economic and security situation and, if time permits, the social position. Therefore, we have an extremely wide-ranging debate.

My hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Nr. McNamara) dealt with the general security situation, so I shall concentrate on some of the other points made by the Secretary of State. He is obviously pleased that he is able to refer to the steady improvement of the economy of Northern Ireland as a consequence of the growth throughout the United Kingdom. No one would deny the validity of that. However, I am concerned about the underlying fragility of the Northern Ireland economy and the underlying trend that it has always been the last part of the United Kingdom to benefit from economic growth, and the first to suffer when the economic downturn arrives. I am worried that the improvement of the past couple of years could disappear quickly when the next economic downturn comes.

As the Secretary of State knows and accepts, the unemployment level in Northern Ireland is unacceptably high, hovering around twice the national average. I urge him to continue to assist and promote policies that encourage further Government initiatives to develop economic opportunities in the North of Ireland. If economic growth there is to continue, it will need the consent of all parts of the community—both the majority and the minority. In particular, I urge the Secretary of State to be ready to listen to any group or individual, working in the private sector, the public sector or the voluntary sector, that has ideas and is prepared to offer advice as to how community economic development could take place. I ask him to interpret the position taken by the then Secretary of State in 1985 far more restrictively than hitherto. If the community is to be involved, all parts of it must be involved.

The Secretary of State knows that we condemn, with feeling and vehemence equal to his, the terrorist killings. The maiming of that young girl is unforgivable. It sickens me to hear the IRA's feeble excuse, "We are sorry about the girl, we meant to get the bus driver," as though one can discriminate between the death or the maiming of one individual and another. The House shares my abhorrence of that and other atrocities in Northern Ireland.

I apologise to the hon. Member for Epping Forest (Sir J. Biggs-Davison), for not being here for the beginning of his speech, but I think he rehearsed yet again the arguments of devolution as against integration, and, not unnaturally in view of his opinion, he came down in favour of integration. He will know, because he was here in 1986 and I was not, that the Secretary of State answered that point then, beyond shadow of doubt. I shall refer later to that speech. It sets out clearly the arguments against integration and those in favour of a devolved assembly in the North of Ireland.

The right hon. Member for Lagan Valley (Mr. Molyneaux) referred to Labour party policy and the right of the people of Northern Ireland to remain part of the United Kingdom. We accept that Northern Ireland is a part of the United Kingdom. There is no policy, or likely policy, of the Labour party that will force those people out of the United Kingdom against the wishes of the majority in the North of Ireland. I want that to be clear. I stated that that was the Opposition's position in reply to a taunt from the hon. Member for Mid-Ulster (Rev. William McCrea), and it gives me some pleasure to repeat the statement in response to the comments of the right hon. Member for Lagan Valley.

The hon. Member for Newbury (Sir M. McNair-Wilson) argued against a devolved legislature and in favour of a devolved assembly. I am not sure what that means. It probably means that he does not want a subordinate parliament and instead would like a regional council of some sort within the North of Ireland. If that follows the logic of the hon. Member for Epping Forest, which leads to integration, I am opposed to the view of the hon. Member for Newbury, as I am to that of his hon. Friend.

I was pleased to hear the hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton) welcome two features of the parliamentary Labour party's policy. The hon. Gentleman supports our call for a judicial review of Stalker, which is one that we intend to continue to pursue, with, we hope, increasing strength and increasing parliamentary support. It is not an issue that will disappear. It is one that continues to cast a shadow over the Royal Ulster Constabulary. Whenever and wherever the RUC acts within the law, it will have our support. If the RUC is to have the full confidence of all the members of the community, it must be seen to have rid itself of the ghosts of the past. Those ghosts can be eradicated only through a judicial inquiry.

I was pleased also to hear the hon. Member for Mossley Hill say that he sees the Anglo-Irish Agreement as part of the process of reconciliation. The hon. Gentleman knows that that is the Labour party's position.

It is with some sorrow, if not distress, that I recall the remarks of the hon. Member for Mid-Ulster. I have spent some happy hours—on occasions, days—with members of the Unionist tradition in the North of Ireland. It is a source of pleasure to me that the Unionists whom I have come across are in no way similar to the hon. Gentleman. I hope that even within the North of Ireland the hon. Gentleman is in a small minority. His arguments go beyond the bounds of logic. He wants Northern Ireland to remain part of the United Kingdom, and when the

Government and the Opposition state their positions the hon. Gentleman believes neither. If he cannot accept the facts as they are stated to him, it is difficult to begin to understand how any rational argument is ever likely to convince him of anything. I came to the conclusion at the end of his speech that his driving force was irrationality, not rationality. When he next speaks in this place, I hope that I am not the unfortunate person who has to reply on behalf of the Opposition.

I was pleased to hear my hon. Friend the Member for Foyle repeat his commitment to the cessation of violence, which is an objective we can all share. I shall repeat a point that I made about him and about the hon. Member for Belfast, East at the beginning of my speech. What impressed me about the speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Foyle was his dispassionate analysis of the situation. He is a man who feels passionately about Ireland and its future, but who is able to speak about its problems in a dispassionate way. That should be a lesson to us all —but particularly to those right hon. and hon. Gentlemen whose passion at times overcomes their political powers.

The central question put again and again by my hon. Friend the Member for Foyle was, how are the two communities in the North to live together in harmony with the Republic? He emphasised that their problems can only be resolved by rational discussion. I hope that the constitutional parties will get together and begin that rational consultation—sitting around a table together with the Secretary of State, rather than at separate tables.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hillsborough stated the Labour party's view when he spoke of being appalled at sectarian violence from whatever quarter—be it against the majority or the minority community. We condemn acts of terrorism as just that, no matter from which quarter they may emanate.

I have already paid tribute to the hon. Member for Belfast, East. He mentioned that political institutions in the North had failed due to lack of consensus. In his view, Stormont failed because the minority community withheld its consent, and the power-sharing Executive did so because the majority community withheld its consent. I draw this conclusion from his remarks. If he and his party are prepared to work together with the minority community, they can build the consent about future political institutions that has been denied them in the past. Success in achieving that objective is within his grasp and that of his party, as well as within the grasp of the SDLP and the official Unionists.

My hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short) knows that I hold her in great respect and esteem. I accept her view that there can be no military solution to the problems of Northern Ireland. I accept also her point that withdrawal from Northern Ireland is a popularly held view. However, my own belief, which is also the official view of the parliamentary Labour party, is that withdrawal now would not help the processes of peace and reconciliation.

I echo the sense of shame arising from my hon Friend's reference to the events of August 1969. I remember them well. I was on a fellowship, working for a firm in Basle, when I switched on the television after returning home from work on that dreadful day. I saw the troops marching into Belfast, with bunting hanging out and flags waving. That gave me no pleasure whatsoever. It made me feel ashamed that the British Army was marching into any city, town or village, or any other part of the United Kingdom. I share with my hon. Friend the desire to withdraw British troops from Northern Ireland, but that must be done at the right time, and with the consent of the people, who would suffer if British troops were withdrawn precipitously.

As my hon. Friend knows, our view is that such precipitous withdrawal could lead to further bloodshed and violence, and moreover—this would be the worst example of post-colonial oppression—could put the Republic under such severe financial and military pressure that it could do irreversible damage not just to the reputation of the United Kingdom and the people of the North of Ireland, but to the people and institutions of the Republic. For that if for no other reason, it should not be countenanced.

Ms. Short: When I talk about British withdrawal, I am not advocating withdrawal without a new political settlement. I am well aware that simply pulling the troops out would lead to more conflict and bloodshed. What is needed is a political settlement that reduces the cause of violence. Let me make it clear, for the record, that I know that the troops cannot be withdrawn without any other change being made, or the situation will become even worse than it is now.

Mr. Marshall: I am grateful for that clarification. If I misunderstood my hon. Friend's earlier comments, I apologise. I have much more sympathy with what she has just said, and, as she knows, it is much closer to the official Labour party's views than what I thought she said originally.

Every hon. Member regrets the need for the continuation of direct rule in Northern Ireland, but we must accept that until there is a measure of agreement on an alternative mode of government, direct rule must continue. We all recognise the unsatisfactory nature of it, which is highlighted first by the way in which the House deals with Northern Ireland business and secondly by the political vacuum that it creates at local level in the North of Ireland, and the arbitrary power that it puts into the hands of unelected officials there.

While I recognise those problems, my reaction is not to solve the first by making special arrangements for Northern Ireland business, or to solve the second by setting up a special Northern Ireland Committee. In my view, the existing difficulties should be used as a spur for the constitutional parties to recognise the way in which the political process is being abused, and to seek to remove that abuse by getting together to create a devolved assembly that could deal with the problems.

The House has an absolute right to determine the principles on which the future government of Northern Ireland should be based, in the light of the reality of what is happening. The reality is that two communities exist there side by side, and the overwhelming majority of people from both those communities simply want to live together in peace and bring up their families in decency. That natural desire, however, should not hide from us the fact that there are divisions between the two communities, and that those divisions run deep. They are the result of discrimination, and have themselves resulted in alienation.

The divisions and the alienation cannot be healed by rhetoric, threats or security measures alone. It is not possible to legislate away animosity between communities, particularly when it has existed for centuries, but it is

[Mr. Marshall]

possible to create a framework in which animosity and a sense of grievance no longer have a fertile soil in which to grow. For that to happen, people need to have a sense of belonging in their community, a feeling that their identity is to be honoured and a belief that they have a stake in the future of their country.

Any arrangements for the government of Northern Ireland must take account of those facts and must be seen to be fair. The House of Commons will not support anything which does not establish fair and effective protection for the minority or which seeks to return to the hegemony of the past. People in Northern Ireland must recognise that the only solution on offer is devolution which involves both communities in the decision-making process.

In that context I should like to support the words of the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland on 19 June 1986. With your permission, Mr. Deputy Speaker—and I see that I am likely to get that—I shall repeat his words:

> "The Government do not support, and would not be prepared to suggest, integration as a policy for Northern Ireland. To sugest that there is no difference between Northern Ireland and other parts of the United Kingdom is to ignore completely the backgrond of different histories, traditions, community attitudes and political parties. These differences have evolved over centuries, and cannot simply be discussed"—

I would have used the word "dismissed", but "discussed" will do—

> "as minor variations that can be cast aside in a uniform Westminster package. There are fundamental objections."—[*Official Report*, 19 June 1986; Vol. 99, c. 1218.]

I and my party agree absolutely with that point of view.

Politicians in Northern Ireland must recognise the political will of that statement and make their dispositions accordingly. My view is that the constitutional parties have the opportunity to determine their own form of devolved Government in Northern Ireland.

Finally, in the interests of all people in Northern Ireland, I sincerely hope that they will grasp the opportunity which is presented to them. For the record, if there is a Division this evening, we shall support the order.

11.7 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Dr. Brian Mawhinney): Having had the privilege of listening to the debate from its inception, I agree with the hon. Member for Leicester, South (Mr. Marshall) that it has been wide-ranging. It has been an almost typical debate on Northern Ireland—full of emotion, thoughtful reflection on the political scene and restatement of political philosophies and policies.

If I do not do his political career any great damage by saying so, the House owes the hon. Member for Leicester, South thanks for his forthright affirmation on behalf of his party of support for the security forces, for helpfully pointing out that the dissatisfaction about direct rule should act as a spur for a better system and for making clear his party's commitment to what my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State said and which he repeated to the House this evening.

The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara) asked about the announcement on the Secretary of State's pleasure cases. He will have heard my right hon. Friend the Minister of State's answer. He helpfully said that the issue of devolution predates the signing of the Anglo-Irish Agreement. It has not emerged as a consequence of the agreement and it is not a concomitant of the agreement. It was an important part of policy before the agreement was signed.

The right hon. Member for Lagan Valley (Mr. Molyneaux) returned to his assertion that decisions are made in the Anglo-Irish Conference. I know the right hon. Gentleman well enough to find it difficult to believe that he believes that. He has been told repeatedly that it is not true. I do him the courtesy of believing that his understanding is greater than for him to accept that as a factual statement. If he does accept it, I must tell him again that it is not the case. His advocacy of a concealed form of joint authority is even less credible at the end of the past year, during which, as others have said, there have been differences of perception—and sometimes action—even within the framework of the agreement, between the two Governments.

I hope that the right hon. Gentleman will not persist in making such assertions, because they do neither him nor the truth any credit. He also said—it is equally untrue—that I am bound by Dublin Ministers because an issue was raised at the Anglo-Irish Conference. That is not the case and the right hon. Gentleman knows it. He also knows, because it has been affirmed frequently enough, that Ministers make the decisions in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Molyneaux: When the Under-Secretary of State checks *Hansard*, he will find that I said that he is bound, through the Secretary of State, to make determined efforts to reach agreement on any proposals put forward at the Anglo-Irish Conference.

Dr. Mawhinney: I hear what the right hon. Gentleman says. All that was reflected in the conference meeting was what had already been reflected to me by a representative group of the SDLP who came to see me about the education proposals. I am sorry, given what the hon. Member for Newry and Armagh (Mr. Mallon) said, that he could not be part of that group, for reasons I quite understand.

The SDLP, the Catholic Church and others have a legitimate point of view to make about the consultative document, just as the education and library boards and Protestant Church leaders do. All are being invited to discuss the representations that they made. The right hon. Member for Lagan Valley has prejudged the draft legislation. I regret that—all the more so as we have hardly concluded the first part of what will be an extended consultation procedure on the education proposals. I regret it all the more because there was no response from the right hon. Gentleman's party to the consultation proposals. I find that sad. It is sad that neither the right hon. Gentleman nor any of his colleagues on the same Bench, with the honourable exception of the hon. Member for Antrim, East (Mr. Beggs), who was at one time a distinguished chairman of an education and library board, thought to respond to those proposals. I accept that the right hon. Gentleman attaches importance to these proposals and to the system out of which they flow. I hope that during the rest of the consultation process we can look forward to his contribution.

Mr. Molyneaux: I was at pains to make it clear that, although the Secretary of State and therefore the Minister were bound by the agreement—*[Interruption.]*—I am sorry that I am interrupting something on the other side of the Chamber—to make determined efforts to reach agreement on any proposals put forward, I said that they were not bound to make determined efforts to reach agreement with us. Those right hon. and hon. Members are not even bound by the House of Commons to reach agreement with the House of Commons on any proposals whatsoever. That is the essential point. I was drawing attention to the futility of any of us putting forward ideas to the Secretary of State or the hon. Gentleman.

Dr. Mawhinney: With great respect to the hon. Gentleman, the essential point is that Ministers will ultimately make decisions which they will present to Parliament for Parliament's approval or otherwise. The right hon. Gentleman has a major opportunity to contribute to that process and I hope that he will do so, even if only on behalf of those whom he has been elected to represent in this House.

I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Newbury (Sir M. McNair-Wilson) for his comforting words about the attack on a bus yesterday, with which the hon. Member for Leicester, South (Mr. Marshall) wished to be associated. I understand my hon. Friend's point about no consultation being built into the agreement. He will know and remember that on many occasions my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has made it clear that he would be happy to brief elected Members of the House on discussions arising out of the conference, were that to be their wish.

My hon. Friend also made a point, as did the hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton), about the Northern Ireland Committee. Since 1985 and the gas order debate, there has been no specific request for a debate of that Committee. If there were such a request, especially if it came from Northern Ireland Members, the Government would consider it sympathetically. Although that is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House to determine, I think that I accurately reflect the sympathetic view that he might take of such a request.

Mr. Alton: I am grateful to the Minister for giving way on that point because I am sure that he would not want the record to go uncorrected. In fact, both I and the hon. Member for Greenwich (Mrs. Barnes) went to see the Leader of the House about that matter and to request a meeting of the Northern Ireland Committee.

Dr. Mawhinney: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman. I should make it clear that what I said, I said in good faith. I was not aware of that meeting.

Sir Michael McNair-Wilson: May I press my hon. Friend on that point? Is he giving an invitation this evening to the Northern Ireland political parties to make such representations to him because he would like a Northern Ireland Committee to be in existence?

Dr. Mawhinney: The Committee exists and can be activated. I have made it clear that if requests were to be made for it to be activated to look at particular draft legislation, I believe that the Government would react sympathetically.

The hon. Member for Mid-Ulster (Rev. William McCrea) made a speech which has already been much commented on, and I do not want to add much more, save to try to encourage him to understand that consent is an absolutely essential part of the democratic process. As the intervention by his hon. Friend the Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley) made clear, consent is already enshrined in the legislation which is part of the legislation of this kingdom. The hon. Gentleman tried to make a point about the status of Northern Ireland. I gently point out to him that he was making that point in the sovereign Parliament of the United Kingdom. There can be no debate about his status. He has the right to make that speech in this Chamber; he does not have the right to make it in the Dail.

Rev. William McCrea: I can assure the Minister that I do not want to make that statement in the Dail. The Republic of Ireland claims jurisdiction over Northern Ireland and has said so in the past week. That is the honest position of the South. In entering into the Anglo-Irish Agreement it has done nothing which would take away from its jurisdiction claim over Northern Ireland.

Dr. Mawhinney: I understand the hon. Gentleman's point, but that does not detract from my message which I should like him to take away with him tonight, that status is not in question, and the best evidence of that is that he made his speech in this Chamber.

The hon. Member for Foyle (Mr. Hume) talked about the clash of relationships, and I agree with the hon. Member for Leicester, South that the hon. Gentleman and the hon. Member for Belfast, East (Mr. Robinson) made thoughtful speeches. We were reminded of the need for dialogue between Governments, and that is enshrined in the terms of the agreement. But there must be a similar need for dialogue in Northern Ireland. If we are to develop that dialogue, it must be with an understanding of the history of our Province and the acceptace of the integrity of those who think or act differently from us, within the terms of constitutional politics. We need to develop an appreciation that difference does not have to lead to division. It can be the strength rather than the weakness of a society. In a sense, the hon. Member for Belfast, East picked that up in his thoughtful analysis.

I welcome the recognition of the importance of consent. The hon. Member for Belfast, East encapsulated entirely the fact that in a democratic society government is by consent and that government in a devolved form must command widespread support of both communities or it cannot succeed. That is a self-evident truth, but one which too many people still cannot come to terms with. The hon. Gentleman was right to stress that we must take account of identity.

Most hon. Members would not disagree with the hon. Gentleman that no formal agreement between Governments can solve the problems within Northern Ireland by and of itself. There must be agreement to have internal discussions. My right hon. Friends the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State confirmed that the Government are committed to the agreement.

The Secretary of State also made it clear that he wished to invite political parties to be involved in discussions without any preconditions, and that is important. The hon. Gentleman said, "If only the Government would say such and such, it would open the door to dialogue." In other words he was saying, "I should like to put a precondition on the discussions which the Secretary of State is inviting my party, other Unionist parties and the SDLP to have with him." The Secretary of State said that he wished to have those discussions without preconditions.

[Dr. Mawhinney]

"Without preconditions" applies to everybody, so I cannot, on behalf of the Government, say what the hon. Gentleman wants me to say. That is not because I will not, but because the offer from the Secretary of State was for discussions without preconditions.

I hope that the hon. Gentleman and his hon. Friends on both sides of the Chamber will talk to the Secretary of State not on the basis of preconditions, but with confidence in the strength of their arguments. That is the way in which progress can be made. I hope that they will feel that now is the time seriously to consider that proposal.

It has been claimed that the Unionist community was excluded from the development of the agreement. I hope that it will not now exclude itself from consultations with the Government that may be associated with a review of the working of the agreement.

Mr. Ian Gow (Eastbourne): My hon. Friend has stressed many times the important democratic principle of government by consent. Does he believe that it is possible to govern one part of this kingdom differently from the rest of the kingdom and differently from the way in which it has been governed previously, save with the consent of a majority of the people who are to be governed differently?

Dr. Mawhinney: My hon. Friend will know that the sovereign Parliament has decided that an acceptable agreement was entered into by this Government with the Government of the Republic. That does not translate into the sort of fundamental difference that I know my hon. Friend honourably believes lies at the back of that agreement.

My right hon. Friend referred to sectarianism and my hon. Friend the Member for Newbury supported him. We can make no progress ultimately in Northern Ireland unless the two communities learn to live together. Relations between them will be improved not just by the actions of politicians, but ultimately by the concerted actions of many individual members of the two communities. It is proper and correct that elected representatives should reflect the views of those who elect them. That is legitimate. However, it is not legitimate for that to spill over into a form of sectarianism or perceived sectarianism. I am encouraged by the increasing evidence in the community of Northern Ireland that there is a greater determination of people who wish to live together.

I must draw my remarks to a close—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Ken Maginnis (Fermanagh and South Tyrone): Hear, hear.

Dr. Mawhinney: I am grateful for the hon. Gentleman's encouragement. He has not graced the debate with his presence for most of the time.

I wish to refer to an interview, on the "Today" programme this morning, with two of the girls who were on the bus yesterday. They were asked questions, and I wish to place before the House the answers of Madonna Murphy. She said:

> "I think people on both sides will be very angry, and hopefully their anger will bring them closer together to get rid of the sick people who do things like this."

Madonna Murphy also said that she thought that the people of Linaskea would

> "do as much as they can to create better relations. That's all they can hope to do, and hope that people realise that this is getting us nowhere."

I think that Madonna Murphy spoke for an increasing number of people in Northern Ireland when she said that the present arrangements were getting us nowhere.

I commend the order to the House, but I do so on an interim basis in the hope that we can build on the dialogue in the Chamber this evening. If we can talk here, the people of Northern Ireland will expect us to talk outside in the hope of doing better for the Madonna Murphys and all the other people in Northern Ireland.

Question put:—

The House divided: Ayes 133, Noes 16.

Division No. 392] **[11.30 pm**

AYES

Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Alton, David
Amess, David
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Boyes, Roland
Brazier, Julian
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Burns, Simon
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Chope, Christopher
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Day, Stephen
Dorrell, Stephen
Durant, Tony
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Tony
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Flannery, Martin
Forman, Nigel
Foster, Derek
Freeman, Roger
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gow, Ian
Griffiths, Sir Eldon *(Bury St E')*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Ground, Patrick
Hanley, Jeremy
Haynes, Frank
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
King, Rt Hon Tom *(Bridgwater)*
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Lawrence, Ivan
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lilley, Peter
Maclean, David
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNamara, Kevin
Mans, Keith
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxton, John
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Monro, Sir Hector
Moss, Malcolm
Mowlam, Marjorie
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Needham, Richard
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Paice, James
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Quin, Ms Joyce
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Redwood, John
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rowe, Andrew
Ryder, Richard
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Speller, Tony
Stanley, Rt Hon John
Stern, Michael
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*

Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thurnham, Peter
Vaz, Keith
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wallace, James
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Watts, John
Wheeler, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wood, Timothy
Worthington, Tony
Yeo, Tim

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Peter Lloyd and
Mr. David Lightbown.

NOES

Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Beggs, Roy
Canavan, Dennis
Cousins, Jim
Cryer, Bob
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Gordon, Mildred
Kilfedder, James
Maginnis, Ken
Meale, Alan
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Paisley, Rev Ian
Patchett, Terry
Robinson, Peter *(Belfast E)*
Skinner, Dennis
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Rev. William McCrea and
Mr. William Ross.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved,

That the draft Northern Ireland Act 1974 (Interim Period Extension) Order 1988, which was laid before this House on 7th June, be approved.

Northern Ireland (Appropriation)

11.41 pm

The Minister of State, Northern Ireland Office (Mr. John Stanley): I beg to move,

That the draft Appropriation (No. 2) (Northern Ireland) Order 1988, which was laid before this House on 26th May, be approved.

The order has been made under paragraph 1 of schedule 1 to the Northern Ireland Act 1974. The draft order authorises the expenditure of £2,020 million. That amount, when added to the £1,598 million approved by the House on 1 March, gives a total voted cash provision for the Northern Ireland Departments of £3,618 million for the 1988-89 financial year. That forms the voted element for Northern Ireland Departments of the public expenditure planning total of £4,564 million, excluding law and order, shown in the public expenditure White Paper, Cm. 288. The House will know that this sum may be increased by supplementary estimates later in the year. The services on which the money will be spent are detailed in the Northern Ireland estimates for 1988-89.

Before turning to the detail of the estimates, I want to highlight certain key features of the Northern Ireland economy. Over the past year there has been a welcome fall in unemployment in the Province. In May, total seasonally adjusted unemployment was about 9,400 lower than a year earlier, although the overall unemployment rate of 17 per cent. is still twice that of the rest of the United Kingdom. As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State said earlier, that is an unacceptable level.

The latest figures for those in employment, which show an increase of 5,000 in the 12 months ending in March 1988, are also encouraging and show growth across most sectors of the economy. The economic revival of Northern Ireland is perhaps most clearly reflected in the construction sector, in which output in 1987 was nearly 20 per cent. above its 1986 level.

As for the future, the United Kingdom economy is now in its eighth successive year of sustained growth and the Northern Ireland economy can be expected to benefit from further growth at national level in the months ahead. In the private sector, independent surveys—for example, by the CBI—show a favourable economic outlook for the Province, with investment intentions and business confidence remaining relatively buoyant. It is encouraging that in the past few months plans for substantial investment in the Province have been announced by Moy Park at Craigavon, Herdmans at Sion Mills near Strabane, Norbrook Laboratories at Newry, Glen Electric at Bangor and Newry, Neotech at Antrim and McDonnell Douglas at Glengormley.

As for the public sector, these estimates are based on forecast total public expenditure in Northern Ireland this year, including law and order, of £5,144 million. That is the highest ever amount in real terms—12 per cent. higher in real terms than in 1978-79. This provides the clearest possible evidence of the Government's recognition of the special expenditure needs of this part of the United Kingdom.

I now come to the details of the estimates, starting with agriculture. The net provision sought in the two votes covering agriculture, forestry and fisheries totals about £127 million. Vote 1 covers expenditure of about £40 million on national support measures which apply

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throughout the United Kingdom. In the main this is made up of £27 million to assist structural improvements by way of various capital and other grants; £12 million is to support farming in the less-favoured areas by means of headage payments on hill cattle and sheep.

Vote 2 seeks total provision of about £87 million for local agricultural expenditure programmes. This includes £16 million for industry support, and I would draw particular attention to the allocation of £6 million for the first year of the revised agricultural development programme which will commence very shortly. This programme will provide a range of assistance for farmers in the less-favoured areas, including renewal of existing drainage, grassland improvement, and silage effluent and animal waste storage facilities. These measures are extremely important to farmers in Northern Ireland's less-favoured areas, which cover almost 80 per cent. of the Province.

The reopening of the agricultural development programme will place farmers in a strong position to maintain levels of capital investment in farm structures. The aim is to increase efficiency by reducing costs and to avoid an increase in the production of commodities in surplus. This will help to offset to some degree the disadvantages suffered by agriculture because of Northern Ireland's geographical location. The other main elements of the vote are £38 million for agricultural, scientific and veterinary services to the industry, £20 million for drainage and forestry, and £12 million for central administrative services including accommodation.

I shall now turn to the Department of Economic Development. Vote 1 covers expenditure by the Industrial Development Board. In this vote the main provision sought, about £76 million, is for industrial support and regeneration including support for marketing and research and development. In addition, £13 million is required for the provision and maintenance of industrial land and buildings. Taken together, the IDB's various activities make a significant contribution to the strengthening of the Northern Ireland economy by stimulating investment and promoting job opportunities.

The Department of Economic Development vote 2 covers other economic support measures. About £60 million of the £110 million sought is to provide assistance to Harland and Wolff. This will be used largely to assist in refurbishing work within the yard, to provide grants for contract work, to fund redundancy payments and to meet current operating losses. This high level of support is required to enable the yard to meet the persisting difficulties of the world shipbuilding market.

The Local Enterprise Development Unit, the Northern Ireland small firms agency, has an allocation of £23 million. In the last financial year LEDU promoted 4,570 jobs, bringing to over 35,000 the number of jobs that it has promoted since the unit was first formed in 1971. The House will agree that this is a most creditable performance and illustrates the potential of the small firms sector in Northern Ireland.

In vote 3, a total of £116 million is sought for various training and employment measures such as the youth training programme, industrial training, the encouragement of enterprise and the provision of work experience for the long-term unemployed. The youth training programme is an important element in the Government's strategy for fighting unemployment. It requires about £34 million this year. This level of funding enables a training place to be guaranteed this year for a minimum of two years to every unemployed 16-year-old and for one year for every 17-year-old. Nobody under 18 need now be on the unemployment register.

Also in vote 3, £37 million is sought for the action for community employment scheme. The ACE scheme is proving extremely successful and provides useful employment for those who have been out of work for at least 12 out of the previous 15 months. The scheme also gives participants improved prospects for obtaining employment in the open market. This provison will enable the number of ACE jobs available to increase this year from 6,200 to 8,000.

The balance of £45 million in vote 3 is made up of £29 million for industrial training, £12 million for other employment schemes such as Enterprise Ulster and £3·4 million on various labour market services such as the Fair Employment Agency. Finally within DED, vote 5 requires a total provision of £17 million; £15 million of this is to cover the orderly rundown of the gas industry. A further £1 million is earmarked to assist industry with the cost of implementing approved energy efficiency projects.

The Department of Environment vote 1 covers roads, transport and ports, and a total provision of £126 million is sought for these services. The major portion, some £102 million, is required for roads, of which some £42 million is for maintaining the existing road system. Vote 2 covers another very important matter—housing—for which £246 million is required to provide assistance to the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, to the voluntary housing movement including the co-ownership housing association and to the private housing sector, mainly comprising the cost of the rent assessment machinery. The Government's public expenditure allocation for housing of some £338 million in 1988-89, supplemented by rental income and capital receipts, will mean that gross expenditure on housing should be over £552 million this year.

Department of Environment vote 3 covers water and sewerage services. The total requirement is £84 million, of which over £26 million is earmarked for the capital works programme. Part of this is aimed at improving sewerage facilities in the Greater Belfast area. As a result, there will be an improvement in the quality of the River Lagan. Provision of £21 million is included in vote 4—environmental and other services—for urban regeneration measures. An important element is the encouragement of partnership between the Government and the private sector, as illustrated by the urban development grant scheme, in which every £1 of public money generates £3 of private finance.

The education estimates seek a total provision of £803 million for Department of Education and Science services. Total current expenditure on the schools sector in vote 1 accounts for over half the total provision in the education estimates. A major element of the expenditure is required for the salaries of almost 18,700 teachers. This number of teachers will maintain the pupil-teacher ratio at the improved 1987 level of 18·3. It includes an additional 50 specialist teachers for the continued development of the vocational education programme for secondary schools. Provision of over £6 million is included to increase the number of pupils following courses in science, economics, technology and information technology.

Expenditure in the schools sector also reflects the expansion of the 11-to-16 programme into a further 50 secondary schools. The main aim of the programme, which commenced in 1984-85, is to improve the quality and relevance of education for all pupils in the age range 11 to 16 but especially for those young people who do not react positively to secondary education.

The current expenditure provision of £250 million to area education and library boards to cover the running costs of controlled and maintained schools represents an increase of 5 per cent. above last year's spending. In the further education sector, provision has been made for an additional 30 lecturers in the priority disciplines of engineering, business studies and microelectronics. The estimates provide for total capital expenditure on education of some £51 million. This will enable a substantial programme of new building work to start, including 21 school building projects worth £30 million. The major projects are listed on pages 104 and 105 of the estimates volume. The capital provision includes almost £2 million for work on the replacement and upgrading of schools for the mentally handicapped, including a start on a major new special school in Belfast.

In the Department of Education's vote 2, provision of £127 million is sought. The bulk of this, some £100 million, covers expenditure on the two universities in the Province, and expenditure on the Open university and on teacher training in Northern Ireland. Grants to the universities are based on the principle of maintaining parity of provision with comparable institutions in Great Britain. The remaining £27 million is for expenditure on arts and museums, youth, sport and community services and the administrative costs of the Department of Education. Provision is also made in this vote for the community relations initiative to promote cross-community contact among young people in Northern Ireland, which was launched by my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary on 14 September last year, and which I am sure commands the warm support of both sides of the House.

For the Department of Health and Social Services, a total of £762 million is sought in vote 1 to maintain and further improve Northern Ireland's health and personal social services. The largest single element within this total is the health and social services boards' expenditure of £625 million. A further £25 million has been earmarked for capital expenditure. This will permit the continuation of a substantial programme of major and minor works, including the first stages of the new area hospital at Antrim, the new block at the Mater hospital, Belfast and geriatric units and day hospitals at Enniskillen and Armagh.

Vote 3 provides £71 million for the Department of Health and Social Services administration and miscellaneous services. Vote 4 provides £825 million for social security. This includes £32 million for support to the national insurance fund. Some £18 million is for payments into the social fund. The balance—£775 million—is for family and non-contributory benefits, as well as means-tested benefits.

I hope that this summary of the main items of expenditure has been helpful and I commend the Appropriation (No. 2) (Northern Ireland) Order to the House for its consideration and approval.

11.57 pm

Mr. Jim Marshall (Leicester, South): I thank the Minister for taking us so carefully through the details of the order. That helps every hon. Member to understand what the order, which is of paramount importance to all the people of Northern Ireland, contains. Important as these measures are, their substance should be discussed by local politicians in Northern Ireland. I regret the absence from this debate of some of the main protaganists from our previous debate, as the order is essential for the well-being of all people in the North of Ireland.

There is much to be welcomed in the order and the Minister's speech. It is good to see the Government's continued adherence—in the North of Ireland, if not in the rest of the United Kingdom—to the importance of economic intervention and public spending. As I conceded to the Secretary of State in the previous debate, there are some optimistic economic indicators in Northern Ireland. The Minister cites the continuing fall in unemployment, among other improvements, and the recently announced expansion of the textile industry.

However, the improvement is relative when compared to the economy of 15 or 18 years ago. I am sure that the Minister will accept that there has been a massive decline in employment in manufacturing industry since the 1970s. Industrial output is still below the level of 1973, and unemployment, even though it is on the decline, still hovers at around twice the national average. I am sure that he will further concede that living standards are among the lowest in the United Kingdom, which is a reflection of both the low wage economy and the high levels of unemployment.

There are one or two worrying signals about the future economic prospects of the North of Ireland. As the Minister did not say much about them, perhaps the Under-Secretary will do so later. The Government will know that a recent report issued by the Northern Ireland Economic Council highlights the fact that the underlying economic position is not based on a fundamental improvement in the economy. Additionally, there has been a worrying excessive growth of credit in the local economy. A recent observation shows that personal credit at the end of 1987 stood between £700 million and £750 million. With the fragile economy that pertains in the North of Ireland, the families that are in debt are in a position that is fraught with disaster.

I do not intend to highlight every detail of the order. I shall refer to one or two examples and my hon. Friend the Member for Redcar (Ms. Mowlam) will take up some others when she winds up for the Opposition.

First, the Minister will know that Northern Ireland egg producers have become accustomed to extremely low economic returns. Those returns have often been negative for short periods. In the recent past, the position has worsened dramatically. There are no EC arrangements for effective price support for the industry. Is it possible for the Government to take unilateral action to finance a scheme to enable egg producers to be given financial incentives to abandon their enterprises?

The Government are rightly proud of the recent growth in the linen industry in the North of Ireland. I am sure that they will be aware that the basic raw material, flax, used to be an abundant crop in the North of Ireland. I understand that the recent expansion in the industry has been based on

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imported flax. Some time ago the Government commissioned a report which showed that there could be a revival in the flax-growing industry in the North of Ireland if up-to-date techniques were used. Have the Government any intention of introducing any incentives, or any new new policies, to encourage the production of flax within the North of Ireland?

I acknowledge and welcome, as I have done on previous occasions, the extent of financial support for industrial regeneration. However, if the Government are so committed to industrial development, why are 100 jobs, including 35 Government training inspectors within the Department of Economic Development, under threat?

The Minister of State referred to Harland and Wolff and the measure of public support that it enjoys. I welcome the Government's decision to maintain and increase that support. I am sure that the Minister will agree that Harland and Wolff is of great economic benefit to Belfast and to the Province as a whole. No matter what its future ownership may be—we would differ on that issue—there is an urgent need for Harland and Wolff to continue to exist. The Ultimate Dream project is of some importance in that context. I ask the Minister to be more specific. Can he tell us when the Government are likely to be in full knowledge of the facts of the Ultimate Dream project and when they will be able to announce their response to Harland and Wolff's request for financial assistance?

Within the responsibilities of the Department of the Environment, I wish to raise one point about housing and another about roads. All parties would concede that successive Governments have been generous in making provision to fund Northern Ireland housing. We all accept the need for that, in view of the chronic condition of the housing stock there, which necessitated drastic action.

That finance has been forthcoming. Consequently, housing has greatly improved, but it still falls below the standard in the rest of the United Kingdom. This is not the time to slacken the pace of house building and improvement in Northern Ireland, but unfortunately that is beginning to happen, New house building by the Housing Executive is being reduced, waiting lists are increasing, and there is a growing backlog of improvements and repairs. That situation must be reversed. Northern Ireland is not yet in the fortunate situation where the drive to improve the housing stock can be slackened.

In general, we all accept also that Northern Ireland's road system is good, with most major towns being bypassed and Warrenpoint and Belfast ports being served by excellent dual carriageway and motor road access. However, having recently visited Larne, I wish to make a special plea on behalf of Larne in respect of the A8 between Larne and Belfast. The Minister is aware of the issue and has recently replied to the boss of the port authority, rejecting the plea that I shall now repeat. I hope that in response to my personal submission he will give a less unequivocal no than the one that he gave previously.

Larne is the largest roll-on, roll-off port in Northern Ireland, but its growth may be impeded by the road system linking it with Belfast. Increasingly, the 11-mile stretch of single carriageway between Larne and Belfast is becoming a bottleneck. It also represents a considerable accident risk, as long queues of traffic frequently develop behind relatively slow-moving heavy goods vehicles and caravans. As the Minister knows, there are few safe passing places on that stretch of road.

I hope that the Government will show their good intentions towards Larne port and its economic well-being, as well at the high priority they accord to road safety, by announcing that they accept the need for a dual carriageway system to extend along the whole length of the A8 between Larne and Belfast.

On Department of Health and Social Security matters, I shall let pass the opportunity to condemn the Government's complacency and get down to more particular points. Why are the Government refusing to hold a public inquiry into cuts and hospital closures in the Northern health board area? What is the Government's policy on peripheral hospitals such as Down general? In particular, what is the Government's response to the plan submitted by the local medical and other staff to concentrate all the facilities of Down general on the site of the new maternity hospital?

I also wish to ask about the royal group of hospitals, and particularly the Royal Victoria. I do so for a number of reasons. First, in last year's debate, a number of hon. Members representing Northern Ireland constituencies expressed doubts about the long-term desirability of keeping the Royal Victoria. Unfortunately those comments, together with financial cuts, have fuelled the suspicion that a political decision has been made to run down and eventually close the hospital. I sincerely hope that the Minister will take this opportunity to scotch such rumours once and for all by expressing his confidence in all the staff of the Royal Victoria, and in the long-term future of the hospital.

The Minister will no doubt accept that the Royal Victoria is a centre of excellence with a worldwide reputation in many specialties, and is second to none as a major source of medical research. Its medical reputation is one of which all of us, whichever part of the United Kingdom we come from, can be justly proud. Moreover, members of both communities work side by side in the hospital, and it is a major employer of both communities in that part of west Belfast.

The closure of the hospital would be not only a medical disaster but a social and economic tragedy to many thousands of employees and their families. I hope that the Minister will be able to respond positively to my plea on their behalf.

I can only repeat what I said in an earlier debate on appropriations. While we all recognise the imperative of security, it must not be achieved at the expense of other services. Unfortunately, the suspicion lingers in my mind that that may be the case in some key areas of expenditure in the North of Ireland. The Government must also continue to take a lead in encouraging economic activity and co-operation between the North and the South. I am sure that the Minister agrees that inward investment is of paramount importance, and the debate that we are to have on Friday, and the subsequent legislation, will play a large part in determining the level of American investment.

In conclusion, I can give the Government a light pat on the back. But they could do better: they could provide more financial resources. In view of the pleas that we have made and will continue to make, I hope that those increased resources will be forthcoming.

12.12 am

Mr. James Kilfedder (North Down): The order, entailing the expenditure of some £2,000 million, is all-important to the Ulster people. Yet under the present colonial-type rule, only one and a half hours have been provided for our debate. How can I tell my constituents —and, indeed, the people of Northern Ireland—that the Government place Northern Ireland high on their list of priorities, when the debate is taking place at midnight after a long and busy day? This is a sad comment on the present state of affairs. Not so long ago, matters covered by this all-important appropriation order were considered carefully and in great detail by the Northern Ireland Assembly. I see here colleagues who served in that Assembly: my hon. Friends the Members for Belfast, East (Mr. Robinson) and for Mid-Ulster (Rev. William McCrea).

Rev. William McCrea (Mid-Ulster): When dealing with the budget and the vote for the Education Department, will my hon. Friend reflect on something that may have been raised with him when he was Speaker of the Assembly? The case, which has been going on for some time, is that of a Mr. Crozier from Cookstown, a former teacher.

In a previous debate I stated that Mr. Crozier wanted only to be told why he is being pensioned off on health grounds and then he would take the pension.

My hon. Friend the Member for North Down (Mr. Kilfedder) will agree that in the desire for accuracy it would be correct for me to state that Mr. Crozier would agree to a pension only if his excellent service for 10 years could be proved false and if Dr. Flanagan's report of normal good health could be proved wrong. It is right that that should be stated correctly in *Hansard* and I ask my hon. Friend to encourage the Minister to be sympathetic to my constituent.

Mr. Kilfedder: I am sure that the Minister has heard what my hon. Friend has said about the matter which he mentioned during the lifetime of the Northern Ireland Assembly. It is right that he should put the record straight.

It is sad that the Northern Ireland Assembly no longer exists, because all these matters, which may seem of little consequence to hon. Members from Great Britain, are vital to people in Northern Ireland. Therefore I hope that the day is not long off when the Northern Ireland Assembly can be brought back into being and when constitutional politicians can once again meet at Stormont and work together in a positive mood to improve the conditions of the people of Northern Ireland.

Anyone who visits Northern Ireland will know that, despite the image projected by television, Ulster people are kindly, humourous, good-natured and big-hearted and that it is not their fault that the evil of terrorism haunts them every day and every night of their lives. I hope that we can return to peace in Northern Ireland and that we can work together for the goal of creating a better Ulster for the people who will come after us.

I wish to make use of this opportunity to protest about the effects of the substitute teacher regulation in primary schools. The regulation, which was implemented in September 1987, bars a principal from obtaining a substitute teacher until the third day of absence of one of his teaching staff. The regulation was introduced by the Department of Education in Northern Ireland as part of a policy of Government expenditure cuts. Will the Minister say—if not tonight, perhaps later—what was the cost of such teacher cover in primary schools in Northern Ireland in the last school year before the regulation was introduced and what has been the cost for this year to date, which amounts almost to an entire school year?

The Government are concerned only about money. I am convinced that the regulation should be abolished. I am concerned about the primary schools and the boys and girls who are entrusted to those schools by their parents.

When a teacher is absent, the principal of a primary school has to make the unenviable choice between putting that teacher's class in with another class or dividing the class among a number of other classes in the school. We have to remember that classes in schools in many parts of Northern Ireland are already full, and chairs and desks may have to be moved whenever rearrangements are made. As a result of the rearrangements the pupils suffer the loss of proper tuition while the temporary arrangements last. Not only the pupils who are missing the teacher are affected; all the boys and girls in the rearranged classes lose out, because no matter how good a teacher may be, the changes and the crowded classroom will disturb the normal routine and unsettle the children. Therefore they will suffer educationally.

Of course, there is an additional worry for the school because the possibility of an accident is increased and it is more difficult to clear a classroom in case of fire. Therefore, I urge the Minister to abandon the regulation, in the interests of the schools, the parents, and above all, the boys and girls in the primary schools.

I have been informed that the Northern Ireland Schools Examination Council has introduced a new syllabus. Under the old one, Northern Ireland was studied with the United Kingdom, but now, for the first time, it has been taken out of that context and it must be studied as part of a course on Ireland, North and South. I would like the Minister's comments on that. Perhaps he will ensure that the previous arrangement is brought back.

Parents in my constituency and others covered by the South-Eastern education board have a real grievance about the lack of grammar school places for boys and girls who would benefit from such education but do not pass the 11-plus transfer test. The new policy being pursued by the South-Eastern education board means that, even with a controlled school such as Glenlola in Bangor, which has the physical capacity and the necessary teachers to take another 20 to 30 pupils in September this year, no more fee-paying pupils are permitted. That is unacceptable. I have argued with the board and made representations to the Department of Education on behalf of six girls whose parents want to send them to the school. It amounts to discrimination against the girls. If they had been boys of similar education attainment, they would have been given a place in a voluntary grammar school. I do not think that the education board should be a party to discrimination.

We need a reversal of Government policy, which was meekly accepted by the Eastern health board until last year, when even it protested about cuts in hospital services in its area. The board's area includes the city of Belfast, which has teaching hospitals, including the Royal Victoria hospital and the new tower block at the City hospital. They attract vast sums of money, which is drained away from North Down, which I have the good fortune to represent, to the detriment of Bangor hospital, the Ulster hospital at Dundonnell and the Ards hospital.

[Mr. Kilfedder]

The hon. Member for South Down (Mr. McGrady) will mention hospitals in his constituency, as he has before. We lodge formally a protest with the Minister about the unacceptable situation. Hospitals are being denied the money which would enable them to provide a proper and full service to people in their areas. Vast sums are, however, going to hospitals in Belfast, which has a decreasing population.

North Down borough council has attempted to have a new byelaw accepted by the Department of Environment. The council has endeavoured to control the problem of alcohol and solvent abuse in council parks, piers, promenades and open spaces. Sadly, Bangor is no different from other towns in Northern Ireland, which have suffered from drunks, smashed bottles, shouted obscenities, fights and general bad behaviour. The council submitted a draft byelaw to the Department of Environment for approval, but the Department has so far refused to confirm it

> "as it would criminalise an activity not presently illegal and that it considers that the Police already had sufficient powers to deal with the matter."

The truth is that there are not enough police in Bangor, and more police are needed.

I am still awaiting a response to the appeal and complaint that I made to the Northern Ireland Office at the beginning of the year. It replied, acknowledging my letter. It sent another acknowledgement and then another. It then said that it had passed the matter on to the Police Authority. The Police Authority then sent me an acknowledgement. Months later, I have still not got an answer to my demand for more police for the Bangor area.

As a result of the behaviour of drunks in Bangor and those who engage in aggressive conduct, many people in the area, visitors and residents alike, are offended. Something must be done to protect law-abiding people, not only in Bangor but in other places, who are subjected to hooliganism. I urge the Government to recognise the problem that is faced by Bangor and other towns in Northern Ireland.

Millions of pounds have been spent on a new marina and other developments in Bangor, which will transform that seaside resort over the next few years. I hope that you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, will take the opportunity of coming to my constituency to see the delightful resort of Bangor——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker) *indicated assent.*

Mr. Kilfedder: I am glad that you are nodding your head in agreement, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We—I am including the Bangor borough council—will put out the red carpet for you. I am not too sure about the Northern Ireland Office. I know that the Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland—I think that he is pointing at his chest; I do not know whether he has something wrong with his chest. He is now pointing at his brain, or rather at where his brain should be——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I thought that the Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland was adding to the hon. Gentleman's encouragement to me to visit Bangor.

Mr. Kilfedder: The trouble with some people is that they extend invitations to areas for which they do not have responsibility. I, as the Member of Parliament for that area, and speaking on behalf of the Bangor borough council—a most distinguished body of people—am extending that invitation to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The Minister was invited to Bangor and has seen the progress that has been made in the marina. He knows about the problems which people will face if they use the marina where young people urinate into the yachts that are already there and smash bottles. That is not the sort of welcome which you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, would expect. Therefore, I ask the Under-Secretary of State to make sure that approval is given to that draft byelaw.

I turn now to housing. A substantial cut of £5 million in the Housing Executive budget for 1988-89 was made by the Government in March without any notice to the Housing Executive and after the amount for 1988-89 had already been announced by the Government. For the year 1988-89 the Housing Executive had sought a funding allocation of £345 million, but the Government reduced that to £309 million. Therefore, the Housing Executive budget for this year has been severely cut.

According to the Housing Executive, the cuts will have a detrimental effect on the number of new houses to be built in Northern Ireland and on the amount of renovation work that is undertaken. Improvement work will now have to be placed on such an extended time scale that disrepair and need will rise at a far faster rate than the rate at which the Housing Executive can carry out remedial work.

The housing unfitness rate in Northern Ireland is already worse than the average for the rest of the United Kingdom. I pay tribute to Mr. Victor Blease, the Housing Executive's chief executive, who is a totally dedicated man, leading an enormous organisation, and dealing with a gigantic task in Northern Ireland. But perhaps the size of the Housing Executive is its weakness. The repairs carried out on individual homes are not always of a high standard. I have seen many botched jobs in my constituency and my complaint applies to other constituencies in Northern Ireland. Some council repairs are not properly checked by officials, yet the contractor is paid. The executive may then bring in another contractor to make good the botched job, but more often than not, it will not do so, and the unfortunate tenant suffers.

Major renovation work is taking place in various parts of my constituency. At the block of flats in Drumadoon drive, Ballybeen, Dundonald, the contractor has still not completed the work which he started last year. Each block was to have been completed within a relatively short space of time and the tenants were assured that the work would be completed within a few months. Instead of finishing each small block in turn, as promised, the contractor has work going on in all the blocks. That is unfair. He should have finished one block and then moved to the next.

All the tenants are suffering with holes in walls and unfinished work, and even where the contractor has finished, he must come back to make good what was not done properly initially. I demand an investigation into that renovation contract and into other sites where work is prolonged and the lives of tenants are made a misery by delays and the standard of workmanship.

In addition to the undue and punishing delay in completing the work, defects have become manifest, and workmen must correct mistakes. For example, windows can be opened only with the greatest difficulty. It is extraordinary that a contractor can leave a job in that state. There is a further punishment for tenants. They find that in their absence workmen have used their kitchens, cookers and cooking utensils, and left cigarette stubs in saucepans. If that is not enough, the contractor makes use of their electricity for power machines. One tenant's electricity bill has more than doubled since the contractor has been there.

That is not how tenants in that sector should be treated. It is not as though rents are cheap; they are not. They have been increased to a level which makes life difficult for those who do not qualify for housing benefit. The recent housing benefit changes have made a cruel difference to many of our senior citizens. Perhaps the Government do not recognise that many people take pride in watching their pennies. The expression used for people who are careful with money is that they "look after" their pennies. These senior citizens of mine who have worked hard all their lives and now deserve some dignity in old age, have to consider how to spend their pennies. It is not a question of being able to discount the pennies and throw the pounds around; they have to watch how every penny is spent.

No wonder I am incensed when I hear of people spending vast sums in the City of London while pensioners are denied what would give them some comfort in their old age. That is why the Government need to show compassion.

There is a need to freeze rents at their present level. In many cases they are already too high in the Housing Executive sector. The Government should seek to help the elderly, the sick, the disabled and, especially, parents with a mentally handicapped son or daughter. I know that the hon. Member for South Down (Mr. McGrady) wishes to speak, so I do not have time to enlarge on those matters. I give notice that I will return to them at a later stage.

12.35 am

Mr. Eddie McGrady (South Down): We have spent five hours discussing the political environment in which the people of Northern Ireland live. It is a great pity that we do not have the same time to debate the bread-and-butter issues that relate to that environment on a day-to-day basis. In the short time available, it would be impossible for anyone to deal in detail with the points raised by the Minister, so I shall make a few general comments.

The principle of the budgetary process in Northern Ireland is based on parity, but it seems to be applied in different ways to different announcements. For example, when parity demands a cut, there is a minus sign; when the plus sign is used, parity means an increase in rents and electricity. The most adverse parity is when it relates to benefits, which are the same as those in the remainder of the United Kingdom, despite the fact that food, transport and energy are much dearer in Northern Ireland. Therefore, the benefits are not of equivalent value.

Agriculture is a base industry in Northern Ireland and it is suffering a grave disadvantage in almost all sectors, be it milk, pig or poultry. The Minister has referred to one or two areas where the producer suffers adversely compared with his counterpart in the remainder of the United Kingdom. The higher cost of transport, both inwards and outwards and the higher feeding and energy costs result in a very meagre profit margin, while the pig industry actually suffers a substantial loss.

Much has been correctly made of job creation, but it must be understood that as well as creating jobs, there must be an appropriate and equal distribution of them, because of the peculiar circumstances of the two communities, job distribution will be essential for equal opportunities in job attainment and requirement.

I was glad that the Minister announced the advent of the agricultural development programme and the £6 million that will be provided. I urge him to hasten that programme because the larger part of Northern Ireland is a less-favoured area. I shall be parochial and say that my constituency of South Down is one of those less-favoured areas. It made an application to the EEC in January 1986, through the Department of Agriculture, but there has been no word on it since. I ask the Minister to give an assurance that a more dynamic approach will be made to whoever has the power to make a decision—be he in Brussels or in London—to ensure that those less-favoured areas are declared.

Another area in which the Minister could take immediate and beneficial action for the whole of Northern Ireland—again, it has a particular relevance to South Down—is that of sheep farmers. The hill subsidy is paid in two instalments to both the highland and the lowland farmer. The annual premium for ewes has been paid only in part to the highland areas—that was last November—and there has been no payment at all to the lowland areas. Relief could be given if the will were there to do so.

The very small farmer is making a contribution to the maintenance of his livelihood and that of his family, and I ask the Minister to extend to him basic grants such as those for reseeding, drainage and fencing. That would alleviate some of the hardship.

The Minister may have noticed that I tabled a question to the Prime Minister about assistance for fishermen who had lost their gear, their tackle and their catch through becoming entangled with those mysterious, unnatural objects that move backwards in the Irish sea. I ask him to be more sympathetic in endeavouring to solve those problems.

I have already made general comments about economic development and job promotion. The Government could take a number of steps to help job creation. In March, unemployment stood at 17·3 per cent.—double the United Kingdom average. The Industrial Development Board should make a more vigorous approach to the north American continent. There should be a better presentation of the benefits of establishing inward investment in Northern Ireland. The board's current approach is too sympathetic and sentimental; it is based on heritage, and how many Presidents we gave to America. The hard-nosed business man is not interested in all that. He wants to know about training, grants, education, skills and so on. A hard-nosed sales technique would be much more beneficial.

The Minister said that the CBI was showing confidence because of full order books. Perhaps he is not aware that the CBI is concerned that, despite full order books, there is no real intent to make substantial additional investment, either internally or from abroad. Yet that is really the only way in which jobs will be created. The recent 10 per cent. increase in electricity costs will not help to create viable industries in Northern Ireland. It is a tragedy that the year that young people spend in skilled training under the youth training programme is not recognised as apprenticeship by the respective industries. It would help those young people to obtain jobs if it was judged to be a recognised year of training.

[Mr. Eddie McGrady]

Another aspect of job promotion is tourism. I pay tribute to Sir Jack Swinson, who retires tomorrow after 14 years' service. He has done a magnificent job and brought a tradesman's dimension to tourist promotion. However, it has been concentrated on particular areas, and now needs a new image.

There are enormous opportunities for expansion to other areas. I especially have in mind Down, which has scenic beauty, outdoor activities, parks, golf courses and all that anyone needs, including the passive holiday enterprise of St. Patrick's country, St. Patrick's heritage and St. Patrick's grave. That has not yet been packaged, but it could be a big sell to the Irish-American community in north America.

Job creation and tourist promotion lead me almost automatically on to roads. In the halcyon days of big money, money was spent on certain areas of Northern Ireland, not on areas such as South Down and South Armagh and other areas outside what I call the new pale. Those roads should be improved and properly maintained.

I am not satisfied with the yo-yo approach to housing finance in Northern Ireland. We still have 131,000 houses in serious disrepair, which is 25·7 per cent. of the total stock, 51,000 are unfit and 49,000 lack at least one amenity. That means that 10·4 per cent. of total housing is in an adverse condition. In addition, 11,000 households are in urgent need. I hope that the Minister will do his best to increase that budget, particularly since he is introducing legislation for the homeless for which there seems to be no budget.

I echo what the hon. Member for North Down (Mr. Kilfedder) said on health and I put in a plug once again for the Down hospital. However, one particular matter is causing me great concern. I have received a letter from a consultant radiologist who is greatly concerned that, because of obsolete diagnostic X-ray equipment, people in Northern Ireland are receiving two and a half times the necessary radiation dose in the normal application of X-rays. A new nuclear magnetic resonance scanner is required, against which I understand that the Department of Health and Social Security has set its face. That does not involve ionising radiation and is considered to be safe. That is the case despite EC regulations and the strictures of the National Radiological Protection Board and the Health and Safety Executive. Will the Department please look for a few thousand pounds or whatever is required to give that added safety factor to the medical service in Northern Ireland?

Finally, I want to refer to my abhorrence for the consequences of the social security regulations as applied to Northern Ireland. According to a brief survey in my constituency, applications for benefit have dropped by 76 per cent. People who have come to my surgeries have been denied benefit for rates and rents. To say that there is not major deprivation as a result of the social security changes is to fly in the face of the facts that I meet every day in my constituency.

12.48 am

Mr. Seamus Mallon (Newry and Armagh): I am aware that tonight is the debut, or honeymoon, of the hon. Member for Redcar (Ms. Mowlam), so I shall be brief and confine myself to one issue.

I shall not mention South Armagh, nor shall I mention the imbalance that remains after three years in the number of managers in Government training centres. I do not expect the Minister to give me a satisfactory reply, but I still hope for one.

The urban development grant was provided for Northern Ireland, especially for those areas that have suffered greatly during the past 20 years from the bombings, troubles and all kinds of environmental deprivation. I live in one of those areas, known as Armagh. It has been bombed about 18 times. It has been almost razed to the ground. Surprise, surprise, the Department of the Environment, acting as agent for the international fund, was able to process only one application for the sum of £9,000. One wonders what is wrong. The list shows that Coleraine, another world from Armagh, had six such applications processed, to the tune of £264,700.

That drives me to one of two conclusions; either the DOE is grossly inefficient in the areas in which I live and work—I know that it is anything but inefficient; it is most efficient—or there are differing approaches to the administration of this urban development grant. I would need some convincing by the Minister that there is not an imbalance in the application, administration and payment of the grant.

I hope the Minister will explain this, if not tonight, then on another occasion. I note that Ballycastle received one award of £84,000. Let us remember that the grant exists so that dilapidated buildings can be brought up to standard. And one dwelling was awarded £84,000. In Armagh, one dwelling was awarded £9,000. Downpatrick got £1,500 for one dwelling. Bangor has no problem; it had three grants at £46,100. The hon. Member for North Down (Mr. Kilfedder) will know of the ravages that the IRA has wrought in Bangor.

I want clarification of where the £84,000 in Ballycastle went. I was told by a Government Department that it was for retail outlets. In my younger days, they used to be known as shops. One should not justify the unjustifiable by clothing it in different verbiage.

12.52 am

Ms. Marjorie Mowlam (Redcar): I start by echoing the words of the hon. Member for South Down (Mr. McGrady) who said that these are bread and butter issues, which it is important to discuss. It is sad that we have little time left in which to do that, and I shall be brief so as to allow the Minister to answer the many questions he has been asked. I should hate to deprive him of the chance to do that by talking too long.

The Minister mentioned indicators that we should examine to determine whether the position in Northern Ireland is getting better. He listed some that tended to portray the silver lining to some of the grey clouds that can be seen over Northern Ireland. But there are other signs which could have been used and which might have given a more complete picture.

The Minister readily acknowledged the 17 per cent. unemployment—the highest in the United Kingdom. He cited the construction sector, but if he had mentioned the manufacturing sector we should have seen a 30 per cent. contraction since 1979.

Two other statistics will begin to give a true flavour of the degree of social and economic deprivation in the Province. One quarter of the population are on means-tested benefits, which gives some idea of the extent of the benefits problem. The second statistic records the number of youngsters who leave school at 16 with no qualifications. We are talking about a quarter of 16-year-old youngsters leaving school in Northern Ireland with no qualifications compared with one tenth in England and Wales. That is a worrying statistic because it creates a climate of deprivation, poverty and unemployment which is a breeding ground for alienation, frustration and paramilitary recruitment. That must be borne in mind.

Mr. David Lightbown (Lord Commissioner to the Treasury): Rubbish.

Ms. Mowlam: The Government Whip might consider it rubbish but if he had listened to a little more of the debate he might be able to comment more constructively instead of making negative comments.

When we look at the picture more broadly, we see that we have to take into account the economic and social situation and the political side and make sure that they work hand in hand.

I should like the Minister to address an aspect of the order that has not been covered—value for money. We have had some suggestions about how the money could be allocated differently, but I should like to be sure that it will be allocated in an efficient, value-for-money way.

I shall give an example of what I mean. In his opening statement the Minister said that 21 new schools are being built. Is one of the schools that he listed the Catholic school being built 100 yd down the road from Skegoneill primary school in north Belfast which is closing this month? If it is, that means that within 100 yd one school is closing and another one is opening. As I am sure the Under-Secretary of State is aware, 21 per cent. of the students of the school that is closing are Catholics. In September, the intake would be 50 per cent. In the Minister's view, that school is ripe for grant-maintained integrated status in line with the Government's policy of supporting integrated education. It is ideal for funding under what are known as the Mawhinney proposals.

It appears to be a scandalous waste of Government resources to close one school and open another, because there is no clear indication that that is not a waste of taxpayers' money due to inefficient management of the Department of Education budget. Similarly, we could look at the allocation of money to nursery education. I am sure that the Minister knows that 84 per cent. of three-year-olds and 25 per cent. of four-year-olds receive no nursery education.

The recent European Commission report shows that Britain is the meanest EC country in relation to nursery education and that Northern Ireland has the lowest number of available places. Has there been any attempt in the order to respond to that problem and to the Commission's report?

When answering that question, perhaps the Minister would also respond to the 1987 policy document "Day care in education for under-fives in Northern Ireland". It proposed the establishment of a central advisory committee to discuss the whole question of the under-fives. I have found no evidence to show that that advisory committee has been set up. People are unable to go to work or have to give up work because of a lack of nursery provision or local authority provision in Northern Ireland. Can the Minister say whether that committee has been set up to address that important problem?

When the Minister is replying to the question asked by the hon. Member for North Down (Mr. Kilfedder), perhaps he could tell the House about the difficulties that the hon. Gentleman mentioned of discrimination against girls in the 11-plus transferability test. Perhaps he could tell us whether the setting of a quota of 27 per cent. for boys and girls when all the statistics show that more girls pass at that age is clearly a case of sex discrimination. Will he support the Equal Opportunities Commission, which wants that regulation changed? Clearly it discriminates against girls who at that age are more capable than boys of passing that examination.

We have heard a great deal about integrated education and there has been much support, supposedly from the Government, for that. Will the Minister address the matter of capital funding for Hazlewood and Lagan integrated schools? We know that Hazlewood has been given funding a month ahead of time, but what about capital funding for other schools that are going for integrated status rather than changing? He knows that without that capital funding new integrated schools are unable to survive. I am sure that Minister will not prejudge the matter but will pay careful attention to all the submissions that have been made about this topic. I should like him to tell the House whether the question of integrated education will be considered.

I shall make a couple more points, and then I will stop to give the Minister a chance to respond.

A number of hon. Members asked about agriculture. I should like to add to their questions by referring to the problems facing seed potato farmers. As I am sure the Minister will know, because of export problems last year crop commitments have been made without adequate financial resources to back them. Until now the Government have refused to help the industry. It is no exaggeration to say that the seed potato sector is on the verge of collapse. About £700,000 investment is needed and 750 jobs are threatened. The Government should have addressed that problem in the order.

As I understand the DED estimates, they include a reduction in the electricity tariff subsidy from £4·5 million to £1 million. Will not that lead to even higher electricity prices—a problem which the hon. Member for South Down (Mr. McGrady) raised in relation to industrial development? The Minister has acknowledged the problems that pensioners face in this regard.

Will the Minister assure us that in the figures for social security—especially the appropriations in aid—there is not a saving in terms of cuts in social security benefits? We know that the social fund loan will be less than what was paid out in single payments. We know that the transfer from supplementary benefit to income support involves a decrease. We seek an assurance that the appropriation in aid will not in fact represent a cut. The Minister has said about social security that overall it is pensioners who are the main losers in the changes. Can he assure us that there will not be an additional cut in pensioners' income as a result of both electricity price increases and potential benefit cuts?

Can the Minister assure us that the appropriations for the Northern Ireland Audit Office—appropriations in aid of £235,000—represent value for money? I understand that the money is related to contracts that are being

[Ms. Mowlam]

worked outside the main Government Departments. However, we need to be sure that the Audit Office is doing its job properly and has adequate funding to ensure that Government Departments are acting efficiently in terms of value for money.

1.2 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Mr. Richard Needham): It would require 90 minutes rather than nine to answer the torrent of questions that the hon. Member for Redcar (Ms. Mowlam) asked with her customary vigour. If I do not get round to answering all of them, I shall of course write to her with full details, and if she wishes to have a further meeting, I shall, as always, be only too delighted to see her.

The hon. Member for Leicester, South (Mr. Marshall) pointed out that not many members of the Official Unionist party were present. I do not understand how hon. Members in the Official Unionist party think that they can do anything to lessen the alienation of which they complain so bitterly by boycotting debates as important as this. Last year, I seem to remember, they were here; the year before, they were not. Their behaviour is increasingly reminiscent of the words of the old song:

"First she said yes,
then she said no.
First she said come,
then she said go."

You probably remember them yourself, Madam Deputy Speaker.

The Unionist people of Northern Ireland showed clearly at the last election what they felt about hon. Members who abstained in parliamentary proceedings: they kicked two of them out. But it seems that Unionist Members have once again retired to their tents to complain through the columns of the newspapers that no one is listening to them. It is hard to listen to people who will not talk. We all remember one Northern Ireland Member who came to a debate to abstain in person. Now Northern Ireland Members come to boycott debates in person.

The hon. Member for Leicester, South gratifyingly pointed out that an economic revival is taking place in Northern Ireland, but relative to what happened 15 years ago, it is still fairly shallow. There have been great problems in replacing the old industries, which have been running down in the Province over the past five or six years. The major problem, as the hon. Gentleman knows, is that it is extremely difficult, in the present political and terrorist climate in Northern Ireland, to tempt people back. The best hope for reducing the number of unemployed and getting industry back is to replace war-war with jaw-jaw, and in the earlier debate, we had some signs that we may be making some progress in that process.

The problems of egg producers are felt throughout the country and the Community. I realise the difficulties facing them, but I do not have much more than sympathy to offer.

The hon. Gentleman will remember from his visits to Northern Ireland that the growing of flax, which he mentioned, is a two-edged sword, to mix my metaphors. The retting of flax can create problems of pollution and although, as he rightly pointed out, the climate in Northern Ireland is conducive to the growing of flax, it is not as ideal as the climate in other flax-producing areas. However, he is right to say that the linen industry is doing much better, and I hope that that will continue.

There is a question about Harland and Wolff on tomorrow's Order Paper and, as my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State said earlier, we hope to be able to make a statement on the future of the yard soon. We are ready to consider any privatisation proposals, but I have nothing of further use to add tonight.

I appreciate that the housing budget for this year is not as much as the Housing Executive asked for. I have to point out to the hon. Member for North Down (Mr. Kilfedder) that if one asks for £500 million and gets only £300 million, one can say that one has had a budget cut of £200 million. However, it would never have been possible for us to fund everything that the Housing Executive wanted.

I probably will not be able to cover all the points made by the hon. Gentleman, but I can say that the outturn for 1987-88 was £500 million, and the outturn for 1988-89 is likely to be £506 million, so there has not been a reduction. In cash terms, that is a small increase. We are still spending proportionately double the amount that we spend in the remainder of the United Kingdom, so we shall continue to be able to reduce the levels of unfitness and disrepair, which are worse in Northern Ireland than in the rest of the country.

The hon. Member for Leicester, South asked me about the road to Larne. If we spend more money on roads, there will be less money to spend on housing or other sectors. We shall look at that road, right the way down to the border. We have been having discussions for some time with the Government of the Republic to try to get that route upgraded, but it is a question of finance. I should like to see stages 2 and 3 of the Newry bypass built, and the hon. Member for Newry and Armagh (Mr. Mallon) has pressed me about it and no doubt will continue to do so. However, it is more important to get the housing conditions in Northern Ireland right before we concentrate on roads.

The hon. Member for Leicester, South asked me why there had been no inquiry about the Northern health board's proposals. We looked carefully at the case that it has put, at the consultative procedures and at the alternatives that it was suggesting to its proposed closures, and we decided that its policy should be supported as it was in line with its structure plan. As to the small hospitals in its area and other areas, we shall look at the proposals that come to us, but it is our policy to have major acute hospitals of real quality and we find it hard to staff the much smaller acute hospitals. It is difficult to get staff to go to them.

I cannot think where the hon. Gentlemen got hold of the idea that there was a suggestion that the Royal Victoria hospital might close. Some of those who circulate such rumours are quite capable of creating them. There is no question of there being any danger to the Royal Victoria hospital. In fact, we are spending large and increased capital sums on it. It is one of the finest hospitals, if not the finest, in the country. I support the tremendous work that is does. In the total terms of public expenditure—

It being one and a half hours after the commencement of proceedings on the motion, MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER *put the Question, pursuant to Standing Order No. 14 (Exempted business).*

Question agreed to.

Resolved,

That the draft Appropriation (No. 2) (Northern Ireland) Order 1988, which was laid before this House on 26th May, be approved.

Orders of the Day

ELECTRICITY (FINANCIAL PROVISIONS) (SCOTLAND) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith, pursuant to Standing Order No. 93 (Public Bills relating exclusively to Scotland), as amended by the order this day, That the Bill be committed to a Committee of the whole House.—*[Mr. Peter Lloyd.]*

Question agreed to.

Committee this day.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): With the leave of the House, I shall put together the Questions on motions 4 to 11.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(5) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.).

AGRICULTURE

That the draft Agriculture Improvement (Amendment) Regulations 1988, a copy of which was laid before this House on 16th June, be approved.

That the Agriculture Improvement (Variation) Scheme 1988, (S.I., 1988, No. 1056), dated 16th June 1988, a copy of which was laid before this House on 16th June, be approved.

RATING AND VALUATION

That the draft British Waterways Board (Rateable Values) (Scotland) Amendment Order 1988, which was laid before this House on 7th June, be approved.

That the draft Docks and Harbours (Rateable Values) (Scotland) Amendment Order 1988, which was laid before this House on 7th June, be approved.

URBAN DEVELOPMENT

That the Wolverhampton Urban Development Area Order 1988, dated 24th March 1988, a copy of which was laid before this House on 30th March, be approved.

That the Sheffield Development Corporation (Area and Constitution) Order 1988, dated 10th May 1988, a copy of which was laid before this House on 17th May, be approved.

That the Leeds Development Corporation (Area and Constitution) Order 1988, dated 10th May 1988, a copy of which was laid before this House on 17th May, be approved.

That the Central Manchester Development Corporation (Area and Constitution) Order 1988, dated 10th May 1988, a copy of which was laid before this House on 17th May, be approved.—*[Mr. Peter Lloyd.]*

Question agreed to.

United States Domestic Waste (Dumping)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Peter Lloyd.]*

1.10 am

Mr. Chris Butler (Warrington, South): I have had an opportunity to speak to my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment and I understand that he is not averse to the hon. Member for Truro (Mr. Taylor) contributing briefly to the debate if he manages to catch your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker, after my contribution.

It is my duty tonight to report a sense of utter outrage that is felt in the north-west at the proposal of the Manchester Ship Canal Company to import 7·5 million tonnes of supposed American domestic waste into my constituency. The resultant mountain of muck will dominate the flat Cheshire landscape. It will rise to 130 ft and cover 390 acres. Thousands of representations are pouring into me. I cannot over-emphasise the sense of bitterness and amazement among my constituents and among others in the north-west that the proposal should even be contemplated.

I have experienced this urgency of public opinion only once before, and that was when I was working in No. 10 during the Falklands crisis. On the Beaufort scale of political force, I reckon that if unassuaged these winds could destroy careers, even those of Ministers.

For the past 18 months there have been barges trawling around the Caribbean filled with sewage, one from New York and one from Philadelphia. They have been trying vainly to find a home. The Manchester Ship Canal Company is suggesting that the poor and under-developed nations of the Caribbean should reject the barges and that it will accept and welcome them for profit. This will be a national issue and the British people will reject the proposition and its defenders.

In 1986, Cheshire county council, against bitter opposition from my predecessor and the hon. Member for Warrington, North (Mr. Hoyle), gave planning permission to the Manchester Ship Canal Company to place a tip on Arpley meadows. It was meant to be a strategic long-term facility to take Cheshire's waste for the next 25 years. The council was not disinterested because it agreed to share the profits of the deal. Critically, it entered into a local agreement to encourage the import of waste from outside Cheshire.

The Manchester Ship Canal Company has interpreted the agreement widely and has entered into a preliminary deal with Tower Water and Waste Ltd. to import 1·5 million tonnes of American domestic waste for five years. A company search of Power Water and Waste Ltd. shows that it has the princely sum of paid-up capital of £2. It has filed no accounts since the company was formed on 23 September 1986. The company will import—I say this so that my hon. Friend the Minister will understand the nature of the beast with which we are dealing—the muck into Liverpool and then ship it every day in 300 22-tonne lorries into the heart of my constituency, through the over-stretched road system around Warrington.

Why should Ministers be involved? First, it is a question of national importance as to whether we ought to be shipping in large imports of foreign waste. I wonder what areas of the country will be the next to be blighted by a megatonnage of muck. This is the thin end of a potentially enormous wedge. I wonder whether Cirencester, or even Tewkesbury, might be blighted by such imports.

Secondly, although one might think that the waste disposal authority itself would be the prime mover in stopping such imports, it may not be able to do so because it is over a legal barrel, due to the foolish agreement into which it entered, to encourage imports of outside waste.

The Royal Commission on environmental pollution, in its eleventh report, concluded that landfill capacity in the United Kingdom is a scarce resource that needs to be conserved. However, these proposals will reduce the life of the tip at Arpley meadows by 15 years. Cheshire, already hard pressed to find landfill sites, will discover that its entire strategic waste disposal policy is jeopardised. Worse, the Manchester Ship Canal Company plans to find another landfill site in Cheshire at the end of the five-year period with a view to importing even more American domestic waste.

I am told by the man in the street—and he is right—that the American continent is a vast land mass and that ours is a small country hard pressed by environmental problems. Why cannot the American nation find a place in its vast land mass—perhaps in its deserts—to dispose of its waste and not add to our problems? It is paradoxical that the Government are spending £4 billion on clearing the Mersey basin but at the same time we appear to be allowing a towering beacon of noxiousness right on the Mersey's banks.

The royal commission suggested that the costs of preventing pollution should fall on the producers. I should like my hon. Friend to say whether the Government accept that recommendation, and, if so, how it could be enforced on the municipalities of New York, Philadelphia and Boston. The royal commission commented:

> "The greater the degree of separation between the final disposal of waste and the original process which gave rise to it, the more likely it is that the incidence of costs will be distorted."

My fear is that Warrington will end up paying the bills of New York.

The royal commission commented that there is often uncertainty surrounding the composition of a waste. That must be especially so with a megatonnage of waste from the United States. I find it hard to believe that there will be a man with a pan sorting through 7·5 million tonnes of waste before it comes over here or when it arrives. The suggestion that there is one global environment and that US waste is exactly the same as United Kingdom waste is laughable. The United States has a different climate, different insects, different diseases and different rubbish —and different ways of dealing with that rubbish and those diseases.

I ask hon. Members to pay heed to the words of Mrs. Linda Haslock, who lives 35 miles south of New York. She writes:

> "Non biodegradable plastic waste amounts to 112·8 tons of garbage each day for New York alone—never mind Boston and Philadelphia. It would pay, for once, to have a political jamboree for all those Cheshire officials to come out to Staten Island and spend a day or so surveying the current New York dump at Arthurs Kill and Fresh Kill. The mess is indescribable and the stench detectable up to 5 miles away when the wind is in the wrong direction. Park that lot in Warrington and you have the equivalent of a National Disaster area for years. To say nothing of the inevitable unkillable New York variety of cockroaches which will come with it all and proceed to infest the whole country at a phenomenal rate. Incidentally, the Staten Island Dump is

> largely responsible for the pollution of the New Jersey Coast. Three days ago a large consignment of used and filthy 'crack' phials and hypodermic needles washed up on the beach . . . drug dealers' junk."

There are real environmental risks in the proposals. Who would pick up the bill if the Colorado beetle infested the Cheshire potato crop and destroyed it? Last year we suffered swine fever in this country as a result of imported meat products. There is a danger that small rabid animals would be imported and would infect the native livestock. Who would be responsible if thousands of domestic animals had to be slaughtered within a given radius?

The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food knows what horrors are contained in the proposals. It has been in correspondence with Humberside about the proposals by a shipping agent to bring in 15,000 tonnes from Holland. The ENDS report of May 1988 stated:

> "According to MAFF's veterinary branch, any foreign household waste is likely to contain animal products and as such would be subject to licensing under the Importation of Animal Products and Poultry Products Order 1980. 'No such licence would be given due to the animal health risks involved', MAFF says . . . 'Animal viruses are likely to persist in imported refuse, and could be taken up by seagulls, rats and other animals from British landfills', added a MAFF spokesman."

Even Chris Bonnington now faces a £400 fine for bringing in the supposed skull of an abominable snowman. MAFF even mounted a raid to seize the skin of a wild blue sheep that he had brought in. I urge my hon. Friend to dispense with this strange reticence about the 7·5 million tonnes that it is proposed to bring into the country, and to end this sorry saga now.

I realise that money is involved in the deal, but it is dirty money. The British people will be looking for more than the scalp of a yeti if the United Kingdom becomes the dustbin of the world but for paying dollars at the turnstile.

1.21 am

Mr. Matthew Taylor (Truro): I thank the hon. Member for Warrington, South (Mr. Butler) for allowing me to speak. As he knows, we not only have great sympathy with Warrington but are concerned about the potential for our waterways to inflict a similar scheme on us in Cornwall.

As the hon. Gentleman rightly made clear, waste is now becoming an international problem, with a phenomenal 183,000 tonnes imported to Britain in 1986-87, compared to only 5,000 in the early 1980s. The short-term answer to that international problem has been to pay Third-world countries and the poorer communities—including our own—to accept toxic waste that should be, indeed is, refused by all who are able to do so. While Warrington and Cornwall cannot be compared to Third-world countries, we are told that we should accept waste-dumping schemes because they will improve the job situation in two areas that continue to suffer terrible unemployment, and therefore, in effect, are believed to have their backs against the wall.

When the CEGB threatened to build a nuclear power station in Cornwall, I was among many thousands who protested. We argued that what was not safe for Plymouth or London was not safe for Cornwall either. Exactly the same is true with this proposal. What is not welcome in New York or Washington is certainly not welcome in Cornwall or Warrington. The Minister must respond to our opposition in Cornwall to the dumping of American domestic waste because of fears of toxicity and the new fear of the spread of diseases to local livestock.

The third report of the hazardous waste inspectorate has already expressed fears of transportation of diseases by seagulls and rats in those waste dumps. We all saw not so long ago the farce of New York's rubbish being transported to and fro on massive barges, not being accepted anywhere. The rubbish travelled up and down the east coast of America without takers. It had been claimed that the barges held only the domestic waste that is promised for this country, but it was found to contain toxic waste, and the Americans did not want it to be landed anywhere in the States.

Must we look forward in the not-too-distant future to barges travelling up and down the south coast of Cornwall with such toxic waste destined for some part of our country? The proposals will mean the importation of 2 million tonnes of waste a year through Falmouth harbour. That is equivalent to 10 per cent. of British domestic waste. The United States is phasing out landfill sites because it has had such bad experience of them.

The debate will not stop here tonight. Solutions will be found only through an inquiry to answer the fears of the hazardous waste inspectorate, the fears of the people of Warrington and the fears of the people of Cornwall. It is not enough for the applications to be turned down, because they will be back tomorrow, in Cornwall, in Warrington and in other parts of the country. The United States does not want the waste and it believes that it can offload it on to us. Neither in this country nor internationally has a solution been found to the growing problem of waste disposal.

Government commitment to a full public inquiry generating genuine public trust and support for real, long-term solutions will provide the answer. Meanwhile, the proposals for Warrington and Cornwall most certainly should not go ahead.

1.26 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Colin Moynihan): First, I should like to address the general background to policy in regard to the handling of waste before moving on to the specific and important issues raised by the hon. Member for Truro (Mr. Taylor) and my hon. Friend the Member for Warrington, South (Mr. Butler).

I thank my hon. Friend for the opportunity to discuss the proposed import of waste from America and the wider issues of waste imports in general. I should like to put the debate in context.

As a general principle, it is right that waste should be disposed of as close to its point of origin as practicable to maximise the effectiveness of controls over its movement and disposal. However, it has been widely accepted that the trade in waste is legitimate and indeed beneficial where the waste is to be disposed of more safely than in its country of origin and where the import does not endanger the availability of disposal facilities for United Kingdom waste. We are all more aware of the international dimension of pollution and it is in the interests of international environmental protection that, where appropriate, wastes should travel to facilities which can deal with them to a higher environmental standard.

This general proposition has long been the Government's policy and was endorsed by the Lords Committee on Science and Technology as long ago as 1981

[Mr. Colin Moynihan]

and again by the Royal Commission on environmental pollution in its 11th report, "Managing Waste, The Duty of Care", in 1985.

The import of waste has increased since these two eminent bodies reported. However, it must be seen in perspective. Trade in waste is much more widespread elsewhere. The OECD estimated that in 1983 2·2 million tonnes of wastes crossed the borders of the European Community, but in that year only 15,000 tonnes came to the United Kingdom. Reports suggest that trade in waste has risen both in the European Community and throughout the world.

The United Kingdom has taken a share of this growth but from a very low base level. We still, it seems, import rather less than many of our European neighbours and certainly less than might be expected in view of our size and trading record. It is still a very small proportion of the amount of waste we dispose of annually in the United Kingdom. Imports of special waste amounted to 3·5 per cent. of total special waste disposed of in 1986 and the non-special waste was about 0·3 per cent. of industrial waste arising in England and Wales.

Imports of special waste—that is, wastes which are dangerous or difficult to dispose of—have increased from 4,000 tonnes in 1981 to 52,000 tonnes in 1986. Those special wastes all go to the specialist facilities I mentioned earlier, providing feedstock for them which allows them to remain in business to provide this essential service for our own waste arisings. As long as the waste is disposed of safely here, the United Kingdom can be proud of its record in the international waste disposal scene and protection of the wider international environment. This trade in special waste meets the criteria set out by both the Science and Technology Committee and the RCEP and is a legitimate trade.

It is, of course, less easy to see any reasons for importing waste for direct landfill, since all countries landfill waste and therefore have the facilities to dispose of that waste themselves. In 1986, there were imports of around 130,000 tonnes of non-special waste for direct landfill. It was mainly contaminated soil, fly-ash, gypsum and other industrial waste from the Netherlands, which has severe problems with landfill in some areas because of its geology and high water table. The United Kingdom, along with France, West Germany, Belgium and several other countries assisted their neighbour in the disposal of some of the waste. In those circumstances, even import for direct landfill can be said to be in the best interests of the wider environment, provided of course that it is disposed of safely in the country which accepts it. I can confirm that this is the case in the United Kingdom.

Having set out the Government's general view of waste imports, I shall now consider the matter of particular concern to my hon. Friend the Member for Warrington, South and the hon. Member for Truro.

The proposal to ship 1·5 million to 2 million tonnes of domestic waste per annum from the eastern seaboard of the United States of America for disposal in this country is undoubtedly different in kind and in scale from the imports we have received so far. Safe disposal of waste, which is a prerequisite for all disposal of United Kingdom and foreign waste, must depend on full knowledge of the contents of the waste. Paradoxically, it is often easier to guarantee the contents of chemical wastes—acids do not have a different chemical make-up if they are Belgian as opposed to being British—but household refuse is quite a different matter.

In England and Wales, we have recently laid regulations which specify that certain items of household waste may not be put in a dustbin but should be kept separate to ensure their safe disposal. This applies particularly to clinical waste arising in the home. We have, as yet, no indication that such segregation applies to household waste collection in, for instance the United States of America.

There are differences, too, in the nature of the articles which may be found in household waste from other countries. The United Kingdom is fortunate in being free of many pests and diseases, particularly those affecting animals and plants, which are common in some other countries.

Household waste will contain a large proportion of food and garden waste, which must involve the risk of pests and diseases being carried with it. The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food restricts the import of any animal products and poultry, of animal pathogens and of listed plants, plant pests, plant products or soils. Such import is normally prohibited unless the relevant authorities in the exporting country can certify that it is free of disease. These regulations would apply equally to waste animal products or plants. It is difficult to see how the United States authorities could certify free from disease the contents of the many hundreds of thousands of dustbins.

Finally, there are differences in scale between the trade in special waste at 52,000 tonnes per annum and household waste at 1·5 to 2 million tonnes per annum. While imports of special waste and the relatively small amount of non-special waste can be accommodated without diverting disposal resources away from United Kingdom needs, the import of up to 2 million tonnes of waste, even if it did not raise questions of public health and safety, would be a significant increase in the amount of waste to be disposed of in this country.

This proposal comes at a time when we are re-assessing the availability of void space for waste disposal and other valuable land uses such as recreation and nature reserves. We are also reconsidering current landfill practices in view of the increased number of incidents involving landfill gas. A reappraisal of the geological conditions necessary for safe landfill of putrescible wastes may well reduce the availability of void space in the future.

For all these reasons, the proposed import of household waste from the United States of America gives grave cause for concern. It is difficult to envisage how the waste can be guaranteed free from disease or pests and, even if it were, I believe that the United Kingdom would have considerable difficulty in accommodating the proposed volumes at a time of increasing uncertainty about the future use of certain types of geology for landfill.

My hon. Friend has argued that matters of this kind should not be left to local authorities. There may be a case to argue on that point, but the fact is that under existing legislation, waste disposal control and regulation rests clearly and firmly on waste disposal authorities. They, not central Government, have the powers and the duty to ensure not only that waste is disposed of safely in their areas but that facilities are available in the longer term. Thus, for the particular proposals concerning Cheshire, the county council, as waste disposal authority, is both operator of the site and regulation authority for the county, responsible for the planning of waste management in its area.

It seems quite clear that the proposal to increase the amount of household waste for disposal in the county by 300 to 400 per cent. would require a radical reappraisal of the operation of the site in question and the long-term waste planning of the area. It is for Cheshire, in the first instance, to consider the impact of the proposals on the site and on the plans, as it would be for any waste disposal authority considering any proposals which would radically alter its plans for individual sites or the area as a whole.

However, as my hon. Friend is aware, I am meeting a deputation from the council tomorrow to discuss the position and ascertain what conclusions it has reached. I believe that it will be an important and decisive meeting, not least in providing me with a comprehensive update on its position and to gain replies to a number of the additional specific points which the hon. Gentleman and my hon. Friend have brought to my attention. It is an opportunity to hear direct from the council about the position that it has now reached with regard to the possibility of imports of that size.

For Cornwall, which I understand is a possible alternative destination, a new site has been proposed which will require planning permission and, again, Cornwall county council as planning authority for waste disposal will consider any planning application that may be made in the normal way. Planning permissions and disposal licences or resolutions are normally granted subject to conditions which protect the use of the land and the amenity of the area for its residents. Proposals to alter the scale and nature of any operation would always have to satisfy the normal requirements for safeguarding the environment and the residents' health and amenity. The Government are therefore well apprised of the implications of the proposal, not only for Cheshire and Cornwall but for the country as a whole.

The Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food maintains a constant vigilance against the risk of diseases coming into the country in products of animal and vegetable origin. Any would-be importers of any material would have to satisfy him that there were no dangers of carrying pests and diseases with that material. On that specific point, I have requested that officials from the Ministry are present tomorrow so that we can further discuss this specific and important point of concern. I also believe that in national terms the scale of the proposal raises serious questions on the availability of disposal facilities, not least in Cornwall and in Cheshire, on which it may be necessary to seek further powers.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: I thank the Minister for what he has said. In view of his last comment and his earlier comments on the national seriousness of the issue, may I ask whether he feels that such applications would be likely to be called in by the Department of the Environment for inquiry?

Mr. Moynihan: As the hon. Gentleman knows, I am not in a position to judge in general in regard to call-in. There is certainly no reason why applications of that type would not be considered for call-in. The hon. Gentleman will be the first to recognise—the House will understand this—that I cannot comment on a specific case in advance of all the details being brought to the attention of the responsible authorities.

Finally, in the last minute, I would also like to draw my hon. Friend's attention to the announcement today of the Government's decisions on proposed legislative changes on waste management. These proposals will strengthen and extend the powers of waste disposal authorities and extend responsibility for safe management of waste to producers and carriers. A further short consultation paper on amendments to the Control of Pollution Act 1974 will be issued shortly, dealing with matters arising from the consultation process or from events after the process was begun in 1986. Legislation will be introduced as soon as the parliamentary timetable permits.

All these issues, and all the points to which I have responded, underscore the seriousness with which the Government view the issue. It is a matter of pressing and considerable importance as well as being of public interest. For that reason, not only will I be having a meeting tomorrow but I will be following up all the points that have been made this evening as a matter of priority so that we can ensure that the widespread public concern and strength of opinion that has been expressed from both sides of the House this evening are properly taken into account.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at twenty minutes to Two o'clock.

House of Commons

Thursday 30 June 1988

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

EASTBOURNE HARBOUR BILL *[Lords]*

Order for Third Reading read.

Queen's Consent, on behalf of the Crown, signified.

Read the Third time, and passed, without amendment.

LONDON REGIONAL TRANSPORT BILL *(By Order)*

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on Question [10 December], That the Bill be now considered.

Debate further adjourned till Thursday 7 July.

TEIGNMOUTH QUAY COMPANY BILL *(By Order)*

YORK CITY COUNCIL BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*

CARDIFF BAY BARRAGE BILL *(By Order)*

FALMOUTH CONTAINER TERMINAL BILL *(By Order)*

NEWCASTLE UPON TYNE TOWN MOOR BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*

PORT OF TYNE BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*

AVON LIGHT RAIL TRANSIT BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*

Orders for Second Reading read.

To be read a Second time on Thursday 7 July.

NORTH KILLINGHOLME CARGO TERMINAL BILL *(By Order)*

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on Question [22 June], That the Bill be now considered.

Debate further adjourned till Monday 4 July, at Seven o'clock.

Oral Answers to Questions

NORTHERN IRELAND

Anglo-Irish Agreement

1. **Sir Michael McNair-Wilson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what discussions he has had with his opposite number in the Republic on amending the Anglo-Irish Agreement to enable Northern Ireland politicians to have a greater say in the governance of the Province.

The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Mr. Tom King): None, Sir. The agreement is no obstacle to such a development.

Sir Michael McNair-Wilson: In his speech last night my right hon. Friend said that a devolved settlement would have major implications for the agreement, and the greater the devolution the wider the impact. In his use of the word "devolution," does my right hon. Friend restrict himself entirely to the concept of legislative devolution, or would any form of devolution create an Ulster interface to the agreement?

Mr. King: I referred to what I thought was the desirable ultimate objective. I am sure that my hon. Friend will have noticed that I used the phrase "to or towards devolution." In other words, I am certainly prepared to consider any proposals and alternatives that any hon. Members or others may wish to put forward.

Mr. Molyneaux: In the light of the views expressed in yesterday's debate by the spokesman for the official Opposition, the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara), and others who participated in the debate, is the Secretary of State prepared to consider, as an alternative to the present agreement, a new agreement that would achieve the aims and objectives of the earlier failed agreement, namely, peace, stability and reconciliation?

Mr. King: This is an issue that the right hon. Gentleman and I have discussed on a number of occasions, so he knows the answer. My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, the hon. Member for Peterborough (Dr. Mawhinney), reiterated it when he replied to the debate. The right hon. Gentleman must not seek to impose conditions on any discussions that might occur, as my hon. Friend said to the hon. Member for Belfast, East, (Mr. Robinson) last night. I have made it absolutely clear that I am prepared to enter into discussions with right hon. and hon. Members, without conditions.

Mr. Gow: Will my right hon. Friend address his mind once again to the policy that was set out by the late Airey Neave in the Conservative party manifesto of 1979, when the Conservative party committed itself, in the absence of devolved government, to setting up a regional council, or councils, with widely devolved powers over local matters? Mr. Neave and our party envisaged, not that there would be an Assembly with legislative powers, but that we should govern Northern Ireland more closely in line with the way in which we govern Scotland, England and Wales. Will my right hon. Friend look at that again?

Mr. King: I have made clear to my hon. Friend and others what I think is the desirable objective. However, I have also made it clear that I wish to enter into discussions with the parties and other interested groups in Northern Ireland to consider the basis on which it might be possible to start the process of working and of taking some responsibility together for the affairs of the Province. To repeat what I said yesterday, it is no good people standing at a distance and saying that they are being treated as a colony, but refusing to make any effort to see how they might take greater responsibility for their own affairs.

Mr. Hume: Will the Secretary of State confirm that no party in Northern Ireland is excluded from the Anglo-Irish process? Apart from a party's ability to raise matters in the House, can it approach the Government at any time to have matters placed on the agenda of the Anglo-Irish Conference?

Mr. King: The mistake of the Unionist parties is to elevate the conference as though it were a method for the governance of Northern Ireland. That is a phrase that I corrected in the question asked by my hon. Friend the Member for Newbury (Sir M. McNair-Wilson). The right hon. Member for Lagan Valley (Mr. Molyneaux) completely misrepresented the position last night and implied that there would be joint authority. It is a fair opportunity for the Irish Government to put forward views and proposals. That opportunity is more peculiarly available to every hon. Member. I find it difficult to accept any criticism from people who singularly fail to use all the unique opportunities that are more immediately and directly available to them than are available to the Irish Government.

Mr. Bill Walker: Does my right hon. Friend accept that any proposals for a devolved legislative Assembly in Ulster are bound to have an impact across the Irish sea in Scotland? The Government should tread with some care in this matter, as we have seats in Scotland that are still at risk.

Mr. King: It may disappoint or appal my hon. Friend to discover that I was born in Glasgow and therefore have some understanding of Scottish issues. Having been born in Glasgow of a Welsh mother and an English father, and being Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, I am acutely aware of the differences in the United Kingdom.

Security

2. **Mr. Livingstone:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the current security situation in Northern Ireland.

7. **Mr. Ron Brown:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the current security situation in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Tom King: Since I last answered questions in the House on 26 May 1988 nine people have been killed in Northern Ireland. These deaths include the murder of a full-time UDR soldier by the Provisional IRA, the murder of two civilians in Belfast, and the murder by the Provisional IRA of six off-duty soldiers at Lisburn on 15 June. The Provisional IRA claimed responsibility for the death of one of the civilians and, while no organisation has claimed responsibility for the other death, it is believed to have been the work of a Loyalist paramilitary group.

The efforts of the security forces are continuing to yield substantial encouraging results. Since the beginning of the year, 182 people have been charged with serious offences, including 11 with murder and 10 with attempted murder. A total of 337 weapons, 72,000 rounds of ammunition and 4,100 lb of explosives have been recovered in Northern Ireland. I understand that the Garda Siochana has recovered some 220 weapons, 141,000 rounds of ammunition and 600 lb of commercial explosives.

Mr. Livingstone: I join the Secretary of State in deploring the record of carnage that he read out. Does he agree, however, that Amnesty International's report undermines the legitimacy of the security forces if there is any suggestion that they operate outside the law? Therefore, will he investigate the statement by the RUC in Belfast Crown court that it had decided neither to question nor to charge Mr. R. Jackson, a Loyalist paramilitary who was involved in the murder of Mr. William Strathearn, about using a gun supplied by two members of the RUC who are currently serving life imprisonment for their part in the crime? Can he justify two members of the RUC being in prison for life while the third person who took part in the offence was not charged? For once, will he not say that if I have any evidence I should give it to the authorities, because this comes from the RUC?

Mr. King: I should need to study the hon. Gentleman's question very carefully. I should like to know to what period it refers. I am bound to say that if there is evidence to that effect it must be dealt with in the proper way and should be submitted.

Rev. Ian Paisley: Will the right hon. Gentleman make a statement about the shooting down of a helicopter in Northern Ireland? Is he aware that an Army officer appeared on television and told the people of Northern Ireland that Russia was put out of Afghanistan by the same procedure—the shooting down of helicopters—and that, if it continued, British policy in Northern Ireland would have to change? Will he comment on those remarks made by a British Army officer on the night after the shooting down took place?

Mr. King: I did not see that broadcast or hear that particular comment. Any development of a threat to helicopters would be a serious matter and involve alterations to the operating practices of the security forces. As we know, in Northern Ireland the security forces will, with their skill and courage, adapt and make the necessary changes to their operating procedures to combat whatever may be the assaults and devices of the terrorists. If, after 20 years, the terrorists do not know that and have not realised that there is no military way by which they can win this campaign, I wonder whether they will ever learn.

Mr. Brown: We all condemn violence, but is there not still a case for the phased withdrawal of British troops? I suggest the setting up of workers' defence groups, based on the trade unions, for the defence of the community and to counter sectarianism. That may be anathema to the Tory party and the Secretary of State, but will he at least give us his views on that suggestion, which is important to individuals who believe that class issues still prevail in that troubled part of the United Kingdom?

Mr. King: British troops are in Northern Ireland to protect the community from terrorism, from whichever quarter it may come. They will remain there as long as the community faces such a threat. The people who make necessary the presence of the troops are the people who conduct the terrorist campaign. They are, in a real sense, the "troops in" movement for Northern Ireland, because that is why the troops are there. I do not begin to support the suggestion that trade union groups could provide a security presence, but I should not like to let pass the opportunity to pay tribute to what trade unions have done in Northern Ireland in standing against sectarianism. The whole Province is in their debt.

Mr. Hayes: Does my right hon. Friend agree that, despite the courage and dedication of Sir John Hermon, last night's vote has not helped morale in the RUC? Therefore, is it not vital to get this whole issue of the disciplinary proceedings over the Stalker affair out of the way as quickly as possible?

Mr. King: I entirely agree with my hon. Friend. There is the implication, in connection with the Stalker-Sampson affair and the original shooting, that no action was taken in pursuit of the matter. As we know, four members of the RUC were charged with murder. There has been a massive reorganisation of the RUC, and a significant number of changes have been made, some of them way back in 1983. That shows how long ago some of these issues were being dealt with. I also agree that it is desirable that these matters are finally resolved, and, if disciplinary charges are to be made, that they are dealt with. There may be an announcement shortly in respect of the recommendations made by Mr. Charles Kelly, which are now with the Chief Constable.

Mr. Maginnis: Will the Secretary of State join me and other hon. Members in wishing a speedy recovery to 14-year-old Gillian Latimer, who was so tragically and callously injured by the IRA in my constituency earlier this week? Will he also commend the courage of the driver of the school bus, who brought it to a halt so quickly after being thrown out of his seat that other children were not injured in the crash that should have ensued? At a time when the IRA is plunging to even greater depths, how can the Minister justify the denial of resources to the RUC in the frontier areas, where some of the police stations have cut their hours to 50 per cent. of what they were a few months ago?

Mr. King: The whole House will wish to endorse the hon. Gentleman's opening comments. As he knows, I commented about our feelings for Gillian Latimer and her school friends and on the courage of the driver on that occasion.

On the second matter, we have, of course, made it absolutely clear that law and order and the fight against terrorism are top priorities in our expenditure considerations and that we have significantly increased the resources in that area. If problems arise in particular areas I should like to consider them, but I do not think that I should comment on those matters on the Floor of the House.

Mr. Marlow: In view of the point put to my right hon. Friend by the hon. Member for Brent, East (Mr. Livingstone) and other Labour Members, will my right hon. Friend confirm that the IRA is conducting more than one campaign—not only a campaign of terrorism, but a campaign to undermine the credibility of British justice? Would it not be a matter of some shame and disgrace if Labour Members were to lend themselves, either advertently or inadvertently, to such a campaign?

Mr. King: I entirely agree with my hon. Friend that part of the IRA campaign is to look for people who will repeat various allegations and distortions that it wishes to propagate. Looking at the latest figures, I should like to see some of that enthusiasm for civil rights, personal liberty and freedom addressed to the issue of the punishment shootings and beatings that are being conducted by some people at present. Last year more than 200 young people and others in Northern Ireland were involved in knee-capping and beatings of one sort or another of the most violent and vicious kind.

Mr. McNamara: I am sure that the Secretary of State will agree that we all want confidence in the security forces. We welcome the figures that he has given relating to arms finds, and so on, but is he able to tell us about the new appointments to the Police Authority? We know why the people involved are not named—I do not challenge that—but can he tell us how many of the new members were drawn from the minority community, how many of those not reappointed voted to appoint an investigating officer to inquire further into Mr. Sampson's allegations about the conduct of the investigation into certain matters arising from two of the shootings and an alleged lack of assistance to the Stalker-Sampson inquiry team, and, finally, how many of those reappointed were from the minority community and how many of those who were reappointed voted for the defeated proposal?

Mr. King: On the latter point, I am not able to give the hon. Gentleman the information that he seeks. That is, of course, a matter for the Police Authority and, in its very full statement, it made clear many of the considerations that it had in mind.

On the hon. Gentleman's second point, although he understands that it is not the practice, for obvious reasons, to disclose the names of those concerned with the new Police Authority, which took office yesterday, I am satisfied that it represents a good cross-section of people in the community and that there is a substantial representation from the minority community.

NHS (Anniversary)

3. **Mr. Fatchett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he has any plans to celebrate the 40th anniversary of the National Health Service; and if he will make a statement on the future of health care in Northern Ireland.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Mr. Richard Needham): Any plans to celebrate the 40th anniversary of the National Health Service in Northern Ireland will be left to individual health boards to decide. As regards the future of health care in Northern Ireland, that is as set out in the "Regional Strategy for the Health and Personal Social Services 1987-92", published in August 1987.

Mr. Fatchett: Will the Minister take this opportunity to thank the health workers of Northern Ireland for their dedication and courage over recent years? Will he also take this opportunity of looking again at the cuts in the budget for the Northern health board and the fact that the board is underfunded in terms of health spending? Will he also give the House and the people of Northern Ireland a commitment that he will set up a public inquiry to consider those cuts?

Mr. Needham: I join the hon. Gentleman in paying tribute to the health workers of Northern Ireland. They themselves have something to celebrate. In the seven years to December 1986, the number of employees in the Health Service in Northern Ireland increased by 9 per cent., hospital-related services by 10 per cent., health centres by over 50 per cent., health visiting services by 14 per cent. and home nursing services by 40 per cent. There has been a large increase in health spending over the past 10 years. I cannot give the hon. Gentleman a guarantee about setting up a public inquiry for the Northern health board over its proposals for hospital closures. This has been debated thoroughly throughout Northern Ireland over many months. There has been every opportunity—an opportunity that they have not taken—for the leaders of the trade unions to come and discuss it with me. I believe that the Northern health board's strategy for rationalising acute care and community hospitals in Northern Ireland will benefit all the people in its area.

Mr. McGrady: Will the Minister join me in expressing grave concern about the health of the elderly and the disabled, who are being deprived of basic home-help and telephone connection facilities because of the cuts that are being imposed on the health boards? Many of these people live in isolated rural communities and their only contact with others is by means of the telephone or through the home-help service. Will the Minister take the necessary steps to provide additional finance to reinstate these greatly needed services?

Mr. Needham: The hon. Gentleman knows that care in the community is a main plank of our strategy in Northern Ireland. I cannot accept that the rationalisation that is taking place in the Health Service has led to a diminution of care, although the hon. Gentleman is right to say that there are fewer home helps than there were. However, in proportionate terms there are still roughly two or three times as many in Northern Ireland as are available in the rest of the country. Much of the service that is provided by them is being assisted through an increased number of health centres and through residential accommodation and the voluntary sector. We shall continue to build on services in the community.

Rev. William McCrea: Will the Minister accept from me that many of the members of health boards in Northern Ireland are nominated and are not representative of the people? The Northern health board's strategy for health services and hospital provision in future is not the one that is desired and does not reflect the will of the general public. Will the Minister institute an inquiry immediately into the basis of the board's decisions, which will affect the major hospitals in the area?

Mr. Needham: I shall not. I do not believe that the representatives of the district councils and the members of the Northern health board can agree among themselves on what they want. The mix of the board—it is a large body with representatives of the entire community within the area that it covers—is extremely representative of the public in the area. I believe that it has come to the right decisions in its strategic proposals.

Education

4. **Mr. Martlew:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what representations he has received recently from interest groups in the education field.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Dr. Brian Mawhinney): Since Easter this year I have received many representations, written and oral, on a wide range of education topics. These include provision in schools, school development proposals, cross-community contact schemes, youth service review and funding for arts, museums, sport and community services.

Mr. Martlew: Will the Minister confirm that at a recent meeting with representatives of the parents' action group for education—they had come to see him about extra cover for absentee teachers—he shouted at them and thumped the table when they refused to agree with him on where cuts should be imposed in the education service to enable the extra cover to be made available? If that is true, will the hon. Gentleman take the opportunity to apologise for his childish behaviour?

Dr. Mawhinney: Of course it is not true. I am neither a shouter nor a table thumper. I had a constructive discussion with the representatives of the parents' group. They made clear their concern about substitute cover in primary schools, especially in P1 and P2. I undertook to consider their views, along with others that have been expressed, in the review that we are conducting, as promised in the management-union negotiated settlement that was arrived at last summer.

Sir John Biggs-Davison: What representations has my hon. Friend received from the Catholic hierarchy about the proposed education reform, and what has been done to remove its misgivings?

Dr. Mawhinney: I have received representations from the leaders of the Church and from the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools. Representatives from both organisations will see me in the near future to discuss their representations. Representatives of the Church leaders will see my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, and I will be in attendance.

Mr. McCusker: Will the Minister confirm that one of the more significant interest groups in the educational affairs of Northern Ireland is the Government of the Irish Republic, using the offices of the Anglo-Irish Conference, where they purport to represent what I think is called the Nationalist community in Northern Ireland? As the Minister can ignore and deliberately take no account of the wishes of the remainder of the people in Northern Ireland, but is under an obligation to work thoroughly to reach agreement with the representatives of the Government of the Irish Republic, how does he intend to work in that regard?

Dr. Mawhinney: The answer to the first part of the hon. Gentleman's question is no. The answer to the second part of his question is that with all groups in Northern Ireland, whether they be from the Unionist or Nationalist communities, I will seek to find as broad an area of support as possible to achieve higher education standards and greater parental choice and involvement in the education process. I hope that it will not be too long before the hon. Gentleman lets me have his views so that I may take those into account in the decision-making process.

Ms. Mowlam: What is the Minister's response to the parents and teachers at Skegoneill primary school in north Belfast, who see the Minister allowing the board to close their school, which by September will be fully integrated in terms of student numbers, while at the same time the Minister has agreed to the building of a new Catholic school 100 yds up the same road? The Minister has told us that integrated education is the way forward. Why has he made this decision? Does the decision stem from insensitivity, arrogance or incompetence? What is the reason for it?

Dr. Mawhinney: The reason is that the Skegoneill primary school was not viable. Whatever the composition of the school force, it was the test of viability that had to be applied to granting approval to the proposals from the education and library board. I noticed that the hon. Lady did not say that within a matter of days of the closure of Skegoneill I accepted Hazelwood college—not far from Skegoneill—into maintained status. I am disappointed that the hon. Lady has not welcomed that decision.

Rev. Ian Paisley: Will the Minister reaffirm in the House that it is still the iniquitous policy of his Department to discriminate entirely against independent Protestant schools and tell them that they will receive no money whatsoever from his Department?

Dr. Mawhinney: If the hon. Gentleman is referring to the schools that have a relationship with his denomination, it is my understanding that those schools have never made application for funds from my Department. I further understand that it is the view of his party and Church that they would not make such an application as a matter of principle. If the hon. Gentleman is telling me otherwise, I would be very happy to discuss the matter with him.

Mr. Mallon: Is the Minister aware of the great concern that exists about his proposal, or suggestion, that the Irish language should not be a foundation subject? Will he take steps to ensure that that very important part of his tradition and mine and his cultural background and mine is included as a core foundation subject in the curriculum?

Dr. Mawhinney: I am aware of the concern about the Irish language. That concern has been reflected to me by organisations, including the hon. Gentleman's party, and I thank him for that, and by a number of individuals. It has also been reflected by the Catholic Church. We are looking at all the proposals. However, I join the hon. Gentleman in affirming that it is important that the children of Northern Ireland should have some understanding of their cultural heritage and of the diversity of the cultural heritage that applies in the Province.

Extradition

5. **Mr. Alton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what recent discussions he has had with the Government of the Irish Republic concerning British-Irish extradition arrangements.

Mr. Tom King: At the Intergovernmental Conference on 17 June we discussed the serious difficulties which had arisen in recent extradition cases and we reaffirmed our joint determination to ensure effective extradition arrangements.

Mr. Alton: Although in theory the district courts in this country and in Ireland should dispense justice without fear or favour, is it not inevitable that in the district courts magistrates will be in the greatest fear of the consequences of taking extradition action against members of the IRA? Does the Minister not welcome the Dail's decision on Tuesday that all such cases should in future be dealt with in the High Court? Will he also say whether he has raised with the Irish Government why it was that McVeigh was not kept in custody once it was discovered that the necessary identification was not to hand to allow his commitment for extradition to this country?

Mr. King: As I made clear in my original answer, we had a full discussion with Irish Ministers on this matter, and it is clear that the Irish Government are very concerned about the events that occurred. The hon. Gentleman himself referred to the debate in the Dail. The Irish Minister of Justice made a statement in the Dail making it clear that the Irish Government will appeal against the decision of the district judge. I understand that the Irish Government are also sympathetic to the idea of making changes of the kind that the hon. Gentleman mentioned.

Mr. Duffy: Given that Mr. Justice Ruane acted perfectly correctly and within the law, given that in recent years Law Officers from both Britain and Ireland have failed to make sensitive extradition warrants impermeable to challenge, and given the common practice of an officer from the jurisdiction seeking extradition to provide identification in court, why were not those steps and every other step taken in the McVeigh case?

Mr. King: That is primarily a matter for my right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General. However, the hon. Gentleman will know that in the McVeigh case the procedure which did not lead to a successful completion of the extradition application arose under the 1965 legislation, and that the court's interpretation and approach had not been expected. The greatest efforts had been made by my right hon. and learned Friend and by the British authorities to comply with all the Irish authorities' requirements. The Irish authorities themselves recognised that and shared to the full our concern about the outcome of that case.

Mr. William Ross: Will the Secretary of State confirm that whenever there is a request from the Dublin authorities for the extradition of persons from Northern Ireland it is honoured, regardless of the nature of the crime involved? Likewise, when there are extraditions to Northern Ireland, to Great Britain, of persons who are living in the Irish Republic, for what is usually called ordinary crime, there is also no problem. Problems with extradition cases arise only when those to be extradited are accused of terrorist crime. Will the Secretary of State comment on that point?

Mr. King: My concern—and it is not necessarily implicit in the way in which the hon. Member puts his question—is to make extradition work. In the fight against terrorism it is vital to both countries that there is effective extradition, whatever the type of crime. It is unacceptable for that not to be the case, and we are determined to make it work.

Labour Statistics

6. **Mr. Harry Barnes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether he will make a statement on the latest unemployment figures for Northern Ireland.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Mr. Peter Viggers): The May unemployment figures, which are the latest available, are encouraging. They show a decrease of 2,113 from April and a decrease of 9,949 from May last year. The Government continue to give a high priority to the reduction of unemployment in Northern Ireland and provide a wide range of employment, training and enterprise measures for that purpose.

Mr. Barnes: However one calculates the Northern Ireland unemployment figures, whether in absolute terms or in terms relative to England or with the past; whether one compares Protestant with Catholic unemployment, and Protestant unemployment is still higher than it is in this country—or whether one uses the Government's new statistical techniques or traditional techniques, the fact remains that unemployment in Northern Ireland is a disgrace. It fuels sectarianism and paramilitarism. What will the Government do, and how will the privatisation of Harland and Wolff assist in that situation?

Mr. Viggers: I see no direct link between privatisation and unemployment. As to the hon. Gentleman's other point, the Government operate a wide range of measures in Northern Ireland to promote industry and to organise training and employment. They are easily the most generous in the United Kingdom and they will continue. As to the disparity in unemployment between Protestants and Catholics, there is to be a debate on the Government's White Paper tomorrow. We are committed to equality of employment opportunities and the hon. Gentleman will learn from tomorrow's debate the firm proposals that we intend bringing forward on that score.

Mr. Peter Robinson: In view of speculation in the morning newspapers, will the Minister say whether plans for the privatisation of Harland and Wolff are to be announced in the House, or outside? If the Government have such plans, what attempts has the Minister made to ensure that there is job security, to convince the shipyard that there will be intervention funding and to say whether there will be access to naval orders?

Mr. Viggers: The number of people employed in any company should depend on efficiency and profitability, not on public or private ownership. I said in my response to the Adjournment debate on 27 May that if there were to be an expression of interest in the acquisition of Harland and Wolff the Government would take it seriously. An expression of interest in the acquisition of Harland and Wolff has now come forward from Tikkoo Cruise Line Ltd. The Government will consider that and any proposals from any other parties that might lead to the privatisation of the company.

Mr. Jim Marshall: Since, according to press speculation —again, it is press speculation—Mr. Tikkoo has denied that he has any interest whatever in being a shipbuilder, will the Minister state categorically whether the Government have approached Mr. Tikkoo, or whether Mr. Tikkoo has approached the Government.

Mr. Viggers: I can assure the hon. Gentleman that I have met Mr. Tikkoo and discussed the proposal in outline. He is indeed interested in the acquisition of the yard.

Examination Results

8. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the average number of O-level passes, grades A to C or CSE grade 1, per pupil in the last year for which statistics are available; and if he will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: The information is not available in the form requested. However, information from the school leavers survey shows that of all pupils who left school in 1985-86, 12·2 per cent. had a highest qualification of five or more O-levels. That compares with the 11·3 per cent. of school leavers in England and 10·4 per cent. in Wales. On the other hand, a relatively higher proportion of pupils in Northern Ireland left school with no qualifications.

Mr. Greenway: Will my hon. Friend congratulate the schools in Northern Ireland on those results? However, is he satisfied that the GCSE is sufficiently rigorous to test those pupils at the top of the range and that adequate arrangements can be made to produce suitable new course work for those who will have to retake the GCSE examination, having failed it this summer?

Dr. Mawhinney: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his commendation of all the teachers in the Province, and I am sure that they too will be grateful. As in England and Wales, we have just had the first GCSE examinations and they have gone smoothly. I know that my hon. Friend will want to join me in expressing the hope that, arising out of the education reform consultation proposals, we shall be able to improve still further education standards in Northern Ireland, particularly for the almost one in four of our young people who leave school with no recognised qualification.

Mr. Beggs: Will the Minister recognise that one reason why so many young people leave school in Northern Ireland with no qualification—the one in four to whom he referred—is that they are under pressure to take the first available job that comes along? Will he endeavour to take account of that and persuade his colleagues in the Northern Ireland Office that they too must seek every opportunity to attract and create real jobs so that there is real hope for our young people in schools and colleges?

Dr. Mawhinney: Of course young people in Northern Ireland have employment problems. The hon. Gentleman will recall that in yesterday's debate there were expressions of appreciation for the work that successive Northern

Ireland Ministers have done to try to reduce the levels of unemployment in Northern Ireland. Nevertheless, it remains true that almost one in four of our young people are leaving school with no recognised qualifications, compared with about one in 10 in England and Wales. I know that that is a matter of anxiety for the hon. Gentleman, just as it is for me.

Ministerial Discussions

9. **Mr. Hunter:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he will next have discussions with Ministers of the Republic of Ireland; and what matters will be discussed.

Mr. Tom King: Another meeting of the Intergovernmental Conference is likely to be held shortly. A full agenda has not yet been prepared, but I expect security matters to be one of the items on it.

Mr. Hunter: Will my right hon. Friend take the opportunity to reassure the House that in all his dealings with Ministers of the Irish Republic he stresses, not only the need for full cross-border co-operation with regard to security, but the nature of the threat posed by the IRA both to democracy and decency in the Republic of Ireland and to democracy and decency in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland?

Mr. King: There is no doubt that there is an awareness of the importance to both our countries of the closest co-operation. That has been so in the past, but has been increased since we learnt of the very substantial arms shipments that have reached the island of Ireland, bearing in mind the threat that they pose of greater terrors in Northern Ireland and the Republic.

Mr. Flannery: When the Minister discusses security matters, will he discuss the decision of the Northern Ireland Police Authority, by a majority of only one, not to undertake prosecution or even to inquire into what the Chief Constable and his immediate subordinates have done about the shoot-to-kill policy? After what has happened and the ups and downs of the Stalker-Sampson report, is it not necessary that we have a judicial inquiry into precisely what has happened and why these people are not even going to be inquired into?

Mr. King: That is manifestly untrue. The Police Authority made a very thorough inquiry indeed, conducted over two years and more by Deputy Chief Constable Stalker and Chief Constable Sampson. There has been the most exhaustive inquiry. What was being considered was merely whether an investigating officer should be appointed to conduct any further investigation.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Kennedy:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 30 June.

The Prime Minister (Mrs. Margaret Thatcher): This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House I shall be having further meetings later today.

Mr. Kennedy: Given the reality of the Prime Minister's opposition to Scottish devolution and the perfectly proper wish in the United Kingdom Parliament of Members representing constituencies elsewhere than in Scotland to ask questions of Scottish Office Ministers, will the Prime Minister consult her right hon. Friend the Leader of the House and, without entering into any specific commitments or responses this afternoon, at least undertake to consider whether a practical way of easing the passage of Scottish questions in the House would be to have an additional period of Scottish questions within Scotland at the old Royal High school in Edinburgh, which would not reduce the ability of English, Welsh and Northern Irish Members to contribute on a regular basis, but would allow Scottish Members extra input to Scottish Question Time?

The Prime Minister: No. We are a United Kingdom Parliament and our questions, as I know every Tuesday and Thursday, come from the whole of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Anthony Coombs: Will my right hon. Friend confirm the results of the latest manpower survey on employment prospects? Will she indicate that not only is the employment situation in this country the best for 15 years but that the improvements in employment prospects in Scotland and south Wales are stronger than anywhere else in the United Kingdom? Will she confirm that this is ample evidence of the success of the Government's policies in making sure that prosperity returns, not just to the south-east, but to every region of the country?

The Prime Minister: Yes, I gladly confirm that. Employment prospects are good. Growth has been good for over six years now. *[Interruption.]* Unemployment has been falling for 22 months in succession and 1·7 million jobs have been created since 1983. I do like to give full answers, especially to the Front Bench below the Gangway.

Mr. Kinnock: Is the Prime Minister aware, in the wake of Monday's balance of payment figures, that if the balance of payments deficit in the second half of this year is anything like the deficit in the first half of this year we shall have an external deficit as large, in relation to our domestic product, as the American deficit is in relation to its domestic product? For an oil-rich, oil-exporting country, does that not show unique incompetence by the Government? Will the Prime Minister tell us what she will do to close the payments gap?

The Prime Minister: The present current account deficit is being readily financed by an inflow of private sector capital, showing great confidence in other manufacturers in this country as a base for future manufacturing operations.

Mr. Kinnock: If the confidence is so great and the inflow so ready, why must the Prime Minister inflict 9·5 per cent. interest rates on British industry and British home buyers?

The Prime Minister: To keep downward pressure on inflation.

Mr. Goodlad: Will my right hon. Friend continue her efforts to secure the Thyssen collection's ultimate location in this country? Will she seek to persuade Baron Thyssen and the trustees to consider seriously the development at Battersea, which, like Alton Towers, will be visited in years to come by many millions of people every year?

The Prime Minister: This is a unique and very valuable collection, and obviously we should like it to have its permanent home in this country. Certain proposals have been made, and it is for the trustees to decide whether they are acceptable. As my hon. Friend knows, a number of other countries have made proposals. It is for the trustees to make the final decision.

Mr. Alfred Morris: How does the Prime Minister justify saying that there are no resources for full implementation of the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986, which received all-party support, when she has stuffed so much gold into the mouths of the richest 5 per cent. of taxpayers? If she feels that her priorities are not inhumane, why can she not convince the Royal National Institute for the Blind, MENCAP, MIND, the Spastics Society and other major organisations of and for the disabled?

The Prime Minister: As the right hon. Gentleman knows, expenditure on all the social services has gone up enormously. Since 1979, help for the disabled—about which the right hon. Gentleman is asking—has gone up by 80 per cent. in real terms.

Q2. **Mr. Hunter:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 30 June.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Hunter: Will my right hon. Friend reflect on the wide popularity of the Criminal Justice Bill—not least because of the protection that it gives to child victims—and reflect further on the remarkable fact that the Opposition voted against it? Does that not make a mockery of their protestations on law and order and suggest that it is not only the extreme Left who live in a weird Disneyland of their own creation?

The Prime Minister: The Opposition express sympathy for the victims of crime, but so often they vote against the measures that would enable us to protect people from crime. Not only the Criminal Justice Bill, but the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984, the Public Order Act 1986 and the Prevention of Terrorism Act 1974 all attracted an adverse vote from the Opposition.

Q3. **Mr. James Lamond:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 30 June.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Lamond: Five years ago the Prime Minister was boasting with pleasure and pride about the balance of payments surplus and warning us against the extreme damage that high interest rates could do to our industrial production. Now that we are running the highest balance of payments deficit in the history of the country and interest rates are being increased every week, can she tell us whether she looks back over the past five years and thinks that we have made economic progress?

The Prime Minister: We have made enormous progress, with inflation down, growth up, the number of new jobs being created considerably up, and the highest standard of living that we have ever known and the best standard of social services that we have ever known. Yes, progress continues apace.

Mr. Sumberg: Has my right hon. Friend noted the remarks of a distinguished constituent of mine, the deputy chairman of the BBC and former Cabinet Minister, Lord Barnett, that in the north-west of England there is an outlook of optimism and an air of confidence? Does that not endorse the success of the Government's economic and regional policies, and prove that when the Labour party claims to be listening it is effectively engaged in a dialogue of the deaf?

The Prime Minister: Yes, I agree with that. There is a mood of optimism and confidence, different from when the Labour party was in power, as is manifest in the remarkable book, "Inside the Treasury" written by Lord Barnett. The book tells it all.

Q4. **Ms. Quin:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 30 June

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Lady to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Ms. Quin: Has the Prime Minister found time to study the recently published report by the Low Pay Unit entitled "The 1988 Budget and the Poor"? Is she aware of the statement of its director that today's supertax payers in Britain are the poor, not the rich? Is she proud of the fact that the gap between rich and poor has widened so dramatically during her premiership? If not, what does she propose to do about it?

The Prime Minister: The fact is that those on the lowest incomes have also gained from the growth of the economy and the creation of wealth. As everyone knows, wealth must be created before it can be distributed. Moreover, whereas before the reform of the social security system there was a group of people who, if they increased their pay, forfeited in other benefits more than 100 per cent. of what they gained in earnings, that gap has been greatly reduced.

Mr. Hayward: Has my right hon. Friend compared the newspaper reports printed on Monday and the radio reports the Airbus accident in France on Sunday night with the Press reports that are now appearing? It seems that the British media are determined to talk down British technology and the fly-by-wire system of the A320. However, three days later, they are having to admit that they are wrong.

The Prime Minister: I have seen the reports. It is always wiser to wait for a full investigation of these matters before one expresses conclusions.

Q5. **Mr. Andrew Welsh:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 30 June.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Welsh: Will the Prime Minister pay as much attention to the views of the Scottish people, who are opposed to dumping nuclear waste, as to those of the Lord President of the Council, the right hon. Member for Colchester, South and Maldon (Mr. Wakeham), whose constituency was exempted from dumping such waste before the general election? Even if a local lord is willing to be bought and sold for Nirex gold in Caithness, I assure her that the Scottish people will not be. I can guarantee massive sustained national opposition to dumping nuclear waste in Scotland. Does she listen to the people, or only to Cabinet Ministers?

The Prime Minister: As the hon. Gentleman is aware, there are inquiries and studies into dumping nuclear waste. *[Interruption.]* If the hon. Gentleman is referring to imports of waste from other countries, obviously—[HON. MEMBERS: "No."] If he is not, I do not need to answer that question. If it is nuclear waste, the matter has already been subject to deep study and inquiry.

Mr. Leigh: Further to the question of the right hon. Member for Islwyn (Mr. Kinnock) on deficits, will my right hon. Friend reflect on the fact that it is not she who is 12 points in deficit in the opinion polls? Could it be that that is because we do not have a chaotic defence policy, we are returning real prosperity to the people and we are not in hock to the block votes of trade unions?

The Prime Minister: Yes, all that. I could not possibly have put it better myself.

Q7. **Mr. Fatchett:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 30 June.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Fatchett: If, as the Prime Minister said in reply to my right hon. Friend the Member for Islwyn (Mr. Kinnock), the increase in interest rates is caused by inflation and she aims to act on inflation and not on the trade deficit, is there a level of trade deficit on which the Government would act and introduce measures?

The Prime Minister: The prime objective is to keep inflation down, because to let it rise would be the very worst thing that one could do to the prospects of manufacturing industry, as most people realise. Interest rates are one of the instruments by which one keeps inflation down. As the hon. Gentleman will know, inflation is now lower than it was at any time under the last Labour Government.

Q8. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 30 June.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Greenway: Does my right hon. Friend remember the excellent contribution made to education by direct grant schools, and their destruction by the Labour Government between 1975 and 1979? Does she agree that grant-maintained schools, as envisaged in the Education Reform Bill, will make an admirable return to the principle, formerly upheld by the direct-grant schools, of making education available to children of all levels of ability? Will my right hon. Friend seek to ensure that the Lords amendment on the number of parents voting is overturned so that the decision on opting out can be taken by a simple majority?

The Prime Minister: I agree that grant-maintained schools will give the kind of opportunity to many parents which they lost through the abolition of direct grant schools. We shall consider whether to apply to reverse their Lordships' amendment to the Bill when it returns to this House.

Mr. Hume: In view of the Prime Minister's oft-expressed concern that there should be no hiding place in these islands for people who commit serious crimes, is she aware of legislation negotiated by her right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) with the Irish Government in 1974—the Civil Jurisdiction Act? Is she also aware that during the past few weeks, in the cases of two people wanted for serious crime in Dublin who were resident in Northern Ireland, the Irish authorities, instead of applying for extradition, supplied the evidence to the authorities in Northern Ireland, where they were tried, found guilty and convicted? Could she tell me why the Government do not use those same facilities, which are just as effective for achieving the objective, as extradition?

The Prime Minister: Because, as the hon. Gentleman, I would have thought, would be the first to be aware, having others tried in the Republic is a very different proposition from what he said.

European Council (Hanover)

3.31 pm

The Prime Minister (Mrs. Margaret Thatcher): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I shall make a statement about the European Council in Hanover on 27-28 June, which I attended with my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs.

The Council's detailed conclusions have been placed in the Library. The Council dealt with two main issues—progress towards completion of the single market by 1992; and arrangements for progressively closer economic and monetary co-operation in Europe.

First, on the single market—the Council was able to note that over one third of the measures in the European Commission's White Paper on the single market have now been agreed.

Agreements reached in recent weeks cover a number of subjects of particular interest to the United Kingdom—the full liberalisation of capital movements by 1990 for most EC countries, the mutual recognition of professional qualifications and the opening up of the road haulage market by progressive abolition of lorry quotas.

The Council agreed that priority should be given over the next 12 months to decisions on opening up public purchasing; further liberalisation of banking and other financial services; common standards for manufactured products; and registration of patents and trade marks throughout the Community.

The list does not include the harmonisation of indirect taxes, where the Council simply noted the further studies set in hand by Economic and Finance Ministers. The Government's view is that such harmonisation is not necessary for completion of the single market.

In considering the social aspects of the single market, the Council noted that removing the obstacles to growth offers the best prospects for creating jobs and spreading prosperity. It also encouraged better protection for health and safety at the workplace and easier access to training, on which a major initiative was taken during the United Kingdom presidency.

The Council reaffirmed the objective of enabling citizens of European Community countries to move freely throughout the Community but also stressed the need for effective measures to combat terrorism, drug abuse and organised crime. It is very satisfactory that there is growing recognition of the need for effective safeguards in this area.

Secondly, on economic and monetary co-operation, the Council agreed to establish a committee of the governors of the central banks appointed in their personal capacity. The President of the Commission will take the chair and there will also be a second Commission representative, Mr. Andriessen, and three additional members—Mr. Lamfalussy, director-general of the Bank for International Settlements, Mr. Boyer, president of the Banco Exterior of Spain, and Mr. Thygesen, professor of economics in Copenhagen.

The committee's task will be to study and propose concrete steps towards the progressive realisation of economic and monetary union. That goal was, of course, set out in the preamble to the Single European Act, which was approved by this House.

The committee will report through the Council of Economic and Finance Ministers to the meeting of the European Council in Madrid next June.

The Council approved unanimously the reappointment of M. Jacques Delors as President of the Commission for a further two-year term from 1 January 1989.

Foreign Ministers discussed a number of political co-operation subjects, concentrating particularly on East-West relations, Afghanistan, the middle east, South Africa and Latin America. The Council conclusions on all these subjects are recorded in the communiqué.

Finally, we were able to note with satisfaction that the important decisions taken at the meeting of the European Council in February on budget discipline and agriculture have now been translated into binding legal instruments. Legislation to give effect to the new arrangements for financing the Community budget, including the new own resources decision, will be laid before the House tomorrow.

Following the Council, I had a meeting with the Taoiseach to discuss a number of current issues in Anglo-Irish relations. We reaffirmed our commitment to the Anglo-Irish Agreement and agreed to maintain, indeed strengthen, co-operation against terrorism.

The outcome of this Council was very satisfactory for the United Kingdom. We have confirmed that the way forward in Europe lies in the creation of wealth and jobs, as obstacles to trade and burdens on business are steadily removed. Thanks to this Government's policies, and the response of those who work in industry and commerce, British firms will be particularly well placed to take advantage of the opportunities that the single market in Europe offers.

Mr. Neil Kinnock (Islwyn): I thank the Prime Minister for her statement. First, I welcome the reappointment of M. Jacques Delors as President of the European Commission and take this opportunity to congratulate him. I am sure that that view will carry strong support throughout the House. I commend the perception of M. Delors that conditions must be attached to the development of the single market by an insistence on what he calls the social dimension.

With that in mind, will the Prime Minister say whether her concept of the change to a single market concurs with the conclusion of the European Council that

> "the internal market must be to the advantage of all of its citizens"

and that accordingly it is necessary to provide better protections for the health and safety of workers? Will the commitment that the Prime Minister made at the Council result, first, in the reversal of her Government's policy of weakening industrial and health and safety regulations and cutting the number of health and safety inspectors? Secondly, does that commitment mean the withdrawal of her resistance to the proposals of the President of the Commission to change Community law to foster workers' participation in decision making?

It is well known that the Prime Minister is in conflict with her Foreign Secretary and Chancellor of the Exchequer on the European monetary system and monetary union and that she has said that a European central bank is "not on the cards". However, as she has given in to the other members of the Council and agreed to the establishment of a study group under M. Delors, which will

> "propose concrete steps leading to Monetary Union",

and as it is obvious, as President Mitterrand has pointed out, that a central bank follows from monetary union, is it not clear that the Prime Minister is facing both ways?

What is the Prime Minister's real view? Is she committed to monetary union and what follows from it by virtue of her agreement with the European Council, or will she not accept monetary union and its consequences under any circumstances? Will she give an undertaking that in any event any report from the study group will be debated and determined in this House?

I note that the Prime Minister referred to tax harmonisation. She has, of course, given earlier undertakings about not extending VAT to some necessities. Will she take this opportunity to give an assurance that she will use the veto to prevent the extension of VAT to any items that are currently zero-rated?

On a subject that the right hon. Lady did not refer to but which is of considerable importance, has she resolved her widely publicised dispute with Delors over the subsidies that she wants to give British Aerospace to induce its takeover of Rover?

Twice in the past two weeks, in Toronto and Hanover, the Prime Minister resisted the efforts of partner Governments to insert a commitment to sanctions against apartheid. Is not that resistance further evidence of her appeasement of the apartheid system and of her deliberate refusal to support calls for change and clemency with effective action?

The Prime Minister: I shall try to answer the many questions that the right hon. Gentleman has asked me.

Of course the single market in the European Economic Community will benefit all its citizens, just as rising prosperity, which the single market gives us, benefits us all.

Our regulations on the health and safety of workers are greatly in advance of those of many other countries in the EC; many of them will have a long way to go to catch up with us. The social dimension also includes the training initiative that we agreed in London at the European Council in December 1986.

As for worker participation, we believe that those who get to the board of a company should do so on merit. That is by far the best way to do things. We do not agree with the old-fashioned, outdated approach that the Labour party adopts to these matters.

With regard to a European central bank, we have taken part of the Single European Act, which went through the House and which said that we would make progressive steps to the realisation of monetary union, and we have set up a group to consider that. Monetary union would be the first step, but progress towards it would not necessarily involve a single currency or a European central bank.

Long before European monetary union could be achieved, many other countries would have to come up to the level that we have reached. We have freedom of capital movement; most of them do not. We have no exchange control; most of them have. We have a variety of currencies in our bank reserves; most of them have not. We also deal in the ecu; most of them do not. So they have a long way before they go nearly as far as we have gone on these matters.

We have made our position on the veto on zero-rate VAT clear on many occasions. The recent change was due not to a change in the law but to an explanation of the 1977 directive by the European Court.

Rover and British Aerospace are still under consideration in the Common Market by Mr. Sutherland, the relevant Commissioner. Assuming that that goes through, subsidies in future from the British Government would cease, unless they were given under regional development. That would be very much in line with what the Community would wish.

Sanctions on South Africa did not come up.

Mr. Terence L. Higgins (Worthing): Does my right hon. Friend agree that the change in the own resources basis from a notional rate of VAT to gross national product is an important one? Is she aware of the recent recognition by the Treasury that the GNP statistics in this country are deficient, and that the Treasury has accepted the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee's report that they should be reviewed, which is welcome? If that is so, it is even more important that the GNP figures for the other countries in the Community should also be checked and shown to be reliable. If they are not, we could pay far more than we should. Will my right hon. Friend ensure that such a review is carried out throughout the Community?

The Prime Minister: I agree with my right hon. Friend that a change from a percentage of VAT to a percentage of GNP is significant. As he knows and has stated, we have set in hand an inquiry into our own statistics. Obviously, I cannot force the rest of the European Commission to do that, but we are making strenuous efforts to see that our statistics are as accurate as we can make them.

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): Did a few days in the company of other Community leaders and the Foreign Secretary make the Prime Minister any better disposed towards British membership of the exchange rate mechanism of the EMS? Will she explain to the House the apparent contrast between her reluctance for British membership of the EMS and her apparent unbounded enthusiasm when in Canada for encouraging Canadians to join a single unit with their larger neighbour, the United States?

The Prime Minister: When we were talking about Canada and the United States, we were talking about a trading agreement for a free trade area. That is an excellent arrangement and is the same as we are trying to achieve in the single market this side of the Atlantic. It was not a unity of monetary mechanism.

With regard to the exchange rate mechanism, as I pointed out in my previous reply, we have many advantages which many others who belong to the exchange rate mechanism do not have. Most other countries do not yet have freedom of capital movements, although Germany and Holland do. Most other countries still have exchange control. Those things have enabled them often to keep within the limits of an exchange rate mechanism. The question is, will they be able to do so when they have freedom of capital movement and have thus abolished exchange control? We shall have to wait until 1990.

Mr. Nicholas Soames (Crawley): Is my right hon. Friend aware of the concern in the aviation industry that the liberalisation of air fares may not come about at the same time as the completion of the internal market? Will she assure the House that she will do all within her power

[Mr. Nicholas Soames]

to persuade other members of the Community to break the cartel on air fares and thus enable the charging of fully liberal air fares throughout the European Community?

The Prime Minister: Yes, we shall. As my hon. Friend knows, we have taken a lead in this matter and we shall continue to be active in trying to bring about the greater liberalisation of air fares to the advantage of the consumer.

Mrs. Ann Clwyd (Cynon Valley): Does the Prime Minister agree that she is misleading the House when she says that we have greater protection and safety laws for workers in this country than do many other EC countries —for example, West Germany? Does she agree that in the past nine years her Government have reversed many of the laws for which trade unions fought vigorously for over half a century? Will she reverse the legislation yet again to bring us more into line with other EC countries? Does she recall that similar provisions to those contained in the Baking Industry (Hours of Work) Act 1954, for which workers in this country fought for over 50 years, were enjoyed from the beginning of the century in West Germany? Does she further agree that her Government, in arguing the cause of equality, are equalising down rather than equalising up and that they have reversed those protections for workers in the baking industry? Will she promise to reconsider that?

The Prime Minister: I agree with the hon. Lady that Germany has very good health and safety legislation, as have a number of other countries in the Community. However, several countries still do not reach anything like the standards that we and Germany enjoy. Insofar as they are trying to use social cohesion, they are obviously trying to raise their standards to ours. I do not think that we should change our standards because of any European regulations, as we already stand well in that regard.

Mr. Robert Adley (Christchurch): Is there not a certain divergence of view between the discussions that we all support, which were mentioned by my right hon. Friend, about the encouragement of free movement for goods and people within the EC, especially after 1992, and the intransigence which certain people appear to show towards the elimination of customs barriers, especially on Channel tunnel trains? Will my right hon. Friend note that there was broad agreement in the House during recent Transport questions that the Government must intervene to solve the problem? While she is looking at that, will she also bear in mind the problems that will arise because of the existing arrangements whereby trains in France will travel at an average speed of 145 mph and in England at 53 mph as a result of the Government's investment programmes? Will she look at that whole question?

The Prime Minister: The objective of freer movement of citizens and goods around the Community depends on removing the obstacles and dealing with the bureaucracy, the numbers of forms and the procedures. It must not result in removing all barriers, because then one would have no protection against crime, terrorism, the movement of drugs and many other things. There must still be barriers, which is why we must retain many of the barriers in Europe.

With regard to the Channel tunnel, my hon. Friend is asking for considerable extra investment on this side for an advanced train. On the other side, for other reasons, they have undertaken that investment. I can give no undertaking that we will make extra expenditure on that investment.

Mr. Paul Boateng (Brent, South): The right hon. Lady told the House that the issue of sanctions did not arise at the summit. Did she raise the issue of clemency for the Sharpeville Six? If not, why not? Is she prepared to go along with the West German Chancellor, Chancellor Kohl, and withdraw our ambassador if clemency is refused?

The Prime Minister: Clemency for the Sharpeville Six was in the Toronto communiqué, it is in the communiqué from Hanover and it was agreed by all member states. We pointed out that in South Africa all the legal steps have not yet been exhausted. Nevertheless, whatever the result, we asked for clemency. As the hon. Gentleman is aware, I asked President Botha for clemency—[HON. MEMBERS: "How?"] By the usual diplomatic channels. That is the appropriate way to do it. If the result is that the Sharpeville Six are condemned to death, we shall repeat our call for clemency.

Mr. Jonathan Aitken (Thanet, South): I congratulate my right hon. Friend on her staunch defence of the rights of this sovereign Parliament and British sovereignty generally against the creeping federalism of the Commission over the central bank and the European common currency. Will she clarify what is meant by having the governors of the national central banks meeting in their personal capacities? That sounds like an elegantly phrased impotent formula that might be useful for employing the services of many EC officials, including Mr. Delors.

The Prime Minister: I understand my hon. Friend's point about governors of central banks. Should there be any change in the governorship of any central bank, the person who started on the committee will continue.

Dr. David Owen (Plymouth, Devonport): When the European central bank is created and the House is dissolved—as the Prime Minister says it will be—may we assume that the Prime Minister will no longer be a Member of the House or that she will then leave? Will she confirm that, although a European currency cannot be created other than by unanimity under article 236 of the treaty, it is perfectly possible for the study that has just been set up to conclude that under the provisions of article 100A—the establishment and functioning of the internal market and the necessity to achieve free flow of capital movements and exchange—a European central bank could be created without unanimity?

The Prime Minister: The right hon. Gentleman may be correct in theory; I do not think that he is correct in any way in practice. He is being very optimistic if he thinks that, while he and I are Members of the House, there will be rapid movement even towards a single currency. He knows perfectly well that we would have to have a single economic policy to do that. Like many other people who discuss these matters in the European Community, he talks in grandiose terms but does not always take the necessary practical steps forward to enable us to get closer to a monetary unit.

Mr. Ian Taylor (Esher): Was my right hon. Friend able to discuss in Hanover such matters as company structure and law, which I understand will be one of the features of the Greek presidency? Was she able to say, quite firmly, that people in this country reject the rigid structure that was highlighted by Vredeling in the past? Will she put forward more flexible measures about worker-participation in companies, especially through employee shareholdings?

The Prime Minister: There was brief discussion about a European company structure, which, alongside the national structure, in some ways could be helpful to companies starting up in Europe. The structure proposed would be complicated, would consist of the maximum number of regulations and therefore would defeat its objective. My right hon. Friend and I pointed out that a European structure should consist of the minimum, not maximum, number of regulations to enable companies more easily to start up in Europe.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): It was good to see that the Prime Minister discussed Latin American affairs in Hanover. Why is it that she alone of the Heads of Government of the EC has refused to have a meeting with Vice-President Sergio Ramirez of Nicaragua when he comes to Europe later this month? Why is it that, despite the various statements that she and her Ministers make about the situation in Nicaragua, the Prime Minister remains wholly ignorant of the real situation, and no British Minister has been to Nicaragua? Why is it that the Prime Minister, in respect of Latin America, and particularly Nicaragua, remains a lickspittle for President Reagan?

The Prime Minister: The discussion on Latin America went on in a separate meeting of Foreign Ministers. I met Vice-President Ramirez on a previous occasion and we had a useful discussion, and I imagine that he does not think it necessary to have another.

Mr. Tony Banks: He asked for a meeting and was refused.

The Prime Minister: I am not going to see him, because, as the hon. Member knows, I have an extremely busy schedule. I am not alone in the view that I have taken towards that.

Mr. Robert Hicks (Cornwall, South-East): In view of my right hon. Friend's encouraging remarks about the development of the single market and her confirmation of the reappointment of the President of the Commission, can the House assume that this excellent precedent will mean the reappointment of Lord Cockfield as one of the United Kingdom commissioners, given the excellent preparatory work that he has undertaken in respect of the development of the single market?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend is fishing. No decision has yet been taken on the future of either of the commissioners who represent this country. A decision will be taken shortly.

Rev. Martin Smyth (Belfast, South): We appreciated the reference in the communiqué to the conversation with the Prime Minister of the Irish Republic and the press reports that the Prime Minister had expressed concern about the level of security co-operation. Has the Prime Minister discovered what will be the difficulties in improving security co-operation? Why is it that, while some arms dumps have been found, there would seem to be far more reports of possible hideouts for dumps being found, including those passed by the Department of Agriculture in Dublin?

The Prime Minister: It was generally recognised that, whatever level of security co-operation we may have had, it needs strengthening now; that is why the emphasis, both in those talks and in the statement issued afterwards, was on strengthening that co-operation. I hope that that will please the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): In the course of this satisfactory Council meeting, in which my right hon. Friend made an enormous contribution to common sense on major issues of policy, did she express any concern about the fact that the Agriculture Council should have just agreed a formula—riddled with green pound changes—which, according to the Commission, will stay within the agricultural guidelines agreed 13 weeks ago by the Council, after substantial but unspecified management economies? Is there anything that my right hon. Friend can do, after the success of this Council, to make sure that the solemn and binding assurances given in February will not turn out to be the sick joke that every other assurance has turned out to be?

The Prime Minister: I am advised that the agreement will stay within the guideline. As I said, those arrangements have been set into a binding legal form, have been passed by the European Parliament and will be laid before this Parliament tomorrow, together with the increase in own resources, so that their effectiveness can be debated before the House gives its approval to the increase in own resources. I am sure that my hon. Friend will have a lot to say in that debate.

Mr. Sydney Bidwell (Ealing, Southall): Is the right hon. Lady aware that her answers on health and safety at work sound most smug and unsatisfactory? Is she aware that there have been drastic cuts in the number of health and safety inspectors at work? Will she be prepared to consult the trade unions on the matter to see what our standards are like compared with those of other European countries?

The Prime Minister: Obviously, the standards in other European countries are varied. Their standard of living is varied and, obviously, the standard of living that they have reached impacts upon their health and safety regulations. We are very good on health and safety, as are West Germany and a number of other countries, but I do not anticipate specific improvements in that unless there are separate reasons for requiring those improvements.

Mr. David Curry (Skipton and Ripon): As the object of the creation of the internal market is to liberate companies to compete in the wider market, will my right hon. Friend make sure that we do not proceed to elaborate on social legislation to such a degree that we shackle industry so that it cannot compete in global markets?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend has put his finger on the most relevant point. There is a tendency at present in the Commission and the Council to increase the amount of regulation almost to the point of standardisation, rather than harmonisation. Of course, safety standards on products must be clear and, when it comes to setting up

[The Prime Minister]

legislation for a European company, if it is to increase trade, it must have the minimum regulation and not the maximum. The danger is that they are moving towards far too much regulation.

Mr. Dick Douglas (Dunfermline, West): Will the Prime Minister give us some insight into this unaccustomed unison between the two Front Benches in welcoming the reappointment of M. Delors? Why should we welcome the reappointment of a commissioner who has manifestly shown that he wants the thrust of the Common Market to be related to the Franco-German axis? Why should we, particularly in Scotland, welcome the thrust of the Common Market against an area which has no political countervailing power, as we have in the United Kingdom Parliament? Why should we in Scotland welcome 1992 without the creation of countervailing power in Edinburgh in the creation of a Scottish assembly?

The Prime Minister: We welcomed the reappointment of M. Delors and, with everyone else, voted for it because M. Delors has been an excellent President of the Commission. He started a great deal of the work on the single market for 1992 and we all thought it advisable that he should continue. I assure the hon. Gentleman that M. Delors is very much aware of the strength of the United Kingdom in the debates and discussions in the European Council. Edinburgh and Scotland can welcome the single market because it will give all the industries in Scotland a much larger market to which to export. The industries in Scotland are now, under Tory Government, enterprising and prosperous.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The House well knows that there is a rare opportunity today to debate foreign affairs. No fewer than 34 right hon. and hon. Members wish to take part. I shall therefore have to limit questions to a further two from each side and then we must move on.

Mr. Kenneth Warren (Hastings and Rye): I congratulate my right hon. Friend on the encouragement of wider public purchasing, but will she consider pursuing that into the defence industry in Europe where, for far too long, British companies have put up with a share based on what other countries will tolerate, rather than the competitive purchasing that would encourage those industries in their efficiency?

The Prime Minister: The wider public purchasing clause is not directed to defence industries. As my hon. Friend knows, we co-operate with other members of NATO and with France as a political member, although not a military member, of NATO. We operate on a different network.

The real trouble with public purchasing is that, in theory, all the tenders should already have been opened up to the whole of Europe, but in practice they have not. We have been very open, as we usually are. We abide by the rules, but we are not certain whether all other people do and we wish that the whole of Europe was as open to tender—on the basis of the most efficient tender—as we are. It will be our purpose to achieve that.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Would it not be welcome, just once in a while, if the Prime Minister, when coming back from these Euro-summits, was able to start telling the truth about economic co-operation? Is it not a fact that West Germany, with a $40 billion surplus on its balance of payments, is now ruling the roost and that that economic power is now changing into political muscle, whereas for Britain, with a balance of payments deficit of £12 billion this year and invisibles being scaled down to £5 billion from £7 billion last year, the prospects are very glum indeed? The truth is that we shall be dominated in the Common Market by the Franco-German axis, the people Britain had to sort out in 1940-45.

The Prime Minister: Let us leave the hon. Gentleman to wallow in his own depression. It does not extend to other people. This country has grown far faster than West Germany over the past six years and the degree of subsidisation of Germany industry by the German Government is greater than in this country. That is very damning to Germany because it means that she is not carrying out the restructuring of her industry as she ought to be doing and it means that we have a greater chance to be more competitive than she has. I am quite certain that Germany would love to have the budget surplus that we have in this country.

Mr. Eric Forth (Mid-Worcestershire): My right hon. Friend said that the

'burdens on business will be steadily reduced'.

Did she take the opportunity to discuss with her colleagues at the meeting the difference in performance between the United States and the Community, particularly in job generation? Did they draw the obvious conclusion that the more burdens one places on business and the more regulations there are, the worse it is for employment generation? Will my right hon. Friend bear that in mind and keep reminding her colleagues that the more they seek to regulate business the fewer jobs will be created in the European Community?

The Prime Minister: I agree with my hon. Friend. The communiqué makes it clear that we have obtained the extra growth through cutting many of the regulations and, particularly, by cutting them on small businesses, which are the real engine for growth. I agree with my hon. Friend that the creation of jobs in the United States is much faster than it is on this side of the Atlantic and we would like to emulate them in that way rather more than we do.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): On the future harmonisation of VAT, on which the Prime Minister has given some assurances, although not on the future of VAT on water, books, newspapers and public transport, will she confirm that article 99 of the treaty of Rome puts on Governments a requirement for unanimity but that it does not exclude any measure by which national Parliaments can determine what their Governments do? Surely that makes the House of Commons only an advisory assembly in respect of that tax. Would it not be much better for the final decision concerning the Government's attitude to VAT to be determined in this House? Will the right hon. Lady reflect upon what steps should be taken to make that a reality?

The Prime Minister: No. The Government make the decision and come to the House for endorsement of their decision. It is the Government who have the budget and come to the House after debate for endorsement of those decisions. The hon. Gentleman is aware that, on every possible occasion in the Community, we fight the harmonisation of taxation and insist on being able to keep a zero rate for value added tax. It was, and remains, my understanding that any fiscal changes will be subject to unanimous vote. We have to come before this House, and we find it of great value that the House takes the same view on these matters as we do.

Business of the House

4.8 pm

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Wakeham): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I should like to make a statement about the business for next week:

MONDAY 4 JULY—Remaining stages of the Civil Evidence (Scotland) Bill *[Lords]*.

Committee and remaining stages of the Electricity (Financial Provisions) (Scotland) Bill.

Remaining stages of the Legal Aid Bill *[Lords]*.

Motion to take note of EC documents on the limitation of the emission of pollutants from large combustion plants. Details will be given in the *Official Report*.

The Chairman of Ways and Means has named opposed private business for consideration at seven o'clock.

TUESDAY 5 JULY—Opposition Day (16th Allotted Day). There will be a debate on an Opposition motion entitled "The Threat to a Universal Free Health Service".

Motion on the Education (Assisted Places) (Amendment) Regulations.

Motion on the Sex Discrimination (Northern Ireland) Order.

WEDNESDAY 6 JULY—Opposition Day (17th Allotted Day). Until about seven o'clock there will be a debate on a Scottish National party motion entitled "The Political Situation in Scotland". Afterwards there will be a debate on a Social and Liberal Democratic party motion entitled "Hardship to Pensioners Caused by Government Policies".

Second Reading of the Court of Session Bill *[Lords]*, which is a consolidation measure.

THURSDAY 7 JULY—Estimates Day (2nd Allotted Day). There will be debates on Defence (class 1, vote 1), Housing, England (class IX, vote 1), and Local Environmental and Planning Services etc., England (class X, vote 1). Details will be given in the *Official Report*.

Motion on the Church of England (Ecumenical Relations) Measure.

FRIDAY 8 JULY—Private Members' Bills.

MONDAY 11 JULY—Second Reading of the European Communities (Finance) Bill.

Debate on Monday 4 July 1988

Relevant European Community documents

Air pollution from large combustion plants.

(a) 11642/83
(b) 5124/85
(c) Un-numbered

Relevant Reports of European Legislation Committee

(a) HC 78-xxvii (1983-84) para 4
(b) HC 5-xviii (1984-85) para 2
(c) HC 43-xxviii (1987-88) para 1

Estimates to be considered Thursday 7 July:

Class I, vote 1 (Defence: personnel costs etc. of the armed forces and civilians, stores, supplies and miscellaneous services), so far as it relates to the defence requirement for merchant shipping and civil aircraft;

Class IX, vote 1 (Housing, England), so far as it relates to the provision of bed-and-breakfast accommodation for the homeless;

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Class X, vote 1 (Local environmental and planning services etc., England), so far as it relates to grants to local authorities for the provision of gipsy sites;

Mr. Frank Dobson (Holborn and St. Pancras): I thank the Leader of the House for his statement. Given his earlier commitments, when can we expect, first, an opportunity to debate the Committee on Procedure's proposals for short speeches, secondly, the Government's failure to set up a Select Committee on Scottish Affairs, and, thirdly, the Government's proposed changes to the law on official secrets?

As Britain has a balance of trade deficit in electronic goods of £2,000 million, when does the Leader of the House expect the McKinsey report on the future of the electronics industry to be published? When will there be a debate on the future of this crucial sector of the economy?

The consultation period on the Green Paper on the public library service ends today. When will the responses be published, and when shall we have an opportunity to debate the preposterous proposals to levy charges for services which Winston Churchill thought should be free?

The consultation period has ended on the Government's proposals to hand over the swimming pools, sports grounds, sports halls and running tracks that are now owned and used by local communities to profit-seeking private companies. Will the Leader of the House ensure that all the responses are placed in the Library, as promised by the Minister? Will he ensure also that the House has an opportunity to debate the proposal before any decision is taken by the Government? Will he give the House an assurance that any statement of Government policy is presented in an oral statement and not by written answer?

This is an important matter because the proposals, if they are accepted and implemented, will harm sporting opportunities for countless young people who will not be able to afford to pay for them. The only reason for the proposals is to increase charges. We do not want the proposals to be accepted and then to hear Ministers bleating and asking why young people are being vandalistic and violent, they having reduced the sports opportunities of young people.

Mr. Wakeham: The hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) has asked me a number of questions. He has asked specifically when we should have debates on a number of subjects.

I understand that the Committee of Selection has reported its view that there is no generally acceptable basis for producing names to complete nominations for a Select Committee on Scottish Affairs. In these circumstances, I think that the matter should be debated by the House. The timing of the debate is probably best left for discussion through the usual channels.

My right hon. Friend the Home Secretary made a statement yesterday on official secrets legislation and the White Paper. I think that the timing of that debate is best left also for consideration through the usual channels.

The hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras asked me about the date of publication of the McKinsey report on the electronics industry. I do not have that date available, but I shall refer the matter to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State.

The hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras said that the consultation period on the public library service ends today. The Government will want to consider the results of the consultation before making a statement.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment will be making an announcement shortly on the proposals to be put forward on the privatisation of sports and leisure facilities following a consultation paper which was issued last autumn. If we decide to proceed with the proposals, the necessary order under the Local Government Act 1988 will be preceded by further consultation, and implementation will be delayed beyond 1 August 1989, which is the date by which authorities must begin the phased introduction of competition for the activities that are listed in the Act. I have taken note of what the hon. Gentleman said. I shall refer the matter to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I ask the House to reflect on what I said earlier. No fewer than 34 right hon. and hon. Members want to take part in the debate on foreign affairs. I do not like to limit questions, and accordingly I shall allow them to continue for a further 20 minutes. I hope that all those who wish to put a question to the Leader of the House will be able to do so in that time. We must then move on.

Mr. Patrick Cormack (Staffordshire, South): Will my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House arrange for my right hon. Friend the Paymaster General to make a statement next week about the Barlow Clowes affair? Will my right hon. Friend the Paymaster General say something about providing compensation for those who suffered through no fault of their own, many of whom are in great hardship?

Mr. Wakeham: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry announced the timing of the completion of the inquiry into the facts of his Department's handling of the Barlow Clowes affair. That announcement was made after consultation with Sir Godfray Le Quesne. It represents the best estimate possible of the time needed to complete the investigation. I do not think that it would be sensible or productive to seek arbitrarily to impose a shorter time limit. It is important that we obtain an authoritative report.

The Barlow Clowes affair will be raised in an Adjournment debate early next week, when I hope that the Minister who replies will be able to say a little more about it. I recognise the concern of my hon. Friend the Member for Staffordshire, South (Mr. Cormack), but the important thing is to ensure that the report is produced quickly.

Mr. Jack Ashley (Stoke-on-Trent, South): Has the Leader of the House seen the recent report in *The Independent*, which states that the official Government survey on disabled people shows that there are now 6 million disabled in Britain, many of them living in poverty? It seems that the Government are not prepared to release the report until September, when the House will be in recess. May we have a statement next week about that?

Mr. Wakeham: I do not know about the recent report in *The Independent*. I remember, however, my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister saying a short while ago that there has been an 80 per cent. increase in real terms in help for the disabled under the Conservative Government. I recognise the right hon. Gentleman's concern, however, and I shall refer the matter to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services.

Mr. Andrew Rowe (Mid-Kent): On the afternoon when we have heard of remarkable progress being made towards the establishment of a common market, will my right hon. Friend take note that the people of Kent feel enormously anxious about the provision of roads to cope with the increased traffic that will ensue? May we have a debate about that? At the very least, will he ask the Secretary of State for Transport to undertake an urgent reappraisal of what he is up to?

Mr. Wakeham: I recognise that it is an important issue in Kent. I wish that I could offer my hon. Friend a debate in the near future, but this is an especially busy time of year and I do not think that I can do that. I shall refer his second suggestion to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport.

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): Does the Leader of the House recall that, after the most recent general election, the Secretary of State for Scotland said that it would be business as usual in spite of the small representation of Conservative Members in Scotland? There is no Select Committee on Scottish Affairs, and it is clear that it is not business as usual. What does he propose to do to save the face of his right hon. and learned Friend?

Mr. Wakeham: As the hon. Gentleman knows, I put proposals to Opposition parties on how we could set up a Select Committee on Scottish Affairs. Unfortunately, the proposals did not meet with universal enthusiasm. The best course is to have a debate and to clarify the issue.

Mr. Andrew MacKay (Berkshire, East): Further to the question of my hon. Friend the Member for Staffordshire, South (Mr. Cormack), will my right hon. Friend confirm that the Minister who will be responding to the Adjournment debate on Barlow Clowes next week will deal with the issue of compensation? Secondly, when the internal independent report into the Department of Trade and Industry has been published, may we have a full debate on the Floor of the House and not merely a statement?

Mr. Wakeham: I do not think that I can say any more than I said to my hon. Friend the Member for Staffordshire, South (Mr. Cormack). We must wait for the Adjournment debate next Tuesday and decide then how to proceed from there.

Mr. Tom Pendry (Stalybridge and Hyde): Does the Leader of the House agree that the way in which the Secretary of State for the Environment has conducted a consultation exercise on competition in the management of local authority sports and leisure facilities amounts to a complete sham? To take up the remarks of my hon. Friend the Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson), will he not reprimand the Secretary of State?

On 25 January, when I asked a junior Minister whether he would place in the Library the responses of all those who had replied to the consultation paper, he said that he would do so as soon as possible. I have visited the Library and have found that there have been 16 responses from organisations in Wales and not one from all the other 300 that he consulted throughout the country, or which he says he consulted. Will the Leader of the House reprimand the Secretary of State for the Environment and make no statement until we have had a chance to visit the Library to read the responses to the consultation paper?

Mr. Wakeham: If any undertaking given by a member of the Government has not been fulfilled, I take that to be a serious matter and I will look into it. However, I hope that the hon. Gentleman will not take it amiss if I say that I would like to check with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State before I accept the strictures that the hon. Gentleman has laid on him.

Mr. John Bowis (Battersea): Will my right hon. Friend acknowledge the growing disquiet about the jury system? We have seen the eyeballing techniques, fraternising with the accused and now the substitution of bogus jurors for people who simply do not want to turn up. Should not public confidence in the jury system be re-established by airing the problem in the House?

Mr. Wakeham: Confidence in the jury service is an essential part of our criminal justice system. Any concern should be ventilated and debated in this House. However, I hope that my hon. Friend will understand if I cannot promise him a debate in the immediate future.

Mr. Harry Cohen (Leyton): May we have a statement next week on why the campaign to educate our people about the dangers of AIDS has been scrapped or virtually has ground to a halt because of the Government's mistaken morals? Health education books have been pulped because the Government do not like the list of help agencies. Instead of being pragmatic, are not the Government being "prigmatic"?

Mr. Wakeham: The Government have taken the problem of AIDS extremely seriously and have taken a number of very important initiatives. I am glad to say that in the main those initiatives have had the support of hon. Members on both sides of the House and I would like that to continue. I recognise that we have not had a debate in the House on this subject for some time, and obviously the House will want to return to the subject. However, I cannot promise an early debate, but I recognise the force of the hon. Gentleman's comments.

Mr. Richard Shepherd (Aldridge-Brownhills): Following yesterday's publication of the White Paper on section 2 of the Official Secrets Act 1911, the last paragraph of which says that the Government intend that there will be a debate by the end of July, will my right hon. Friend give as early a sign as possible of that date?

Mr. Wakeham: I will give as early a sign as I possibly can. I believe that the date for the debate is best discussed through the usual channels.

Mr. Alex Salmond (Banff and Buchan): Now that the discussion period on "The Way Forward" is over and Nirex is openly discussing with Scottish landowners the possibility of access to land for test boring, is it not time for a full debate on the issue of nuclear waste disposal? Will the Leader of the House give us valuable instructions on how to keep nuclear waste out of our constituencies?

Mr. Wakeham: I believe that the consultation period has only recently ended. It is right that Nirex should have time to consider that and make proposals. Obviously the House will want to debate the subject at some stage, but I do not believe that that stage has been reached yet.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): Despite the great and continuing differences between this country and the Soviet Union, I wonder whether we could have a debate on the similarity between our two countries and, in particular, on the fact that we both have one-party states in that there is only one party in either country that is capable of civilised and intelligent internal debate about the real issues facing the country; that there is only one party in either country that is looking to the future rather than the past; and that there is only one party in either country that is capable of forming or likely to form the Government?

Mr. Wakeham: A parliamentarian of lesser skill than my hon. Friend might have difficulty keeping a speech on that subject in order in the foreign affairs debate that follows. No doubt if my hon. Friend catches your eye, Mr. Speaker, he will be able to keep his comments in order.

Mr. Peter L. Pike (Burnley): In recognising that there is widespread concern about the Government's determination to go ahead with the privatisation of water, will the Leader of the House ensure that we have a debate on that important matter as soon as possible before the summer recess? Perhaps it would be useful to latch that debate to the Select Committee report which will be published soon containing the Government's response. We must also take into account the fact that the lower the standards that are fixed, the more money there will be in privatisation from the Government. We want the highest possible standards if privatisation is to be forced ahead.

Mr. Wakeham: I recognise that this is a very important subject and I hope that I will not disappoint the hon. Gentleman by making him wait too long for a debate. However, I cannot promise a debate before the summer recess.

Mr. Phillip Oppenheim (Amber Valley): Bearing in mind the moves in the Soviet Union towards a more consumer-orientated society, does my right hon. Friend feel that we have anything to learn from that attitude? If not, may we have a debate on the fact that in this country we still have import quotas and controls on cars, vans, trucks and cultivated mushrooms in brine? Perhaps during that debate the Minister responsible can tell us how he squares that with the Government's policy on deregulation and a free market.

Mr. Wakeham: I cannot promise a debate on that subject next week, interesting though it would be to have one.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): I gave notice this morning about the Fiat sale of 16·7 per cent. of Westland Helicopters Ltd. to United Technologies Corporation. Will the Leader of the House comment on that?

Mr. Wakeham: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving me notice of his question. The Government and Westland Helicopters Ltd. consider that negotiations between UTC and Fiat concerning Fiat's holding in Westland are a matter for the two companies concerned. As is well known, the Ministry of Defence has substantial contracts placed with Westland Helicopters. Any change in share ownership of the sort contemplated in no way affects those contracts.

Mr. Richard Holt (Langbaurgh): Is my right hon. Friend aware of a recent report commissioned and written within the DHSS by two junior and one middle-ranking officer on the relocation of civil servants throughout the country and that they have dismissed any removal to the north of England on the basis that it would be too great a culture shock for the Sir Humphreys of this world? In view of that and the likely precedent that it could have for the entire north of England in future, an early debate is required by those who represent northern constituencies which may be blighted and affected by that nonsensical report.

Mr. Wakeham: That is obviously a very suitable subject for debate, but I cannot promise my hon. Friend an early debate. When the debate occurs, no doubt he or the Minister concerned will explain that about 80 per cent. of civil servants are located out of London.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): Will the Leader of the House assure us that we will have a statement next week about the proposed privatisation of the Harland and Wolff yard to Mr. Ravi Tikkoo who is pressing the Government for a £100 million taxpayer subsidy for a somewhat illusory luxury liner? This is a very important matter, particularly as some of us believe that, in the light of Mr. Ravi Tikkoo's reputation, his adviser on getting money from the Government might be Mr. John de Lorean. We therefore believe that an urgent statement is necessary.

Mr. Wakeham: An expression of interest in the acquisition of Harland and Wolff has now come forward from Tikkoo Cruise Line Ltd. The Government will consider that and any proposals from any other parties which might lead to the privatisation of the company. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland will make a statement when there is something to say, but not at this stage.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): In the light of what the Leader of the House said about the likely takeover of Harland and Wolff, should we not in the near future have a debate on the shipbuilding intervention fund? Presumably Mr. Tikkoo has had his appetite whetted by the generous gift of the Govan yard that the Government have given to Kvaerner, the Norwegian company. Should not the shipbuilding intervention fund debate determine once and for all that all engines purchased for vessels to be constructed in British yards should be purchased from British marine engineering companies?

Mr. Wakeham: As the hon. Gentleman is aware, shipbuilding was debated on the Floor of the House on 19 May. My right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster said that he would report further on developments. He gave a full answer to a written question on Monday on the sale of the Govan yard to Kvaerner. I wonder whether the hon. Gentleman might think that some aspects of this subject might be debated next week in the debate on Scottish affairs.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): In the light of the Government's repeated assertion that they condemn the local authority waste of ratepayers' money, may the House have a general debate on that matter? I know of several specific cases in the south of England concerning Tory constituents in the heart of Toryland, where Conservative-controlled local authorities are squandering hundreds of thousands of pounds of ratepayers' money. May we have a debate so that those matters can be discussed in Parliament?

Mr. Wakeham: I am very pleased to hear that the hon. Gentleman is in the business of condemning wasteful spending of ratepayers' money wherever it occurs; there is a measure of agreement between us on that point. I suggest that the hon. Gentleman's earliest opportunity for making some of his points might be when the Local Government Finance Bill returns to this House. I hope that we shall not have too long to wait.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): Is the Leader of the House aware that, as a result of the outcome of the court case concerning the Severn-Trent water authority and Cakebread, massive amounts of money will be a burden on the backs of ratepayers and local authorities? In the case of Bradford, the amount involved is about £2 million for the backdating of refunds of general rates on sewage works. Will he arrange for the Secretary of State for the Environment to come to the House and do what he has done many times before—put right his mistake so that ratepayers all over the country will not be forced to pay further amounts of money, making the privatisation of the water industry even more lucrative for the City spivs than it is already?

Mr. Wakeham: I do not accept a great deal of what the hon. Gentleman says, but I recognise that he points to a case of consequence and of some importance. I shall refer his point to my right hon. Friend.

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): Would it not be useful to have a wide-ranging debate on Northern Ireland when the House could discuss the Harland and Wolff situation? The House had two debates on Northern Ireland last night and there is to be another tomorrow, concerning specific and limited areas. I was present last night, when the Chamber was almost empty, which was a bad time for that discussion to take place. There are many other wider issues, such as attempted moves towards democratisation in Northern Ireland involving the establishment of a Bill of Rights, the establishment of devolved government, and moves to attack paramilitarism and militarism in the Province. A wider debate would be of value.

Mr. Wakeham: I recognise that, however many debates on Northern Ireland we manage to arrange, there will be hon. Members with still more to say on the subject. It seems to be a characteristic of Northern Ireland politics that there is a great deal to say. We have not done too badly on Northern Ireland matters. At present, there is a lot of pressure on our time and I cannot promise another debate in the near future. However, I note that there is to be a debate on the Sexual Discrimination (Northern Ireland) Order next Tuesday night.

Mr. Paul Boateng (Brent, South): Given the widespread concern in all quarters of the House in the aftermath of last Monday's ITV programme about the activities of the mobster landlord Nicholas van Hoogstraten, will the Leader of the House consult his right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General about coming to the House to make a statement on referring the matter to the Director of Public Prosecutions in order that that mobster can be prosecuted for conspiracy?

Mr. Wakeham: If the hon. Gentleman has any evidence, it is not a matter for the Government. The Government are not the prosecuting authority, as the hon. Gentleman knows. He knows also that nobody in any part of the House has any time or support for anyone indulging in criminal activities. However, many of the housing difficulties that have occurred in the past have been the result of restrictive Rent Acts, and we are trying to remedy that problem.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): The Leader of the House has announced that there will be a debate on the European Communities (Finance) Bill on 11 July. Has that Bill yet been published, and, if not, when will it be? Will he confirm that it will contain two elements: first, an endorsement of what has become known as the Delors package, and, secondly, authority for an advance payment to the EEC to keep it going, in expectation of the fact that other countries will endorse the Delors package. If the latter element is included, would not that be very unbusinesslike and bad, because we would be voting money without knowing whether the resources would be available?

Mr. Wakeham: I will not confirm anything about a Bill that is to be published tomorrow; notice has been given. I can tell the hon. Gentleman that two Command Papers have been published and they are now available in the Vote Office. As I have already said, we propose giving that Bill a Second Reading on Monday 11 July.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Will the Leader of the House give an absolute guarantee that the Secretary of State for the Environment will come to the House to make a statement, or to engage in a debate, about the sale of sports fields belonging to local authorities? Is it not preposterous of the Government to have such an idea in their head? Will he dispel the rumour that is spreading through this place that one of the persons suggested to operate the quango concerned is Lady Porter of Westminster city council? Would it not be disastrous for the Government's budget if they were to put her in charge?

Mr. Wakeham: I cannot comment on any and every rumour in this place. I gave a reply to the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson), and I am not prepared to add to it.

Mrs. Ann Clwyd (Cynon Valley) *rose*——

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West) *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am sorry that I am unable to call the three hon. Members, but they are all anxious to take part in the foreign affairs debate.

County Hall (Development)

4.35 pm

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): I beg to ask leave to move the Adjournment of the House under Standing Order No. 20, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the decision by the London residuary body to dispose of county hall, the home of the former Greater London council, for use as a five-star luxury hotel."

This is a specific matter, as it relates to a decision that has not been discussed in the House but which should be, because of the nature of the proposal and the proximity of county hall to the Palace of Westminster.

It is a matter of urgency because the LRB's decision will undoubtedly require the approval of the Secretary of State for the Environment and he should be required to consult the House before reaching his own decision.

It is evident to me that the London residuary body has deliberately chosen for county hall a use that is totally at odds with that building's history as the centre of London local government. I detect in that decision the malevolent influence of the Prime Minister, who has made it clear in a series of well-publicised press briefings that she requires all evidence of the GLC to be removed. To that end, she is prepared to trample on 100 years of local democracy and to reduce local government in this country to near-chaos. I suspect that together with the Secretary of State for Education and Science, she would prefer county hall to be demolished, but on this occasion her Nero-like tendencies have been frustrated by county hall's listed building status.

The House should have an opportunity to hear from the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he is satisfied that the listed building regulations will not be flouted by the development proposals. It should also have an opportunity of deciding whether it wishes to have a hotel so close to Parliament, with all the attendant nuisances during construction, and, after, its visual intrusion and traffic problems. The Secretary of State should be required to explain to the House the apparent conflict between his decision announced on 20 October 1987 to reduce the number of planning permissions for hotel and residential use of the main riverside block and the proposal accepted by the London residuary body, which appears to ignore his previous ruling.

The Secretary of State should also be required to tell the House why he disagreed with his own inspector's recommendation after last year's public inquiry that the main county hall building should be retained for local government activities. Finally, the House should be given an opportunity to hear the Leader of the Opposition and the shadow Secretary of State for the Environment restate their commitment to restoring a Londonwide local government authority and taking county hall back into public ownership by a compulsory purchase, should it be turned into a hotel. The potential developers should have an opportunity to hear those statements before laying their dirty, money-grubbing fingers on county hall.

County hall was purpose-built as the home of the London county council and was paid for by the ratepayers of inner London. Abolishing the democratically elected GLC was an act of unparalleled political vandalism. To convert that historic building into a luxury hotel is an insult to London, an insult to the homeless, and an insult to the fine work of the London county council and the Greater London council. I ask you, Mr. Speaker, to consider very favourably my application under Standing Order No. 20.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member asks leave to move the Adjournment of the House for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that he believes should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the decision by the London residuary body to dispose of county hall, the home of the former Greater London council, for use as a five-star luxury hotel."

I listened with great care to the hon. Member but regret that I do not consider that the matter he has raised is an appropriate one for discussion under Standing Order No. 20. I am sure that the hon. Member will find other opportunities for keeping the matter before the House.

Points of Order

Mr. Speaker: I shall take the points of order, but I hope that they will be brief.

4.39 pm

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. It has long been the tradition and custom of the House that the first business question is asked by the Leader of the Opposition. That seems to have been a satisfactory situation, in keeping with the dignity and importance of the business of the House. Recently you will have noticed that the Leader of the Opposition has not been here for business questions. Is that because the Leader of the Opposition is more important than his predecessors or because the business of the House is now less important than it was before?

Mr. Speaker: That is not a matter of order. It is perfectly in order for the shadow Leader of the House to ask questions on a business statement.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I have just been shown a note about wines on House of Commons stationery circulated by the hon. Member for Luton, North (Mr. Carlisle) to members of the all-party South African group. Inquiries have been made at the Serjeant at Arms' office and it has apparently been confirmed that the postal services and notepaper of the House of Commons should not be used to promote business matters and commercial activity of this nature.

This matter has just been drawn to my attention. It is extremely unfortunate that House of Commons stationery should be used to promote wines and other such products, bearing in mind that, at every opportunity, the hon. for Luton, North reflects the views of the apartheid regime. I suggest, Mr. Speaker, that you ask the Serjeant at Arms to make a thorough investigation into this serious matter.

Mr. Speaker: I shall ask for the matter to be investigated.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

Mr. Speaker: With the leave of the House, I shall put together the two motions relating to statutory instruments.

Ordered,

That the draft EUMETSAT (Immunities and Privileges) Order 1988 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the draft EUTELSAT (Immunities and Privileges) Order 1988 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.—*[Mr. Lightbown.]*

SCOTTISH ESTIMATES

Ordered,

That the Estimates set out hereunder be referred to the Scottish Grand Committee:

Class XVI, Vote 1, Agricultural Support, Scotland
Class XVI, Vote 2, Agricultural Services and Fisheries, Scotland
Class XVI, Vote 3, Regional and General Industrial Support, Scotland
Class XVI, Vote 4, Manpower Services Commission, Scotland
Class XVI, Vote 5, Regional Assistance, Scotland
Class XVI, Vote 6, Roads, Transport and Environmental Services, Scotland
Class XVI, Vote 7, Local Transport, Water, Sewerage and Environmental Services, Scotland
Class XVI, Vote 8, Housing, Scotland
Class XVI, Vote 9, New Towns and the Urban Programme, Scotland
Class XVI, Vote 10, Privatisation of the Electricity Supply Industry, Scotland
Class XVI, Vote 11, Administration of Justice, Scotland
Class XVI, Vote 12, Police Grant, Legal Aid and Criminal Injury Compensation, Scotland
Class XVI, Vote 13, Legal Proceedings, Scotland
Class XVI, Vote 14, Prisons, Hospitals and Community Health Services, Etc, Scotland
Class XVI, Vote 15, Education, Arts, Libraries and Social Work, Scotland
Class XVI, Vote 16, Student Awards, Scotland
Class XVI, Vote 17, Health (Family Practitioner Services), Scotland
Class XVI, Vote 21, Scottish Office Administration. —*[Mr. Lightbown.]*

Foreign Affairs

Motion made and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Lightbown.]*

4.41 pm

The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Sir Geoffrey Howe): My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has just given the House an account of this week's Hanover European Council, and the House has heard that we are likely, before long, to be debating the legislative consequences of the spring Brussels Council. So today I intend to say very little about Europe. My right hon. Friend the Minister of State, will, of course, be ready to answer particular points at the end of the debate. I want, instead, to look at the wider picture and to begin by making two observations.

In the period since our debate last year, the foreign policy climate has taken an undoubted turn for the better. The two successful super-power summits—in Washington and in Moscow—the agreement on intermediate range nuclear forces and the beginning of the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan have put East-West relations on a better footing than for many years. Those are important matters.

Through the events which affect our foreign policy, a constructive British voice has been heard loud and clear, from Moscow to Madrid, from Tokyo to Toronto, either posing the right questions or pressing the right solutions.

Still the most important challenge that we face is that of managing the East-West relationship. We have to protect Britain's interests and Britain's security while minimising any risk of unpredictable tension and conflict. To do that, we need a stable framework of contact and dialogue where the problems that do arise can be tackled calmly.

I believe that we are making real progress in that direction. The Moscow summit was the most obvious sign. It was a summit where the absence of new breakthroughs did not mean failure but rather that relations between the super-powers have reached a new maturity.

That is the measure of the success of the foreign policies of President Reagan and his tenacious Secretary of State, George Shultz. They have taken great pains to proceed, so far as possible, on the basis of bipartisan support. So whether the next United States Administration is headed by President Bush or by President Dukakis, we shall find it easy to work alongside them.

That will be important, because relations between our own country and the Soviet Union have played a key part in the recent East-West dialogue. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister's visit to Moscow last year broke new ground with her talks with Mr. Gorbachev and the impact that she made on the Soviet people. Mr. Gorbachev's visit to Brize Norton underlined the improvement in our relations.

I was in Moscow again in February for talks with the Soviet leadership. In the last three years I have met my Soviet opposite number, Mr. Shevardnadze, 10 times. Exchanges between our countries at all levels are growing. We all look forward to welcoming Mr. Gorbachev to Britain again before long.

Are we then in a new East-West era? A great deal obviously depends on the fate of Mr. Gorbachev's attempts to reform the Soviet Union. This week a drama of major potential significance is being played out in Moscow. Thanks to glasnost and the television camera, we

[Sir Geoffrey Howe]

are able to follow the proceedings of the first party conference since 1941 with a good deal more insight into party workings than usual. We cannot yet know the outcome, but the spectacle of at least the beginnings of a genuine debate is immensely encouraging, and once again we must admire the courage and determination of General Secretary Gorbachev to tackle the fundamental failings of his society and political system. We should not believe that we are witnessing a transition to anything like our own society or genuine democracy—this is still the beginning of the beginning—but Mr. Gorbachev is manifestly pushing in the right direction, and we wish him well.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North) Does the Foreign Secretary agree that if the truth were fully publicised to the Soviet people about the Stalin era in particular and, to a lesser extent, the crimes and abuses which occurred under Brezhnev, including the speech that Khrushchev made at the 20th party congress in March 1956, that would be one way in which such abuses would be prevented from recurring?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The hon. Gentleman will be able to develop that point in his speech. It is very much in line with the sentiments that Mr. Gorbachev expressed in the course of his speech, when he said:

> "We are learning democracy in glasnost, learning to argue and conduct debate, to tell one another the truth."

That is very much in line with the point that the hon. Gentleman has just made.

But our watchword must continue to be vigilance, because—as Mr. Gorbachev knows better than anyone—reforms of the Soviet system have still a long way to go, in face of well-entrenched opposition. As yet, they are very far from being irreversible.

We need vigilance, too, for our own security in face of the continuing strength of the Soviet military machine. The guarantor of that security is the North Atlantic Alliance, and in recent years NATO has served us very well. We owe a considerable debt to the retiring Secretary-General, my distinguished predecessor, Peter Carrington.

Who would have believed, four years ago, when East-West relations were in the deep-freeze and the Russian seat at Geneva was empty, that the INF treaty would have been ratified; that we would have begun to bring transparency and predictability to conventional force movements; that strategic arms negotiations would now be well under way; that considerable progress would have been made in the highly complex chemical weapons negotiations; and that we would not have the prospect of early talks on conventional stability in Europe?

The Alliance has been able to secure those major achievements because its policies have been sound and its members united.

As I told the third United Nations special session on disarmament earlier this month—and we regret the fact that, despite all our efforts, it was unable to reach an agreed conclusion—arms control is very far from being an easy option. It takes hard work. We need hard-headed, verifiable proposals which are compatible with the security needs of the countries involved.

Let me say a word about negotiations where the United Kingdom itself is specifically engaged.

The huge imbalance in conventional forces is at the heart of the security problem in Europe. For that reason, we are working closely with our allies to elaborate specific conventional arms cuts proposals.

Fifteen years' experience in the mutual and balanced force reduction talks convinces us that the negotiations ahead will not be easy, but there are encouraging signs. Mr. Gorbachev said at the Moscow summit that he accepts the need to eliminate the disparities in conventional forces which do exist—to Russia's enormous advantage—before further cutting of troop levels begins. He also accepts the need for proper verification. Mr. Shevardnadze has echoed those points in the United Nations, and that is good. These are important moves towards the long-standing Western position.

Britain's other long-standing goal has been a global ban on chemical weapons. So last month, at our invitation, a Soviet delegation visited the United Kindom's chemical defence establishment at Porton Down, and yesterday a British delegation left for a visit to the Soviet Union's own military chemical facility at Shikhany. These are important practical steps that we are taking along that path.

We have reached this point because the West has thought through its position. We have negotiated firmly but with imagination from a secure base. We have not had to resort to unprincipled manoeuvres or unwarranted contortions. We have been consistent and steadfast of purpose.

Those words must have a very novel ring for Opposition Members. I imagine that they must listen to the radio, watch television and scan the newspapers from day to day in the hope of finding out what their own defence policy is—sometimes, indeed, who their own defence spokesman is. They must count themselves extremely lucky if their own leader is found to have been coherent, let alone consistent, for as long as 48 hours at a time.

Last week *The Independent* reported what must have been a fascinating lunch under the stimulating, although very misleading headline:

> "Labour's defence policy: Neil Kinnock explains."

Like just about every other reader, I guess, I rushed to get a copy of the paper with some excitement. I looked in vain for any explanation. So, too, I see from an article in *The Independent* this morning, did the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore). The House may not yet have had a chance of seeing what he had to say about the Leader of the Opposition. The right hon. Gentleman said:

> "First, I do not see how it is possible now to convince the electorate of a defence policy after Mr. Kinnock's remarks. Second, the lack of realism of Mr. Kinnock's thinking on nuclear issues has become painfully apparent."

The right hon. Gentleman described the defence policy of the leader of his own party as follows:

> "It is about as relevant and convincing as Lambeth Council declaring itself 'a nuclear-free zone'."

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): Will the Foreign Secretary give way?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: In just one moment.

There may be another explanation. Perhaps another lunch at *The Independent* will change everything again. We owe a great deal to these lunches at *The Independent*. We do not know what *The Independent* serves for lunch, but lobster might be appropriate:

"Will he, won't he, will he, won't he, will he join the dance?"

Mr. Dalyell *rose*——

Sir Geoffrey Howe: In just one second. I have made it plain that I will give way.

I think that many people will join me in wondering whether to laugh or cry at the spectacle of the Leader of the Opposition steering an uncertain course between the Scylla of Ron Todd and the Charybdis of Peter Shore. He dare not move the rudder either way lest he be wrecked and sunk with all hands on the rocks to the left or right. It grieves me to talk about a fellow countryman like this, but he must——

Mr. Dalyell *rose*——

Mr. Frank Haynes (Ashfield): I would like to know when the Foreign Secretary is going to talk about foreign affairs—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order.

Mr. Haynes: Yes, I know; there is so much rabble on that flipping Front Bench.

I want to know when the Foreign Secretary is going to talk about foreign affairs and stop attacking individual members of the Labour party.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: It is not usually regarded as remarkable if, in the course of a debate on foreign policy, one has a word or two to say about the foreign and defence policy of the Opposition.

Mr. Dalyell *rose*——

Sir Geoffrey Howe: One must conclude that the Leader of the Opposition is destined to linger in the middle as a kind of flying Welshman condemned for ever to sail unelected on a chartless sea.

Mr. Dalyell: The Foreign Secretary has been reading *The Independent*, but so have some of the rest of us. What we got out of *The Independent* last week was that Ministers and the Prime Minister had been

"playing fast and loose with the truth"

about Westland. Did the right hon. and learned Gentleman, as a skilled lawyer, draft the Prime Minister's speech of 27 January which was less than candid with the House of Commons? Why did he give his right hon. Friend——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. We are not debating a motion for the Adjournment. I do not think that these matters are relevant to the issue before the House.

Mr. Dalyell: Who raised the question of *The Independent* of last week?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I might have known that any intervention by the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) was likely to be directed to one or other of his King Charles's heads. He reacts, apparently, like some kind of slot machine. As one presses the word "*Independent*" into it, so there bounces out an observation prompted by his latest reading of that distinguished organ.

In the real world, we have to make progress, and in the real world relations with the Soviet Union are not fixed for ever in a cold-war mode. We have to have an open mind, but Soviet history cannot be rewritten. We have to be cautious, without allowing caution to close our minds to change. The burden of proof of change lies heavily on their side. If it is truly the case that in political, economic and philosophical terms the Russians really are drawing nearer to the West, we are more than ready and willing to encourage them.

Certainly, around the world issues that have lived for many years under the label "hands off" are being looked at again. Some of the deep-frozen problems are coming in from the cold. At my last meeting with Mr. Shevardnadze earlier this month in New York, it was striking how many topics we were able to discuss in a serious, unpolemical way.

The Soviet decision to withdraw its troops from Afghanistan has helped to convince many that "new thinking" is more than just a phrase. Of course, the Soviet leaders are righting a terrible wrong. We want to see all Soviet troops out by the end of this year. The Afghan people must be left freely to decide their own future. Those who have fought for the freedom of their country for almost 10 years will not be denied victory; and the 5 million Afghan refugees must be allowed to return to their country in safety and with honour. We have already announced the doubling of our aid to Afghan refugees to £10 million this year.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): Will the Foreign Secretary tell us what efforts he is making to ensure that the Government of Pakistan fully comply with the Geneva accords and do not continue arms supplies into Afghanistan, which can only prolong a conflict that it is to be hoped will come to an end in the near future?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: We are in continuous contact with the United Nations Secretary-General. Last week I met the special appointee to consider the provision of refugee aid to Afghanistan, and I have noted with interest the extent to which a large part of Afghanistan is already under the effective control of the Mujahideen. We hope that this will open the way very shortly to the return of the refugees and to the commencement of the refugee aid programme.

The question that many in the House will ask is whether we can draw a wider lesson from the Soviet withdrawal. The Russians themselves have described Afghanistan as a pattern for settlement of other regional conflicts in which they or their clients are involved. Where such conflicts exist, we now look for a positive contribution to their resolution.

One other area in which there are now some signs of movement is Cambodia. Vietnam has announced a timetable for the withdrawal of its troops. I met my Vietnamese counterpart, Mr. Co Thach, earlier this month in New York and welcomed this. But we do not want to see the return to power of the dreadful Pol Pot and his Khmer Rouge. We support Prince Sihanouk's efforts to bring peace to his country. We vote with the overwhelming majority of the world at the United Nations year after year for the withdrawal of Vietnamese troops from Cambodia. We look forward now to the development of effective prospects as a result of Prince Sihanouk's efforts to bring peace to his country.

Britain also has a special interest in peace there, and in the possibility of less self-destructive economic policies in Vietnam. Recently, thousands of boat people have been leaving Vietnam and heading for Hong Kong. In those circumstances, as the House knows, we have recently announced a change of policy: only those who can show

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that they are genuine refugees will be given access to resettlement in the West. As for the rest—the economic migrants—their future must eventually be found back in Vietnam, their native land. The House, I know, looks forward to an early debate on Hong Kong.

In other parts of south-east Asia and the Pacific region, Britain is looking for progress of a different kind. With Japan, as with the People's Republic of China—two very different societies—we are building strong relations and creating new broad partnerships with those growing centres of power on the far side of the globe. As an economy that is also growing, we are keen to expand our links, as I have been able to do in the course of three visits to that part of the world since the start of this year.

Some other regional problems are showing movement. There are welcome signs of a return by South Africa and Mozambique to the spirit of the Nkomati accord. We have also been lending our full support to the United States-led negotiations between South Africa, Angola and Cuba on how to remove foreign forces from Angola and bring Namibia to independence. In May the parties met face to face for the first time, in London. The process was carried forward in Cairo last week. The prize is great but the difficulties remain formidable, and they have been exacerbated by the latest military clashes near the Namibian border.

Sir Ian Lloyd (Havant): My right hon. and learned Friend will be aware of the sudden and rather dangerous tip in the balance of air power on the Angolan frontier. He will know that the Russians are using the Cubans to supply the latest air superiority fighters for their forces in Angola, and that the South African Mirages will undoubtedly be outclassed. In his view, is it in the interests of the West that South Africa should not be able to defend its frontiers?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The answer must partly depend on where we draw South Africa's frontiers. But South Africa has accepted resolution 435, for the independence of Namibia, which must be taken into account.

Of course, an escalation of armed conflict in the region is not desirable. I put that very point to Mr. Shevardnadze when urging him to encourage Cuba and Angola to engage seriously in the negotiations to which I have just referred. That is happening, and we wish the negotiations to succeed.

I wish that I could point to progress towards more fundamental change in South Africa. The immediate agenda on which we are working contains three items: the release of Nelson Mandela and other political prisoners; the preservation of foreign aid programmes from South African Government interference; and clemency for the Sharpeville Six.

In the longer term, as the House knows, we remain firmly of the view that only by making full use of our contacts with South Africa to press the case for change can we expect to influence developments and bring apartheid to an end. We are convinced—I have no doubt whatever about this—that punitive economic sanctions would hinder, not help, the chances of progress towards the non-racial democratic society that we all want to see.

Mr. David Ashby (Leicestershire, North-West): In his wide-ranging speech, my right hon. and learned Friend has mentioned Angola. Is that not an example of change that is taking place in a similar way to the changes in Russia?

I know that my right hon. and learned Friend would like to look at other parts of the world where the same change is taking place—for instance, Nicaragua, whose vice-president is coming to the country at the beginning of July. Will my right hon. and learned Friend meet him to discuss the changes in Nicaragua, as well as the sensible changes in other parts of the world?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: We had offered to see the vice-president of Nicaragua, but he is not now coming to this country in July; nor is he being seen by a number of other Heads of Government and other representatives in Europe. But that does not mean that we are not interested in seeing progress towards plural democracy in Nicaragua.

Another area in which a hardening of attitudes and the ensuing deadlock has not helped is in the long-running Arab-Israel conflict. To break that deadlock, Israeli opinion must be brought to accept the inevitability of trading territory for peace—of allowing Palestinians the same right of self-determination as they have secured for themselves. Arab opinion must turn away from violence and unite in recognising Israel's right to a secure existence. Both sides must be ready to break away from the sterility of the status quo.

I must now deal with the suggestion—renewed in recent days—that there has been any change in our policy towards Iran. Let me make it plain that there is no truth whatever in that. Our policy has been clear and consistent, and it has not changed. I note that the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) expected me to say more about the middle east, but the fact is that it is not possible to deal with every subject at comparable length. I am dealing now, at some length—and he will be interested in what I have to say—with the Iran-Iraq war.

In the past decade, Iran has undergone a revolution that has shaken the country to its foundations. It is not the first such revolution in the history of the world, and certainly it will not be the last. As in other cases, events in Iran have created an extremely severe strain in relations between that country and her neighbours—and, indeed, with the rest of the world. Of course, it was not our wish that there should be such strain in our relations. Iran is an important country, and one with which in the long run we must continue to do business. Where we can sensibly do that, we do. Hence the most recent round in the long-running talks on compensation on embassy premises.

Like other revolutionary regimes in the past, however, the Iranians must come to accept that there are certain necessary standards of international behaviour which must be observed if they are to have a normal relationship with the rest of the world. In recent years, Iran has flouted obligations under international diplomatic and consular agreements; harassed and assassinated opponents of the regime and fomented instability abroad; supported groups committed to sabotage and terrorism, including the holding of hostages; defied the authority of the United Nations; and attacked international shipping, including vessels under our own flag. From all that, it must be clear that there can be no fundamental improvement in our overall relationship in the absence of substantial and sustained changes in Iranian behaviour.

I mentioned hostages. Hostage-taking is a particularly awful crime, whoever commits it and wherever it is done. We utterly condemn it. We expect, as a matter of normal civilised behaviour, that anyone with influence over hostage-takers should use that influence to help secure their release, and without seeking to extract a price. We ourselves do all that we can to discover the circumstances of British subjects held hostage, and to bring pressure to bear on their captors, both through our contacts with other Governments and through our own representatives abroad.

Despite being exposed to considerable personal danger, our embassy in Beirut plays a crucial role in this, and the whole House will wish to pay tribute to it. We are prepared to talk to anyone who we think might be able to help, but there is no compromise in our determination not to make concessions to secure the release of hostages. To do so would offer a reward to the hostage-takers, and put other British subjects at risk.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): Is the Secretary of State in a position to tell the House that Terry Waite and the other British hostages are still alive?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I cannot give any certain and comprehensive information about that, but there is certainly some evidence that they are alive. There are so many reports in the newspapers almost daily that it must be immensely harrowing, particularly for the hostages' families, to be confronted with the constant stream

I hear the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, West (Mr. Randall) muttering on the Opposition Front Bench, and I entirely understand his concern. Of course we have other sources, and we are constantly seeking material and evidence. I am merely saying that the media, in their natural curiosity and to feed our curiosity, provide stories that lead—and mislead—people in all sorts of different directions. I understand their curiosity. There is no certainty that we can report to the House on these matters, but we seek evidence all the time.

Meanwhile, we have been playing a leading role in efforts to negotiate a settlement to the Iran-Iraq conflict. With the other permanent members of the Security Council we are looking at ways to enforce compliance with last year's United Nations cease-fire resolution. We have made proposals about a possible arms embargo. We have condemned, and continue to condemn, the use of chemical weapons by Iraq.

The House will know that the report of the Foreign Affairs Select Committee on the Iran-Iraq conflict was published this morning. I wish to express our appreciation of its work in producing an excellent report. I commend it to the House—and with all the more confidence, because it represents a powerful all-party endorsement of our policy towards Iran and the Gulf conflict.

Mr. Robert Hicks (Cornwall, South-East): I wholly understand the reasons for the policy on our relationship with Iran and endorse what my right hon. and learned Friend has said about deals and hostages, but does he agree that if, after nine years or so, an important Government wish to come to a better relationship with us, we should respond in whatever way we think appropriate? Surely that is the only way to achieve some form of the long-term objective that we all seek in that part of the world.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I understand my hon. Friend's serious and well-informed interest in this matter and I respect the way in which he and his colleagues conducted their recent visit to Iran. I invite him to read carefully what I have already said about this matter. We recognise the importance of Iran and our ability in the long run to establish effective relations with a country of that size. We have not severed diplomatic relations; they have been reduced to a thin thread.

On the topic of compensation for damage to embassy premises—a subject that has been running for seven years—we have been prepared to resume that contact and to bring it effectively to a conclusion. We have no diplomatic representative in Iran because of the way in which the previous people there were treated and because of the lack, as yet, of confidence and assurance that things will be different in future. I entirely accept my hon. Friend's point that this matter must be judged in the light of all the aspects. That is why I invite him to read carefully what I said earlier in my speech.

Mr. Gerald Kaufman (Manchester, Gorton): Is it not a fact that if the regime in Teheran wanted to improve relations with this country, it could use its undoubted influence with the captors of the hostages in Beirut to secure their release speedily? If it did that, there would be a great prospect of improvement in relations between Britain and Iran.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The right hon. Gentleman makes an important point. If he reads the Select Committee report he will see that it identifies several other matters in respect of which the Iranian Government could take action quickly to demonstrate the seriousness of their wish to move towards more normal relations. I have identified some of them. I am grateful for his support for maintaining the firmness and coherence of our position.

We live within the framework of rules of international order which have been established for many years. Other nations, whatever their revolutionary past—they are entitled to that—must come to terms with those rules and conventions. We certainly wish to move towards better relations within those rules, but it is on those terms and in that way that the matter must rest.

Meanwhile, we shall continue through our naval presence in the Gulf to uphold the principle of freedom of navigation in international waters and to protect vital Western economic interests. The whole House knows that the Royal Navy continues to play a major and constructive part in that respect. The effectiveness of our European partnership has been helped by the willingness of Belgium and the Netherlands to place their ships under Royal Navy operational control with effect from tomorrow, which is the first day of the British presidency of the Western European Union.

My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has already dealt with European Community matters earlier today. As I have explained, I do not plan to add significantly to what she has already said. Our membership of the European Community is at the centre of our foreign policy. Within that Community, Britain has done a great deal to set the agenda for action and the terms of debate. That is important for the future of Europe and it is important for the future of Britain. We have worked, most recently, for

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three objectives: sensible financing, a containment of farm spending and priority to the single internal market. That British agenda has now become the European agenda.

In the world beyond the European Community, the same is happening. As in Britain, the pattern of debate is swinging away from old thinking, old philosophies and old assumptions. That was clearly evident at the Toronto summit. British input is vital in the new debate about how to manage East-West relations, reduce tension and tackle potential regional crises.

At the same time, our economic status is higher in the world than for many a long year. British foreign policy is no longer simply a reaction to events beyond our control. Now we have an important influence on those events. Around the world, from the quest for a single market in Europe to the improvement in super-power relations, Britain's voice is heard and Britain's advice respected. The people of this country can once again be proud of Britain's role in the world. Our policies have their support, and I commend them to the House.

5.16 pm

Mr. Gerald Kaufman (Manchester, Gorton): A year is far too long a time to allow to go by without what Mr. Speaker earlier today called a "rare, full-scale" foreign affairs debate in this House, particularly a year which has been so eventful and, in many parts of the world, so historic.

The Foreign Secretary rightly referred to the revolutionary changes in the Soviet Union. They are almost as revolutionary as those which took place just over 70 years ago. The changes have helped to lead to the heartening progress on disarmament and have already brought about Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan.

There have been crisis-ridden areas where developments have not yet led to solutions of profoundly serious problems. Turkish troops still remain in occupation of northern Cyprus. I hope that the Prime Minister will take advantage of the Turkish President's visit here to seek beneficial movement on that issue. The long agony of Kampuchea continues, and hon. Members who have been there can report to the House on that themselves. The Government should play a more positive and constructive role in that part of the world.

As the Foreign Secretary pointed out, the Gulf war continues lethally and apparently interminably, with Iran as inflexible as ever and United Nations resolution 598 a historic document rather than a recipe for peace. There is no sign of follow-up action by the United Nations nearly a year after that resolution was passed unanimously by the Security Council.

Elsewhere, even where solutions are not yet available, the pace of events has often been headlong. If we had waited much longer, headlong change might have meant this debate being introduced by a new Foreign Secretary. We have already read in our newspapers those ill-omened outpourings of the Bernard Ingham Cabinet assassination machine which almost invariably point to an abrupt dismissal, subject to the briefings. In the Foreign Secretary's case those venemous briefings have been augmented by cruel remarks from the Prime Minister.

I understand that what really narked the Foreign Secretary and led even that soporific worm to turn was the off-the-record conversation conducted by the Prime Minister after an on-the-record interview which she gave to a subservient journalist, in which she said of the Foreign Secretary:

> "He used to be a comfortable slipper, now he's just a worn-out old shoe."

Mr. Patrick Cormack (Staffordshire, South): Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that if he carries on like this he will never aspire, or deserve to aspire, to being anything other than ambassador to Disneyland?

Mr. Kaufman: The hon. Gentleman has a capacity for sanctimonious pomposity which he has been able to demonstrate to the House on numerous occasions. I suggest that he confines it to his interesting books on the history of the House of Commons.

It seems that the Prime Minister's likening of the Foreign Secretary to an item of footwear galvanised him into activity, some of it just plain nonsensical, such as his rather pathetic boast of being the pioneer of Thatcherism —a claim which he made rather incongruously at the Waterman's Arms on the Isle of Dogs. *The Independent* said:

> "the Foreign Secretary cast aside his more natural low-profile image as one of the unheralded backroom work horses of the Conservative Party and explained his central role in the creation of the 'enterprise culture'."

Enterprise and the Foreign Secretary are two concepts which it is difficult to associate closely.

Then there was the Foreign Secretary's clash with the Prime Minister about the European monetary system and his rather undiplomatic comments on the current United States election campaign. He tried to put that right a bit further this afternoon when he said that whether the next US Administration is headed by President Bush or President Dukakis we shall find it easy to work alongside him. We recall that, on 8 June, he was assisted by the right hon. Member for Guildford (Mr. Howell) who put a question to the Foreign Secretary, possibly inspired—but he can tell us if it was not—in which he asked:

> "will my right hon. and learned Friend make it quite clear that, contrary to some newspaper reports, he holds no preference between one American presidential candidate and another in the forthcoming presidential election, that that is a matter for the American people to decide, and that either would do quite nicely?"

The Foreign Secretary replied:

> "I am grateful to my right hon. Friend."

As indeed he was.

> "As I said on the David Frost programme on Sunday— that important organ of public opinion—it is part of the democratic process that one works with the leader who emerges at the end of the day. I and Her Majesty's Government look forward to continuing close and friendly co-operation with whatever Administration emerges."— [*Official Report*, 8 June 1988; Vol. 134 c. 829-30.]

What was it that the Foreign Secretary said to David Frost?

> "I think one's always got to be very cautious about expressing opinions on elections in other countries because it's part of the democratic process that one works with the leader who emerges at the end of the day. But obviously it would be less than human if we didn't recognise the value of working with George Bush with whom we've worked for a long time. And he is, if there's anything in the kind of over-simplified right-left divisions in politics, he is on the right of American politics, and so are we in this country."

That was the impartiality in the US elections which the Foreign Secretary expressed. It has to be said that if there is a President Dukakis in November, I cannot imagine him exactly rolling out the red carpet for the author of those remarks, should the Foreign Secretary manage to survive in his Department until next January's inauguration. No wonder David Frost said after that enlightened interlude:

"There's so much more to talk about, we'll take a break and then we'll carry on."

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mrs. Lynda Chalker): Could the right hon. Gentleman confirm a rumour that I heard the other day —that he will shortly be leaving the United Kingdom for the United States to attend the Democratic convention?

Mr. Kaufman: I have no doubt about who I want to win. I have no doubts at all on that subject, but the Foreign Secretary had to plant a question with the right hon. Member for Guildford to ensure that the Government's relations were acceptable. It is interesting that, on a matter which relates personally to the Foreign Secretary, he had to put his right hon. Friend the Minister of State up to think of a question to put to me. He could have got up himself.

There are some areas of activity where the Foreign Secretary gives little sign of carrying on or, indeed, doing anything at all. One is central America. After a welcome for last August's Guatemala accord which was scarcely discernible, the Government have not lifted a finger to help with the implementation of one of the most significant initiatives for peace in central America in decades.

The Foreign Secretary has failed to recognise that, among the four countries where fighting is going on in central America and which are parties to the accord, the only one which has taken any noticeable action to implement the accord is Nicaragua. The Under-Secretary of State seems to be having a slight seizure. Perhaps he can tell us why the Government are not assisting with implementation of the Guatemala accord when the Nicaraguan Government have moved further and faster to fulfil that accord's conditions than its enemies can have expected and than even its friends could have hoped for.

The Nicaraguan Government have reopened La Prensa, they have reopened Radio Cattolica, they have lifted the state of emergency, they have conducted talks with the Contras on remarkably generous terms and the ceasefire agreement has taken place. All of that has not induced one word of approval, let alone help, from Britain. Indeed, last year, as the Minister for Overseas Development admitted a few days ago, not one penny of bilateral assistance was provided by Britain for war-torn and impoverished Nicaragua.

I suppose that that kind of silence is better than the feverish activity of the American Administration and President Reagan's obsessive, though happily unsuccessful, attempts to fund the murderous Contras, and now Mr. Shultz's tour of central America. His 53-hour tour, codenamed "If it is Thursday it must be Tegucigalpa", misses out Nicaragua altogether. As Mr. Shultz is at any rate going to El Salvador, I hope that he will take the opportunity there to demand the firmest possible guarantees of the safety of the leaders of the freedom movement, including Mr. Ungo, who has now courageously returned to El Salvador, where he is risking murder at the hands of that country's murderous death squads.

Mr. Tony Banks: Does my right hon. Friend accept that it is a matter of great hypocrisy on the part of the British and United States Governments that all we hear from them is criticism of and attacks on the Nicaraguan Government in their attempt to get peace in their country, and that we rarely hear a word about the death squads in Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador and Colombia? One could give a list of countries in that part of the world which have been supported by the British and American Governments, who have merely attacked the Nicaraguan people who are looking for peace within their borders.

Mr. Kaufman: I agree with my hon. Friend. Earlier, the Foreign Secretary was interrupted by the hon. Member for Leicestershire, North-West (Mr. Ashby) who went to Nicaragua as an observer of the elections there. He came back praising the conduct of those elections. It is a bit thick of the Foreign Secretary to say that he wants there to be a pluralistic democracy in Nicaragua when, of the five countries which are party to the accord, apart from Costa Rica, Nicaragua is the only one with a semblance of pluralistic democracy.

Mr. Ashby: Does the right hon. Gentleman recall that although I praised the election—the fact that it was the first election and therefore a very necessary part of the democratic process in Nicaragua—and although I said that the election was secret and well conducted, I felt that to talk of it as a pluralistic election as rather like saying that the elections in Poland were pluralistic, free and fair? I was misquoted in respect of that election.

Mr. Kaufman: I accept what the hon. Gentleman says. No one is pretending that in a country that is labouring under a state of emergency the kind of pluralistic democracy to which we aspire in this part of the world can be attained. However, there is no doubt that the only country in the whole of central America, apart from Costa Rica, that has any genuine pluralistic political system is Nicaragua, and it is about time that the Government recognised that.

There is one area where the Foreign Secretary has acted and where we share his approach. It is the middle east. I am sorry that the right hon. and learned Gentleman did not find time to deal with it at greater length. Apart from the issues of South Africa and of East-West relations, it is probably the most important problem in the world and one more fraught with danger to world peace than any other. The past seven months have seen the start and the remarkable continuance of the Intifada—the uprising by the Palestinians in the territories that the Israelis occupied 21 years ago this month.

Opposition Members have long taken the view that the only formula for a settlement in the middle east is on the basis of the United Nations resolution calling for peace in exchange for territory—for Israel to withdraw from lands that she occupied in 1967 as part of a firm agreement that will guarantee Israel's security. Opposition Members believe—I think that the Government share this view— that such an agreement can be brought about only under the umbrella of an international conference sponsored by the five permanent members of the security council of the United Nations. All the Arab nations support such a conference. They made that clear at this month's Arab League summit in Algiers, on which I had the advantage of a first-hand report from the Foreign Minister of Algeria, with whom I had talks in Algiers two weeks ago.

In recent months, I have had talks with King Hussein of Jordan, President Mubarak of Egypt, Mr. Chedli Klibi, the secretary-general of the Arab League, and Mr. Farouk

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Khadonmi, the foreign affairs spokesman of the PLO, as well as talks with Arab leaders in Baghdad, Tunis and elsewhere. In quest of further information I shall shortly be visiting another indispensable participant in any settlement when I go for talks in Damascus that I have arranged with the Syrian Government. *[Interruption.]* Is the hon. Member for Mid-Norfolk (Mr. Ryder) saying that I shall not get information when I go to Syria? Is he saying that there is no chance of a settlement? If he is saying neither of those things but is calling out some other nonsense, I advise him, as a Whip, to keep his peace. This is a very serious matter on which the Foreign Secretary and I are working together. The Opposition are trying to assist the Government in doing something about this extremely dangerous situation. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman, who is capable of a degree of mental agility, will do that too, instead of sitting there and snarling.

An international conference with territory exchanged for peace is vital, and it is admirable that this policy is also the wise and courageous policy of Mr. Peres, the Foreign Minister of Israel and leader of the Israeli Labour party. It is tragic that such a policy, which is supported in so many quarters, is being obstructed by the folly and intransigence of Mr. Shamir, the Prime Minister of Israel. He poses as the defender of Israel's security. In fact, the policy of a greater Israel which he is pursuing is the greatest enemy of Israel's security. The security of Israel does not depend only on the possession of land. Surely, in this, Israel's 40th anniversary year, the people of Israel must know that the armed possession of the whole of mandatory Palestine for more than half the period of their country's statehood has not brought them peace. Instead, it has brought war upon war and death upon death, with too many of Israel's citizens buried in military and civilian cemeteries instead of living hopeful and fruitful lives.

If the Israelis had not learned that lesson a year ago, they surely know it now. The Intifada, the uprising, has permanently changed the history of the middle east. There will never again be peace in the occupied territories. There will be peace in those territories only when they cease to be occupied. More than 200 Palestinians have died to explain that simple fact. Thousands more have been injured and thousands more imprisoned. It is clear that thousands more Palestinians are willing to risk or give up their lives despite the force of the Israeli response.

Already, hundreds of thousands of decent, sensible Israelis are campaigning against the policies inflicted upon them by the bizarre pantomime camel of a Government in their country. They know that it is not only in the interests of Palestine but even more in the interests of a peaceful and secure Israel that a negotiated solution should be achieved. I hope that hundreds of thousands more Israelis will show their good sense in this autumn's election by voting for justice for their neighbours and peace for themselves. The alternative is a Government with a Likud majority. If they went ahead with a transfer of population—a synonym for the mass deportation of Arabs which some of the Likud leaders are now discussing—it would make Israel the loneliest country in the world instead of the pillar of democracy that Israel's best citizens rightly wish her to be.

Mr. David Tredinnick (Bosworth): Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that one of the Palestinians to whom he spoke, who was a representative of Palestinians in the occupied territories, was arrested for talking to him? That was discovered by the all-party group of Members of Parliament who went to the occupied territories after his visit.

Mr. Kaufman: Such reports have been made to me and I have made inquiries of the Israeli embassy on a number of occasions about that individual. To date, the Israeli embassy has denied the information given to me, but I assure the hon. Gentleman that if I receive more information I shall put it to the Israeli Government again. I would regard it as absolutely intolerable that somebody should be arrested and imprisoned because he had spoken to me while I was on a visit to a refugee camp in the occupied territories.

Mr. Winnick: I agree with what my right hon. Friend has just said. The Palestinians undoubtedly made major errors, to say the least, which led to the situation in 1948 when they refused to accept the United Nations resolution and in 1967 when they provoked the war. I believe that Israel was absolutely right in 1967. However, is not the Israeli leadership making a similar mistake at the very time when the Palestinians have come round to recognising that there should be an Israeli state? The leadership of Israel —unfortunately, a large number of people agree with the leadership—refuses to recognise what must be recognised, which is that the Palestinian people have as much right to justice and a state of their own as the people of Israel.

Mr. Kaufman: At this stage of the crisis it is an error on both sides to look back and seek justifications and arguments from the past. We are where we are: 1,300,000 Palestinians have been denied civil and human rights for 21 years by an occupying power. Israel is not living in peace partly because of that situation. It is essential that we look forward. The Government and the Opposition are united on that, even though we have serious differences on many other issues, with which I must now deal.

If the Foreign Secretary has been precise and uncontroversial in many of his pronouncements on the middle east, he has been far less precise and much more controversial in what he has said, and failed to say, about what took place in Gibraltar on 6 March this year.

This House is united against IRA terrorism, of which we have witnessed so many foul examples during the past few months. The House breathed a sigh of relief when the plot to commit an abominable atrocity in Gibraltar was detected and prevented. The House took the Foreign Secretary's word next day when he gave, in total good faith, his account of the events leading to the killing of the three IRA terrorists in Gibraltar. But it was *The Daily Telegraph*, in a leading article on 8 March, which summed up the worries that have arisen:

> "The Government must tell why it gave a succession of contradictory accounts to the world about Sunday's events. Unless it wishes Britain's enemies to enjoy a propaganda bonanza, it should explain why it was necessary to shoot dead all three terrorists on the street, rather than apprehend them with the considerable force of police and SAS which appears to have been deployed in the locality . . . it might be deemed politically prudent to give ill-wishers no further grounds to suggest that the authorities operate a "shoot to kill" policy against terrorists."

When the Foreign Secretary spoke to the House, not in a statement that he volunteered, but in response to a private notice question from the Opposition, the state of our knowledge, all of it derived from Government sources, was as follows. Two men and one woman in charge of a car parked 500 yards from where a changing of the guard ceremony was due to take place had been shot dead by security forces after having planted in their car a 500 lb bomb which members of the East Anglian Regiment swiftly defused. Next day, when it must have been known that parts of this account were untrue, the Minister of State for the Armed Forces was still telling listeners to the BBC "Today" programme:

> "A car bomb was found and defused."

The Foreign Secretary—I am sure inadvertently—added to that disinformation by telling the House that afternoon:

> "Their"—

that is, the three terrorists'—

> "presence and actions near the parked Renault car gave rise to strong suspicion that it contained a bomb, which appeared to be corroborated by a rapid technical examination of the car."—[*Official Report*, 7 March 1988; Vol. 129, c. 21.]

But we now know that such a rapid technical examination could not have revealed what the Foreign Secretary said and must have revealed the reverse, because the car could not, in the condition in which it was seen, have contained a device of 500 lb of explosives or the device of 140 lb of explosives that was found somewhat later 40 miles away in a parked car in Marbella. Indeed, the Foreign Secretary admitted fairly:

> "It has now been established that"

the car

> "did not contain an explosive device."—[*Official Report*, 7 March 1988; Vol. 129, c. 21.]

Again, the right hon. and learned Gentleman admitted openly and without equivocation in a letter to me:

> "I can say that it was not until the morning of 7 March that full confirmation was finally received in London that the parked Renault car contained no explosive device, and I only learnt of it personally after lunch that day, when I returned to my office from a morning engagement outside the FCO."

Describing what he then believed to have taken place, the Foreign Secretary went on to say in his statement to the House:

> "On their way towards the border, they"—

the terrorists—

> "were challenged by the security forces. When challenged, they made movements which led the military personnel operating in support of the Gibraltar police to concude that their own lives and the lives of others were under threat."—[*Official Report*, 7 March 1988; Vol. 129, c. 21.]

But the question is: were they challenged? The Foreign Secretary has been asked again and again by others and by me about whether they were challenged. He has persistently declined to respond to such questions——

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I must confess that many would join me in a sense of dismay that the right hon. Gentleman chooses to embark on a piece of investigative journalism of this sort. He has been kind enough to acknowledge that, in my statement to the House that day, I spoke in complete good faith—as was the case—as the House would have expected me to tell it all I knew at that time.

The matter is now for investigation in the court hearing that is to follow in due course. It really cannot help to try to pursue this matter as though the right hon. Gentleman were back in his old profession as an investigative journalist.

Mr. Kaufman: I am sure that the right hon. and learned Gentleman——

Mr. John Carlisle (Luton, North): Traitor.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I distinctly heard the word "traitor" used by the hon. Member for Pembroke (Mr. Bennett) about my right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman). *[Interruption.]* I am now assured that it was the hon. Member for Luton, North (Mr. Carlisle). Conservative Members know who it was, in any case. If there is any honour left among them, which I doubt, that comment should be withdrawn.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I did not hear the word. I was concentrating carefully on what the Foreign Secretary was saying. But if the word was used, it must be withdrawn.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett (Pembroke): Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I assure you that I said nothing at all.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I heard the remark—it was made by the hon. Member for Luton, North (Mr. Carlisle), who is sitting grinning at the back of the Chamber. In view of recent remarks made about his activities in the House I think that he should have the honour to withdraw his remark.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Perhaps I should ask the hon. Member for Luton, North (Mr. Carlisle) whether he used the word. If he did, I am sure that on reflection he would want to withdraw it.

Mr. John Carlisle: I happily withdraw the word "traitor" and substitute the word "Quisling".

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I am afraid that that is no more acceptable. The hon. Gentleman must give an unqualified withdrawal.

Mr. Carlisle: In deference to you, Sir, and the House I withdraw the word "traitor" in that context

Hon. Members: And "Quisling".

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The hon. Gentleman must withdraw both words.

Mr. Carlisle: In deference to the House and to you, Sir, I withdraw the words "traitor" and "Quisling".

Mr. Kaufman: I am obliged to the hon. Gentleman. I would never dream of describing him as a traitor to the apartheid principles of South Africa, and he can rest assured that I shall make no such accusation against him inside or outside Parliament.

As for what the Foreign Secretary said, I do not question for a moment the complete sincerity and integrity of his remarks and whole approach to this matter when he made his statement to the House. I never implied that I did. Whether he regards it as appropriate for a speech in a foreign affairs debate to deal with an issue that has seriously affected relations between this country and the Republic of Ireland is for him to decide. He said that these matters should be pursued in other ways, but it was he who volunteered, in response to my hon. Friend the Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson) on 7 March, the remark:

> "The matter, of course, will be subject to further amplification as further evidence beoomes available".—[*Official Report*, 7 March 1988; Vol. 129, c. 23.]

We are waiting for that further amplification, which the right hon. and learned Gentleman did not put into the context of an impending inquest, although he knew as a

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lawyer, if anyone did, that an inquest was sure to follow. Nevertheless, he offered the House further evidence, about which I am seeking to question him. I insist on doing that.

It is crucial to know whether these people were challenged, and efforts have been made in the House and elsewhere to obtain the truth about that. Efforts have been made to discover under what rules the security forces—that is what the Government call them, although everyone knows that they were the SAS—were operating. That they were operating under rules has been made clear by the Minister of State, who gave a reply to the House on 24 May:

> "All military operations and activities in this country or by our armed forces are ultimately under political control. I should emphasise that our soldiers are highly trained to operate within the law and according to strictrules."—*[Official Report,* 24 May 1988; Vol. 134, c.185.]

We want to know—we have the right to know—whether they were operating under strict rules and what those rules were. We know of the yellow card rules that are laid down for Northern Ireland. Were the same rules operative in Gibraltar on 6 March? Were they observed? Was there a decision not to observe them? If so, it was not made on the spot but by the political control under which the Minister of State made it clear that they were operating. The Government refuse to provide a morsel of information, claiming that to utter a word would prejudice the forthcoming inquest in Gibraltar. However, as I pointed out, the Foreign Secretary offered no such proviso when the matter was discussed in the House on 7 March.

We also want to know when the inquest will take place. That is another mystery. First, it was said to be scheduled for last month, then it was definitely fixed for 27 June. It was then postponed indefinitely. News of the postponement did not come from the coroner in Gibraltar, Mr. Pizzarello, but from the Prime Minister's Press Secretary in London, Mr. Ingham, who, in his non-attributable Lobby briefing at 11 am on 23 May, told journalists that the inquest would be postponed from 27 June.

Three hours after Mr. Ingham told journalists that the inquest would be postponed, Mr. Pizzarello denied that he had postponed it. Two hours later, he postponed it. It has still not been explained why Mr. Ingham knew for a fact what was denied three hours later, which was then confirmed two hours after that on the grounds of the need not to distract police attention from a music and dance festival in Gibraltar—*[Interruption.]* These are matters of profound concern to the press of this country and to *The Daily Telegraph* among other newspapers. Attempts by Conservative Members to prevent questions being put will not succeed.

The festival due to which the inquest was postponed took place this week. We now know what kind of festival it was which placed such demands on the police that it made it impossible for the inquest to be held. The festival events that were thought to need a massive police presence, included a painting exhibition, a rowing race, flower arranging and a performance by a group of artists known as the Dollydots—[HON. MEMBERS: "Trivial."] What happened in Gibraltar was not trivial. If the Foreign Secretary regards that as so trivial, why did he ask me not to proceed?

The festival organiser said:

> "We are being blamed for having the inquest postponed. That's nonsense. We just did not have that power. We are just amateurs trying to bring a little culture to Gibraltar."

The Dollydots did not have the power to postpone the inquest: someone else did, but we still do not know who.

That conundrum, together with other unexplained events, has caused great damage to Anglo-Irish relations. The Foreign Secretary admitted that when, following the incident, he said:

> "I do not underestimate the hurt felt by the Irish in recent months . . . Let me make it clear that for our part any hurt is not intentional. It is not calculated. There is no conspiracy."

The problem was that, while the Foreign Secretary was trying to reassure the Irish Government, the Prime Minister was almost simultaneously insulting the Irish Government and accusing the Prime Minister of the Republic of backing away from responsibilities under the Anglo-Irish Agreement. The problem for the Foreign Secretary is that again and again when he has tried to maintain a sensible policy, he has been sabotaged by the Prime Minister, acting as an unguided missile, which, unfortunately, will not be done away with under the INF agreement.

When the Foreign Secretary and his Department were negotiating the agreement on Hong Kong with China, which was a great diplomatic achievement for the right hon. and learned Gentleman and his Department, the Prime Minister nearly wrecked it by her crass and ignorant intervention. When the Foreign Secretary is still trying to repair the damage done by the Prime Minister's tendentious briefing against Canada at last autumn's Commonwealth conference, last week in Ottawa, the Prime Minister caused fury in the Canadian Parliament by taking sides in an internal Canadian political controversy and, as one Canadian parliamentarian put it "meddling in Canadian affairs".

The Foreign Secretary has to stand by and watch the Prime Minister trying to sabotage the most helpful development in world affairs in the past 40 years—the disarmament process that is now taking place between the Soviet Union and the United States.

The right hon. and learned Gentleman referred to the Communist party congress taking place in Moscow this week. It must be peculiarly galling for the Prime Minister to see the admirable and remarkable efforts by Mr. Gorbachev to create more democratically elected institutions in the Soviet Union, when she is busy abolishing democratically elected institutions in the United Kingdom. It must be infuriating for the Prime Minister to see the Soviet leader earnestly seeking to create a more open and freely spoken society through glasnost while she pursues her objectives of creating a closed society in this country through her vendettas against the broadcasting organisations.

Worst of all is the Prime Minister's failure to respond to the magnitude of developments which could rid the world of the menace of war. At a time when our Select Committee on Defence provides figures on Britain's naval strength which are different from and fewer than those botched together by the Secretary of State for Defence, the Government have turned down Mr. Shevardnadze's excellent proposal for a formal exchange of official data on conventional forces. At least if we took up that offer, the British Government and the Ministry of Defence might have a chance of finding out exactly how many ships there are in the Royal Navy, which they do not seem to know at the moment.

The Prime Minister is not only at loggerheads with the Foreign Secretary; she is also at loggerheads with Chancellor Kohl of West Germany. He wants to reduce battlefield nuclear weapons in Europe, while she wants to modernise NATO's nuclear capability. Happily, he managed to defeat her at the NATO summit on that issue in March.

The Prime Minister is even at odds with President Reagan. In her notorious interview with *Der Spiegel* last autumn, she said that disarmament

> "ought not to go much further, at least until we have achieved a ban on chemical weapons and an approximate equilibrium in conventional weapons".

In his walkabout in Red square during the Moscow summit, President Reagan made it clear that he wants the world's nuclear arsenals to be fully eliminated during the next 12 years. Even the Foreign Secretary has pointed out today that strategic arms negotiations are under way, which is against the wishes of the Prime Minister who did not want strategic arms reductions to take place until after there had been progress in conventional disarmament and chemical warfare—[HON. MEMBERS: "Quite right."] Hon. Members may say, "Quite right," but they disagree with President Reagan who is pursuing a START negotiation which he hopes to conclude with Mr. Gorbachev before he leaves office at the end of this year.

The most repulsive stand taken by the Prime Minister and carried out reluctantly or otherwise by the Home Secretary is on South Africa. The whole record of this Government on apartheid is shoddy, as at this moment is their record on the plight of the Sharpeville Six in the light of the international discussions in which they have been involved in the past few weeks. The Sharpeville Six are once again under threat of potential imminent execution.

The line that Ministers are being required to take was revealed by the Prime Minister in a written answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) on Monday. She stated:

> "It would be premature to consider intervening again with the South African Government before the legal processes are exhausted."—[*Official Report*, 27 June 1988; Vol. 136, c. *1*.]

In recent weeks, on that legalistic pretext, the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary have been zealous in obstructing, frustrating and sabotaging the efforts of the leading nations to obtain a reprieve for the Sharpeville Six.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The right hon. Gentleman continues to live in a world of fantasy, so I shall put him right. The right hon. Gentleman was not here this afternoon when my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister dealt with this matter. As a result of three meetings that I have attended—first, with the European Foreign Affairs council in Luxembourg, secondly at the Toronto Summit a fortnight ago and, thirdly, this week in Hanover—we have joined in making clear representations to the South African Government calling for clemency to be exercised and for the use of all available legal remedies to that end. We wish clemency to be exercised. The Prime Minister made it plain this afternoon that she had made representations already.

When the judicial processes have been exhausted—the stay of execution has been extended until 19 July—yet again we shall intervene and ask for clemency to be exercised. We choose these methods because it is our firm and clear judgment that they are most likely to have the impact that the right hon. Gentleman and the House wish. That is the only reason why we choose to proceed in this fashion. If the right hon. Gentleman believes that the ultimate judgment of state President Botha will be more influenced in the right direction by coupling representations with threats, he has completely misjudged the target of his representations.

Mr. Kaufman: I was present this afternoon when the Prime Minister responded to my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition on this issue. What she said did not accord with reports in the press. I shall quote from *The Daily Telegraph* of Friday 24 June.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: It is not true.

Mr. Kaufman: The right hon. and learned Gentleman can get up and say that it is not true when I have read it out, but he should allow me to read it. The article says:

> "Last week, Herr Hans-Dietrich Genscher, West German Foreign Minister, was reported to be enraged when Sir Geoffrey Howe, Foreign Secretary, tried to block a joint declaration by the Twelve on the fate of the Sharpeville Six . . . The statement was issued after Herr Genscher insisted that the EEC's credibility was at stake, though Britain succeeded in watering it down."

The article says that the declaration to which the right hon. and learned Gentleman referred

> "urged that 'all legal options available in South Africa should be used to prevent the death penalty being carried out'. However, it did not call on President Botha to exercise clemency, as some member states had urged."

I have an article from *The Independent*, on which the right hon. and learned Gentleman seemed to place great credence, headed;

> "Britain halts EEC move for Sharpeville Six reprieve."

Yes, statements were made in Luxembourg, Toronto and Hanover, but in almost every case they were not the statements that the majority of those taking part wanted because the right hon. and learned Gentleman, acting on the Prime Minister's instructions, sabotaged them.

Chancellor Kohl has spoken about withdrawing his ambassador and about diplomatic sanctions. The right hon. and learned Gentleman has prevented such measures being taken, and I am sorry that he continues to take a position that thwarts the wishes of the Twelve and those of the major economic powers that met in Toronto, to give a full-blooded condemnation of the execution of the Sharpeville Six. We all know that, every newspaper knows it and the Foreign Secretary carefully chose his words and denied that he and the Prime Minister had prevented action being taken by Chancellor Kohl, President Mitterrand, the Dutch and all the others who care about this matter.

I know that the right hon. and learned Gentleman and his right hon. Friend the Minister of State hold different views on this matter to the Prime Minister. Unfortunately, the Prime Minister calls the tune. Even at this late stage, we call on the Government not simply to use this legalistically phrased terminology but to do what everybody has asked them to do. The Prime Minister should get on the telephone to President Botha and make it clear—using the much-vaunted influence that she claims to have with Pretoria—that she wishes the South African Government to abandon this appalling campaign against those innocent people.

The problem that the right hon. and learned Gentleman has with the Sharpeville Six, as in many other matters, is that he is not allowed by the Prime Minister to follow his own sensible and creditable instincts. On so many issues, he makes it clear to the House that he is a decent and

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humane man, but his decent and humane instincts are constrained by the Prime Minister's cheap and ugly prejudices.

Crucial events are happening throughout the world. Britain should be active in hastening and supporting what is good and seeking to change what is wrong. The Foreign Secretary, from time to time, does his best, and I wish him well in his efforts. Meanwhile, the House must watch and seek to correct what goes wrong. That is what debates such as this are about and I hope that we will have more of them more speedily in the future.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Between 35 and 40 right hon. and hon. Members wish to take part in the debate. I am sure that short speeches will be appreciated.

6.6 pm

Mr. Edward Heath (Old Bexley and Sidcup): My right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary rightly concentrated on the agreement signed in Moscow by the two super-powers. It might perhaps have been more helpful to the House if the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) had followed that example. It is true that some of the points that the right hon. Gentleman made can be included in foreign policy, but to take up so much of the House's time was unjustifiable. All the matters could have been expressed very much more shortly. We all recognise the importance of trying to deal with the South Africans and we are all aware of the difficulties with Gibraltar, but they need not take up a large part of the debate.

I want to concentrate on the same subject as my right hon. and learned Friend. In so far as the Prime Minister and my right hon. and learned Friend were responsible for the success of the meeting between the super-powers—I know that my right hon. and learned Friend did an enormous amount of work behind the scenes—they are owed our gratitude and congratulations. It was a remarkable achievement, but I should like to put it in the context of the past 45 years. The Foreign Secretary emphasised the fact that we should look to the future and the impact that the agreement will have on it. There are, however, some lessons to be learnt from the past 45 years.

It seems to me that we have moved in cycles. After the iron curtain fell we had a period of tension, which almost broke out into warfare. After the death of Stalin in 1953, Mr. Churchill stood at the Dispatch Box and said that Stalin was dead and that the three powers that won the second world war—the United States, the United Kingdom and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics—could once more come together. That took 10 years, and in 1963 we signed the first test-ban treaty. That was the beginning of a cycle that continued until 1979. It was a period of continued reduction of tension, and achievements were made in security. It reduced much of the testing of nuclear weapons, which were controlled under SALT 1 and SALT 2.

We then had another period of tension of six or seven years, in which both sides of the Atlantic abused the Soviet Union, for no point whatever. Perhaps we have now come to the end of that cycle and, the treaty having been signed in Moscow, are starting once again on a period in which we can move to a further series of treaties, with a reduction of tension and the benefits that flow from that. I have said before, when asked what the benefits of that reduction in tension were, that by 1979, 55,000 Jews were leaving the Soviet Union each year, but by 1985 only 500 were leaving. That is one of the consequences of reducing tension and getting workable arrangements with the Soviet Union.

Who can tell what will come out of the internal political reorganisation of the Soviet Union? That is not our affair, and I hope that we can stop lecturing the Soviets on what they should be doing. Least of all should we be telling them to copy the Westminster system. There is a lot in the Westminster system that does not appeal to anybody at the moment, and the last thing that we should do is to tell Mr. Gorbachev and Mr. Gromyko that this is what they must do. On the other hand, the consequences of that in Soviet foreign, economic and defence policy are matters of concern because of how we react to them. I agree with my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary that here there is more room for hope than in many years past.

What are the implications of the changes that are being made? I was glad that my right hon. and learned Friend put so much emphasis on chemical weapons. I see no reason why there should not be a rapid agreement about the abolition of chemical weapons, under supervision, which the Soviet Union is prepared to accept. I am not clear where the obstacle lies, unless it is with the United States, which does not want to move quickly for fear of being accused of being reckless and not taking full note of the Soviet Union's power.

The same applies to the strategic defence initiative. The Soviet Union is prepared to give undertakings, and have them verified continuously, about research into SDI, and the quicker that both super-powers get away from that, the better it will be for their economies, budgets and trade and for the rest of us. I hope that those two objectives can be pursued speedily, as well as the rather longer discussions that my right hon. and learned Friend has said will have to take place. That will probably be a task for the next President of the United States. It is unlikely that the present one will abandon his dream fantasy of SDI and the abolition of all other weapons.

It is obvious that Soviet economic development will now move apace. It has been largely inspired by what is happening in the People's Republic of China, in exactly the same way as the People's Republic followed the example of Yugoslavia in changing its agricultural practices. Now the Soviet Union will follow the practices of the People's Republic and develop its agriculture as well as its industry. This will create a problem for the West, because the Soviet Union will no longer require to import vast quantities of grain, and that will greatly affect the middle-west farmers in the United States. This must be foreseen and the necessary adjustments to cope with it must be made.

Perhaps the biggest point is that the Soviet Union will want large supplies of new technology, technological equipment and capital investment, just as the People's Republic of China has been requiring them over the past 10 years. This can cause friction between Europe and the United States. This happened in the 1960s—and some of us had to handle it—when the United States was bitterly opposed to any increase in trade with the Soviet Union, even though we were in a period of diminishing tension. So often the United States objects until it is prepared to seize the market, and then it goes in and changes the rules.

The European Community and Britain should be unequivocal about this. We should supply equipment to and go for capital investment in the Soviet Union and increase our trade with the Soviet Union. That would be for the benefit of both of us. There are those who already say that if the Soviet people become better clothed, better housed and better fed, they will become even more dangerous. This is not a philosophy to which I can subscribe. I believe that if they are more satisfied and are prepared to accept their Government, in whichever form they emerge, then the Government are less likely to want exterior activities to remove attention from internal difficulties. We should be clear about this and firm in our attitude towards it.

What about the relationship of the Soviet Union with the People's Republic of China? This is already changing, and it has changed over the two years since Mr. Gorbachev has been in power. Trade between the Soviet Union and China has been increased, the border crossings have been reopened and the crossings have been considerable. Two of the three conditions laid down by Deng Xiaoping for an improvement in relations are being met. The first was withdrawal from Afghanistan, and that is under way. The second was withdrawal of the Vietnamese from Kampuchea, and that is under way. The third test is the reduction of Soviet forces along Chinese boundaries. The People's Republic has already reduced its forces by 1 million on the ground over the past two years. Therefore, it is in a position to negotiate with the Soviet Union, and this will reduce the burden on the Soviet Union's budget and economy as a whole.

Therefore, we must expect fresh relations to be built up between the Soviet Union and the People's Republic. I do not fear this, because I do not believe that there is any hope of relations between them going back to what they were before 1958—after the revolution in China and before Stalin withdrew support from China. This is a further development which we must expect and of which we must not be afraid.

The next implication is for Africa, and in particular Angola, which has already been mentioned today. I believe that the Soviet Union wants to disengage from Angola and its general position in relation to countries outside the Soviet union. Certainly, President Castro wants to withdraw his forces from Angola. These negotiations have been going on, and I know that my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary has given them every help that he can. It has so worked out that the Cuban forces have achieved considerable successes since the negotiations began. This may bring it home to the South Africans that they will not be able to overwhelm Angola, that the best arrangement is for them to get out of Namibia, as they ought to have done decades ago, and to recognise that they cannot destabilise the African countries along their borders.

All this can be achieved if—but only if—the American President is prepared to put pressure on South Africa to do it. Some will say that it is unlikely that this will happen during an election year. That may be so, although Congress as a whole would like it done, and it may be that, if a Democrat President were to follow, all the pressure would be put on South Africa. Once that happens, the Cuban forces can be progressively withdrawn from Angola. It needs a firm undertaking that the South Africans will not be able to go back easily to renewing the work of destabilising Angola.

That is another consequence of the changes in the Soviet Union's position. A further one, dealt with by the right hon. Member for Gorton, is Israel. I am certain that no solution can be found for the Israeli-Arab problem unless the Soviet Union is involved, because of its allies along the border. There can be no solution unless the American President is prepared to tell Israel that there must be a solution, and the nature of it.

The Soviet Union is prepared to try to solve the middle eastern problem because it regards this as the most dangerously explosive point in the world. I was told this frequently when I was in Moscow two weeks ago. Again, we have the question of the presidential election. President Eisenhower was the only President who was strong enough to stand up to the Israelis, and to do so a week before the presidential election. President Reagan has not been able to do that in his full term of office. We need to bring about a conference that does not necessarily include the Security Council, but involves all the countries in the area and the two super-powers. It must be at a time when the American President is prepared to say that there must be a solution that is acceptable both to the Soviet Union and to the United States.

In all these matters, the European Community can have considerable influence. For example, my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary, during his term as President of the Community, reached agreement inside the Community, after a visit to central America, on a possible solution to problems in the Caribbean. It was a very far-sighted arrangement and did not discriminate between Nicaragua and the rest. That was certainly a basis for negotiation and a solution to the problems.

What is now required, especially if we can solve the Angolan difficulty, is a fresh approach to Cuba. That is something in which European influence must be brought to bear on Washington. Washington is perpetuating a row of more than 30 years, in which a ruthless authoritarian regime was put down by revolution. We must ask ourselves about Cuba's future. In many ways, it has become successful, certainly in agriculture, largely helped by the Canadians, and now in industry, largely helped by East Germany. But what has President Castro got left? He has been President for 30 years. He does not want to be dominated by the Soviets. He knows that he cannot capture south or central America. Only two things are left to him: to get on terms with the European Community and with the United States. Those are the two things that remain to him in what years of his presidency are left, and they may be considerable. Here again, after the presidential election, the European Community can have a considerable influence.

I want to conclude with a few words about the Community. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister made her statement this afternoon about the Hanover conference. The Government are right to campaign in as big a way as possible for 1992. Alas, I am afraid that British business and industry have been slow to react to that—much slower than the French and Germans—but now, perhaps, we can get them on the move and ready to take the necessary steps to take advantage of it.

The reason why business has been slow to react is that, over the past decade, the Government have done so little to boost the European Community as a whole. What we have heard has been how we have managed to bash the

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other countries, win them over or outwit them, not the fact that we are a Community as a whole in which all our interests are involved.

I listened this afternoon to my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor) ask about the common agricultural policy, but I must say that British farmers have done extremely well out of the common agricultural policy. It is a question of telling those people across the Channel not that they must put their affairs in order, but that we are a part of them. What will happen to our farmers when we are lecturing the rest of them what they should be doing? That is where we have failed to treat the Community as our Community and as one whole.

It will not be easy to bring about 1992. An immense amount of willpower is required by the leaders and ourselves. The Prime Minister, in her statement today, said that the regulations that have so far been passed are of great interest and benefit to us. I hope that that does not mean that we shall try to obstruct the later ones. This is a Community and others must have their benefits as well as us. To have the idea that we get what we can and then obstruct is absolutely intolerable and cannot be accepted as the way to behave inside the Community. It is a question of compromise. Every community lives on compromise, and that is what is required in the European Community.

I am delighted that the present President of the Commission has been reappointed. He is excellent and has worked extremely hard. What worries me are the continuing reports—no doubt through the Bernard Ingham service—that Lord Cockfield is to be sacked. If that happens, it will be disgraceful. He has been an excellent Commissioner. He has earned the respect of everybody else in the Commission and in the European Community; and his intellectual work has been brilliant and is the basis of 1992.

I am sorry if my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has been upset by any suggestion that he has made about VAT, but that is something to be negotiated. Certainly it is not justifiable to sack our own Commissioner. Commissioners, once appointed, are not the tools of Governments. They have a responsibility to the Community as a whole, and Lord Cockfield has discharged that duty admirably. I sincerely hope that the Foreign Secretary will assure his reappointment, because it is desirable.

Mr. Nicholas Baker (Dorset, North): I am interested to hear my right hon. Friend's comments. Does he welcome the news this week that, whereas 15 per cent. of business men in this country were aware of 1992 four or five months ago, this week the figure has reached 75 per cent.?

Mr. Heath: I welcome that increase. I was in the United States recently when a public opinion poll was published, saying that only 2 per cent. of the American people knew of the existence of the European Community or where Europe was. They have a much greater problem than we have.

I want to come to the question of European defence because, quite apart from Europe 1992, there is the development of the defence issue with the French and Germans. Of course I do not agree with what the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) was shouting out, during the Prime Minister's statement, about what happened in the war. Perhaps those of us who fought through the war have rather better judgment of those matters than he has. After Reykjavik, the French and the Germans quickly concluded that they must work for the defence of Europe. It is our failure if we remain outside that. That goes back to 1950. We failed then to take any part in the initial stages of the first Community—the European Coal and Steel Community—and look what we lost. It took us until 1972—22 years—before we did anything.

Once again, we are standing on the sidelines with the French and Germans working for military defence in Europe, saying, "Let's wait and see if anything happens," or, "Well, it's not quite nice to have military defence in Europe." We must act on that.

Mr. John Wilkinson (Ruislip-Northwood): In view of the fact that the United Kingdom is to assume the presidency of the Western European Union from tomorrow, 1 July, does my right hon. Friend hope that the Spanish and Portuguese will be allowed to join the WEU, as they wish to do?

Mr. Heath: That is a rather old argument. I am perfectly happy for the Spanish and Portuguese to join the WEU, but it has always seemed to me that the WEU was created for one central purpose—to bring the Germans back into the European family from the point of view of defence. We have succeeded in that. I do not believe—it may be a wrong judgment—that the way to look after European defence in the future is apart from the Community and in a separate WEU. It is essential that we keep Heads of Government and Ministers concerned with the European Community, but I am perfectly prepared to accept the immediate point.

Mr. Harry Cohen (Leyton): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Heath: I was trying to be brief.

Mr. Cohen: The right hon. Gentleman talks about the European defence force that Britain should join, along with France and Germany. Will he kindly tell the House against whom he thinks those weapons and forces should be targeted? Is he saying that they should be targeted against the Soviet Union? If so, that is just another arm of the cold war.

Mr. Heath: I can assure the hon. Gentleman that the Soviet Union accepts that we have forces, in the same way that it has forces. It does not take exception to that. It is trying to reduce the scale of its forces and our forces for the mutual benefit of both of us. That is perfectly justifiable.

I wish to turn to one or two other aspects of the Community before I finish. We shall not be able to stop at 1992. We must move on to a monetary union. Two things are vital. The first is that Britain should become a full member of the European monetary system. The Treasury wants it, the Bank of England wants it, the Confederation of British Industry wants it, the chambers of commerce want it and the business world wants it because it will stabilise our currency. The Prime Minister does not want it.

My view is quite clear. The Prime Minister should accept that we should become a full member of the European monetary system. It is said that that will take away some little grasp of power that we still have. That is irrelevant. Look at black Monday and what followed from it. How can any country stop these things happening by confining itself to its own small system? Of course it is not possible to do that. The stock exchange followed Wall street and then the Hong Kong market had to be closed. Tokyo and Singapore were affected. With its communications, the modern world is different from the one which preceded it.

I believe that we should go into the EMS for stabilisation. If we had gone into it in 1979, we would never have had sterling rising to $2·20, as it did in 1980. We lost 20 per cent. of our industry because of the value of sterling. If we had been a member of the EMS, sterling would not have declined to $1·05, as it did in 1985-86. We are all aware of the calamities that that brought about. We want stabilisation.

There are those who say this is impossible. The Chancellor of the Exchequer was trying informally to stabilise on the deutschmark without formalising membership of the EMS. He was succeeding up to a point. The Prime Minister then said, "You cannot buck the market." The Chancellor of the Exchequer said, "I am stabilising." What does the market do? It is in complete confusion. It asks itself, "What are we supposed to do? Are we supposed to stabilise or are we expected to speculate and move up as far as we can?" With membership of the EMS we would gain stability, which would be of benefit to our industry and exports.

Monetary union was agreed in 1973, and it has been worked out ever since then. Much has been done to formulate how we shall achieve monetary union and a common currency. It is perfectly possible to achieve these things, but before that we can have a European central bank. I was astonished by the response of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister when the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen) asked her a question about a European independent central bank. My right hon. Friend said that that

"would only come about with the dissolution of this House".—[*Official Report*, 23 June 1988; Vol. 135, c. 1255.]

We can have a European bank only if Parliament is abolished. That is an intellectual fallacy of such enormity that I find it impossible to see how it can be removed, except by a complete process of re-education. All the structures of the European Community are based on having institutions that serve all the member countries but do not involve the abolition of parliaments. To say that to have a central bank in Europe must mean the abolition of the House is fantasy of a scale hitherto unknown in public. I hope that my right hon. Friend will feel able to change her view. Let us develop a central bank. It will be to our benefit to do so. Let us proceed to monetary union. Before that, let us join the EMS.

My final remarks relate to Europe and the international order generally. Many of us were greatly concerned when the Government withdrew from UNESCO. At least, we said to ourselves, "They are not satisfied with its conduct." I have always believed, however, that if someone is not satisfied with an organisation or institution, he or she should stay within it and try to put it right. Instead, the Government withdrew. The present Secretary-General of UNESCO is trying to put things right. What is the Government's attitude towards that? We shall be in a much stronger position if we help him to put the organisation right. I hope that the Government will forgo their distaste for cultural and intellectual pursuits, return to UNESCO and try to persuade the Americans to return as well.

The implications, which I have outlined, of the Soviet changes are considerable and I hope that we can pursue them. Europe can have an immense influence in handling the changes. To do that, we must play a full part as a member of the Community. We cannot expect the others to take any notice of what we say if we are not a full member of the EMS. They will say, "You are trying to get all the benefits and squeeze as much as you can out of us without taking any of the responsibilities." That is no way to influence others in the international order. There is enormous scope for us in Europe if we act as a full member of the Community. I hope that we can take advantage of it to follow up the implications of the changes that are now taking place in the Soviet Union.

6.35 pm

Mr. Denis Healey (Leeds, East): First, I congratulate the Foreign Secretary on surviving two gruelling periods of intimate contact with the Prime Minister in foreign parts. He has weathered the right hon. Lady's disapproval and he is actually fighting back. We wish him well in the fight, but I assure him that we shall do so discreetly. I am not sure that vociferous support would do him any more good than the support of the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) will do for Lord Cockfield. We shall see.

I shall confine my remarks to what I think is the central issue that is now facing us and the world, which is how we in the West react to the enormous changes that are taking place in the Soviet Union. I have had the advantage of 12 hours' personal discussion with Mr. Gorbachev over the past few years, and I believe that that is exactly the same number of hours that the Prime Minister has spent with him. I hope that I may have learnt a little more than the right hon. Lady because I allowed him to get in a word occasionally.

When the new phenomenon arrived in Moscow, the Establishment throughout the Western world was inclined to brush off what he was saying and doing. It was said, initially, that it was a cosmetic propaganda exercise that was intended to put the West off its guard. It was admitted rather grudgingly about a year ago that he might be sincere in what he says he wants, but as he is not prepared to change the system there is not much chance of him succeeding.

It is clear this week that Mr. Gorbachev intends to change the political system in the Soviet Union, as well as the economic system, and commit himself even to a broad-ranging rewriting of the Soviet constitution. As the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup rightly said, that does not mean that all the changes that Mr. Gorbachev wants are ones of which we would approve. He will not necessarily follow our model. There is no doubt, however, that he has embarked on an enterprise which, if he succeeds, will be even more far-reaching than the effect of the reformation on the Christian Church, because there will be no old Church left if Mr. Gorbachev's reformation succeeds.

It requires enormous confidence to feel that he will succeed in making some of the changes that he proposes. He faces the opposition of a corrupt and incompetent bureaucracy in both the state and the party machines. He

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faces also a large degree of cynicism among the Soviet people, which under glasnost is now reflected in opinion polls that are being published in Soviet newspapers. However, he is clearly determined to succeed. No Soviet leader since Lenin has consolidated his power in the main organs of the Soviet system as rapidly as Gorbachev has over the past three years.

The most exciting feature of the events of this week, as my right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) has said, is that Gorbachev seems determined to mobilise support among the public through new elected institutions that will be a second source of influence along with the party and the state machines. As my right hon. Friend said, there is an extraordinary contrast between the centralisation of power in Britain, with our Prime Minister's determination to destroy every institution that is capable of standing up to her diktat, and the course that is being adopted by Mr. Gorbachev.

Members of the Prime Minister's Private Office have far more influence on Government policy than any members of her Cabinet. Parliament is rejected and takes a secondary place. Local government is being abolished. Even the Foreign Office sits quivering in the Box, knowing that it is regarded as a hostile element. The Treasury is almost beyond the pale. If the right hon. Lady continues for much longer, I do not think that there will be any of our institutions left except MI5 and the SAS.

Sir John Stokes (Halesowen and Stourbridge): I admire the right hon. Gentleman very much. Like him and my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath), I fought in the last war. However, the right hon. Gentleman must be slightly mistaken about my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister. If she is as bad as he says, why are the Conservatives leading by 12 points in the opinion polls?

Mr. Healey: There are many answers to that, which I shall not explore.

The right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup made a very important point. We cannot guess whether Gorbachev will succeed in his domestic objectives. However, there is much more reason to be confident that he will succeed in his external objectives. Foreign policy in the Soviet Union, as in most countries, is made by a handful of people. In the Soviet Union that takes place in the Foreign Office and in the international secretariat of the Central Committee. All those people have been changed since Gorbachev came in. The old guard has been replaced with men of extreme intelligence and wide experience. The old guard has no political clout, unlike the people being removed from some of the big state enterprises and the domestic departments.

Moreover, even if Gorbachev were to disappear from the scene, I believe that the objective factors which have produced the change in Soviet policy will maintain the change. Above all, the Soviet Government—and the American Government—have recognised that nuclear winter and Chernobyl have rammed home the fact that there cannot and must not be a nuclear war and that there must also never be a large-scale conventional war, at any rate between the super-powers. Gorbachev has made that point many times.

The other great fact that will continue to determine Soviet foreign policy is that unless the Soviet Government can take resources out of defence spending and put them into investment and raising living standards, by the end of the century the Soviet Union will be Upper Volta with rockets. Soviet spokesmen have not used that particular phrase, but they have used similar ones and the concept is the literal truth. Gorbachev has been ramming that point home in speech after speech, not least in the speech that he made in Moscow a couple of days ago.

It is not sufficiently recognised that some of the compulsions are exerting themselves on the other great super-power. The United States is beginning to recognise that it does not have the economic capacity to dominate the world and that it will have to find some means of reducing its expenditure on defence. Whether Mr. Bush or Mr. Dukakis becomes the next American President, it is certain that the President will continue to cut defence spending as the United States Administration and Congress have been doing over the past two or three years.

Our great hope for the future is that the two super-powers are sufficiently conscious of the slow but inevitable decline in their relative influence on world affairs that they realise they have an enormous common interest in trying to create a framework of stability in which the world can live with the nuclear weapon and the new technologies, even when the duopoly, as we have come to regard it between the Soviet Union and the United States, is disappearing.

I would have thought, and I believe that the Foreign Secretary thinks, that Britain has an enormous interest in encouraging those new developments in the Soviet Union, in the United States and between the two. However, I am bound to say that some of the British Government's actions cast doubt on whether that is recognised everywhere. For example, this week, *Jane's Defence Weekly* gives a detailed report of the British Government's readiness to accept up to 60 F111 bombers armed with two to four cruise missiles capable, according to the American general's comments in *Jane's Defence Weekly*, of striking targets deep in the Soviet Union from their new bases in the United Kingdom.

I put it to the Minister of State that that is circumvention of the INF treaty. To replace land-based cruise missiles with air-based cruise missiles on aircraft based in the United Kingdom flies directly in the face of everything agreed between the United States and the Soviet Union over intermediate nuclear forces, which was endorsed by the British Government in NATO when NATO considered it. I hope that the Minister will comment on that. As I have said, there is a lengthy report on the matter in the current issue of *Jane's Defence Weekly*.

Mr. Keith Mans (Wyre): Will the right hon. Gentleman agree that the INF agreement related to ground-launched missiles, not air-launched missiles? Is it not also true that the Russians already possess air-launched weapons?

Mr. Healey: Of course the treaty refers only to ground-launched cruise and Pershing missiles. However, the question of circumvention was much discussed in the negotiations. The two sides agreed not to circumvent. No one can deny that to replace land-based cruise missiles with air-based missiles which, because they are carried on aircraft, naturally have a longer range and can reach further into the Soviet Union than land-based missiles, is circumvention of the most dangerous kind. I am sure that the Foreign Secretary will agree with that. I only hope that he keeps tabs on what the Prime Minister and the Defence Secretary are doing at the same time.

I was disappointed that more progress was not made on the strategic arms talks in Moscow. There is no doubt that greater progress was not made primarily because the American negotiators had not cleared their own position. There is still great disagreement inside Washington as to whether the new agreement should cover mobile missiles. The Americans have already announced that they are beginning a programme to deploy their own mobile missiles. There is also great disagreement on how to deal with cruise missiles.

I noticed that Mr. Nitze, the supervising guru of the American team, who has immense experience dating back to the middle of the last world war, is reported by the *Herald Tribune* as saying that he would like the United States to go for the abolition of all naval nuclear weapons except submarine-based missiles. That would remove sea-based cruise missiles entirely. I fear that unless the Americans move in that direction, they will make as dangerous a mistake as they now admit making when they did not go for a ban on multiple independently targeted re-entry vehicles in the SALT I treaty. Any advantage that the Americans may have momentarily in cruise missiles will certainly be removed in a year or two as it was in the case of MIRVS. The Russians could carry more MIRVS in a single missile because their missiles were more powerful.

In the same way, sea-based cruise missiles are much more a threat to the United States than to the Soviet Union because half the population of the United States lives on the coasts of the Pacific or Atlantic oceans. I hope that the British Government are trying to play a role in this area. I hope that they are not being inhibited by the extraordinary view of the Prime Minister referred to by my right hon. Friend the Member for Gorton, that it would be a great mistake to press on with strategic arms limitations until we have a ban on chemical weapons and an agreement on conventional forces in Europe.

I now want to consider Europe and conventional weapons. The irony of the INF talks and START is that neither side will derive very much economic benefit by eliminating intermediate nuclear forces or by removing half the strategic forces. It may cost more to get rid of the weapons than it costs to maintain them. The only way to save money is by stopping modernisation and cutting the size of forces. Modernisation can only be stopped if we go —as the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup did when he was in power—for a comprehensive test ban treaty. There is no technical reason why that should not be achieved. There would have to be a ban also on the testing of new delivery vehicles. With the new technology that is available, verification would be easy. Every single test launch carried out either by the United States or by the Soviet Union is monitored by the other.

The key, and the most important issue for us in Britain, is conventional arms cuts in Europe. I was deeply disappointed that the Soviet proposal at the recent talks, which has been repeated several times since by General Chervov for example, was dismissed without comment by the United States. The Soviet proposals seemed highly sensible. They suggested that the Warsaw pact and NATO should exchange information about the number of troops and weapons they have and where they are deployed, and that those figures should be verified. They proposed that either side then found to enjoy superiority in one particular area—as the Russians admit that they have in tanks—should get rid of it. The West would have to give up its superiority in attack aircraft. One would then get down to cutting the equal forces on both sides and moving towards what I regard as being the most important single element in the Soviet proposal, which is restructuring the forces and changing the strategy towards a defence rather than an attack priority. I understand that Mr. Carlucci and General Yasov, the new Soviet Defence Minister, started discussions on that aspect when they met in Geneva recently.

In the course of all that, one must of course get rid of dual capability weapons. If the West insists on retaining a lot of artillery and aircraft, which are useful for conventional war, on the ground that they can also carry nuclear weapons, one will get into a ridiculous tangle. The sensible move—as the German Government are arguing —is to get rid of those weapons entirely, so that they carry neither conventional nor nuclear armaments. I am very sorry that the British Government seem to be supporting the American Government in opposing that particular element in a deal.

Mr. David Howell: Does the right hon. Gentleman have any evidence from his considerable knowledge of Russian strategy of any sign of a Soviet move towards defensive rather than offensive deployment of their superior Warsaw pact forces? Is there any sign either that they are modifying their future procurement, to support a defensive rather than an offensive deployment of forces in eastern Europe?

Mr. Healey: There is very little sign of that at the moment, and what there is is ambiguous. General Aktomeyer is the extremely capable new Soviet chief of staff, whose hobby is modern American novels, right up to Tom Pynchon, who is far beyond any novelist whose work you may have read. I do not mean you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but the right hon. Gentleman who just intervened. General Aktomeyer has said that they are beginning to restructure their forces and procurement. I myself know, as a former Defence Secretary, that it takes a hell of a long time to get that done, and working out the detail is very difficult. One must work it out to some extent in conjunction with the other side. That is what the Russians have offered and began discussing bilaterally with the Americans when Yasov and Carlucci met.

The West is set on a course of unilateral conventional disarmament in western Europe. The British Government have already committed themselves to cutting our forces as a whole by 5 per cent. over the next three years unilaterally, without getting anything in return from the Russians, and without consulting any of our allies. Germany will find that there will be a big cut in her conventional forces in the coming years, because somehow the sex drive of young Germans collapsed 20 years ago and the number of young men in the Federal Republic of Germany who are of military age is now set on course to dwindle over the next 10 years or so. That may have been due to the sudden appearance in Germany of rather ugly women, but whatever the reason, the birth rate fell and the number of young Germans of military age fell with it.

I recently spent a month in the United States and no one I met believed that the next American Administration

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—be it Republican or Democrat—will fail to cut military spending. It may well cut its forces in western Europe, whether or not we like it. We have an urgent interest in getting on with the process of making the unilateral cuts, to which the Prime Minister, the American President and Chancellor Kohl are all committed, bilateral. In view of some arguments which appear to be taking place far away from my own personal knowledge these days, I would have thought that some Members of the Conservative party agree that it is better to have bilateral disarmament rather than unilateral disarmament, to which the Government are currently committed, at least so far as Britain's forces are concerned.

I conclude on a point to which we must give far more attention than we have in the past. One of the threats to reforming the Soviet Union, and to the Soviet system, is the growing unwillingness of the peoples of eastern Europe and of many of the republics of the Soviet Union—[illegible] Baltic states, Georgia and central Asia—to remain subject to the kind of centralised Communist control through Moscow that most of those countries have suffered since 1945. I believe that we shall see explosions, which worries the Russians very much. Recently there was one in Armenia, and there is always the possibility of another in Poland. At present, there is the extraordinary phenomenon that the most likely war in Europe will be between Hungary and Romania over Transylvania—which tension would, in any other circumstances, have certainly have produced a war.

It is important that the West makes it clear that we want political change in those countries, although we do not seek to dictate its nature, and that we have no intention of trying to take any military advantage of such changes that do take place.

Recently, I have been re-examining, as no doubt the right hon. Gentleman has, the events of 1956. Our ambassador in Moscow at that time, Sir William Hayter, was convinced that the Russians wanted to do a deal with the people who had taken power in Budapest and with Mr. Nagy. They withdrew their troops, but the removal of those Soviet troops occurred on 30 October 1956, which was the same day on which the British and French Prime Ministers issued their ultimatum to Colonel Nasser. It remains an open question, and one that certainly torments Sir William, who wrote about the matter in his book, whether the Russians would have sent back their troops if they had not been given cover by the Suez adventure. It is possible that they would have done so in any case, the moment that Mr. Nagy said he wanted to take Budapest out of the Warsaw pact.

We ought to start moving towards a Western position in which we make it clear that we shall not take military advantage of desirable political changes inside the Soviet bloc. If we follow the line that the Russians propose, of having defensive-oriented strategies, it will be very difficult for us to do so.

Dr. Alan Glyn (Windsor and Maidenhead): I was in Budapest at the time, and while the treaty was being signed between the Russians and the Hungarians, Russian troops were advancing—we saw them.

Mr. Healey: With respect, that was on 31 October and at the beginning of November. I remember asking Sir Anthony Eden, as he then was, whether he had exchanged congratulations with Marshall Rokossovsky because Budapest fell exactly the same day as Suez. That was a shame on the British people, the scars of which I hope are still worn not too lightly on the Conservative Benches.

What we are seeing in the Soviet Union, if it succeeds, and it is too early to be sure, may prove to be not just a watershed in the cold war, or, as has been said, the beginning of another cycle—we saw one under Malenkov and Krushchev—but a turning point in world history. We must face the fact that nuclear weapons and modern technologies are making war far too risky an enterprise for developed countries, and it is far too risky for the developed countries to allow the undeveloped countries to kill one another's peoples at will, as they are doing at the moment.

If Mr. Gorbachev succeeds, we shall be embarking on a new phase in the history of the human race. We are trying to develop a new international framework for stability between peoples which will have to involve not just the super-powers and their allies but all the other nuclear powers—Israel, India, China—all the other potential nuclear powers, and, ultimately, all countries in the world.

That is an enterprise that may take centuries to complete, but to my mind it is the most worthwhile enterprise that humanity has ever faced and I only hope that the British Government play a constructive role in it.

7.1 pm

Mr. Michael Marshall (Arundel): As has been said, it is rare for us to have an opportunity to debate foreign affairs. I hope that the House will understand if today I seek to say a word or two about the role of the British group of the Inter-Parliamentary Union.

I am delighted to follow the right hon. Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey), because I should like to take up one or two themes on which he touched and, indeed, to refer to some of the parts that he has played in our affairs.

It goes without saying that I do not need to rehearse the value of parliamentary diplomacy. I recognise on both sides of the House many who have played an active part in that work and will continue to do so. Therefore, in the spirit of today's debate, I want to concentrate on some practical examples of our work which highlight and illustrate the general thrust of the debate so far.

Let me deal, first, with our relationship with the Soviet Union and other Communist countries. The right hon. Gentleman was right to emphasise that we cannot reflect on the major changes in the Soviet Union without considering their impact on the satellite countries.

It is fair to argue that it was after the visit in 1984 of Mr. Gorbachev—then leader of the Russian parliamentary delegation, before he became Head of State—that we began to see the glasnost-perestroika summitry dialogue beginning its logical progression.

It is also fair to suggest that the return visit to Russia, through the Inter-Parliamentary Union, of the delegation led by Lord Whitelaw and the right hon. Member for Leeds, East was an opportunity to carry forward an understanding with the Soviet Union and, in particular, with Mr. Gorbachev, which has been of great significance.

I know that the right hon. Gentleman has said in a light-hearted moment that he saw himself as a gentleman's gentleman to Lord Whitelaw, but the fact of the matter is that it was a significant delegation. The substantive talks covered matters of great importance. We have in our IPU room something in which we take pride—a letter from my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister reflecting on the value of that Gorbachev link. The right hon. Member for Leeds, East has taken other opportunities, fairly, to say that he sees that IPU activity in relation to the Soviet Union as being of wider significance.

The process continues. We shall be sending a delegation to the Soviet Union in due course and we look forward to the delegation that is due to arrive here in November this year. Much interest will turn on the leadership of that delegation. I do not want to say too much about that today, but it is clear that, after the Gorbachev interest, consideration has been given to bringing over others with a new-found interest in Britain.

On a more practical day-to-day basis, one of the key discussions at the IPU biannual conference concerns drug trafficking and terrorism—areas where parliamentarians can seek opportunities to find common ground. It will not have escaped the notice of the House that conversations in Britain, in which Members of both Houses of Parliament were involved, with the Russian ambassador have, within the last few weeks, been reflected in some successes in tackling drug trafficking in which the Soviet Union's co-operation played an important part.

Let me deal now with some of the satellite countries of eastern Europe. This afternoon the Bulgarian Deputy Foreign Minister was in the IPU room leading a parliamentary delegation. Bulgaria is one of over 40 countries represented every year which come to see the IPU. The conversation today pointed ahead to our visit to Bulgaria in the autumn for the next IPU conference and the opportunity to consider the Bulgarian-British relationship. It was clear from our discussions today and from those of my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Colchester, North (Sir A. Buck), who was recently in Sofia with a Labour Member for disarmament talks, that the Bulgarians are looking to reappraise their relationship with Britain. That is an obvious example of the interest and differing approaches of a number of east European countries in the light of events in the Soviet Union.

Sir Antony Buck (Colchester, North): As my hon. Friend has been kind enough to mention Bulgaria, may I say that I agree with every word that he has said so far? I suspect that I shall go on to agree with everything he has to say. I and a Labour Member made a particularly valuable visit to Bulgaria. It is far better to have jaw-jaw than war-war. It is important to form contacts and friendships across political barriers, and that is largely made possible by the work of organisations such as the IPU, which my hon. Friend distinguishes.

Mr. Marshall: I am grateful to my hon. and learned Friend for that intervention. I pay tribute to the work that he has done, together with the hon. Member for Walsall, South (Mr. George), who also played a notable part.

By contrast with Bulgaria, recent contact with Romania emphasises the difficulties that must still be overcome. It is undoubtedly accepted by Foreign Office Ministers and hon. Members on both sides that there is a cool relationship with Romania, partly stemming from cases of personal tragedy affecting those who seek to inter-marry. There are several other issues. I shall not labour the point, but simply go on to say that next year we shall be engaged in the biennial process of meeting to discuss security and disarmament within Europe. That gathering will be in Romania, and I hope that we shall take the opportunity to explore what makes so sharp a difference between the relationships that we enjoy with that country and some others in eastern Europe.

By contrast, I come to Hungary, where we shall be going next year for the spring conference of the IPU. It is interesting that the Hungarians have told us consistently over several conferences that they have been in the business of glasnost and perestroika for years. They would argue—I think with some force—that they maintained a dialogue with the West at a time when the relationship between the United States and the Soviet Union was going through one of its most difficult periods.

We look forward to finding opportunities to co-operate with our Hungarian friends in sharing what will essentially be a year-long celebration of the centenary of the Inter-Parliamentary Union next year. They will have their conference in the spring. We, as co-founders with France, will have the main conference in the autumn. But in finding ways in which we can share the load—indeed, the opportunity—I believe that we can help to strengthen that relationship, too.

Mr. Donald Anderson (Swansea, East): Before the hon. Gentleman leaves this general theme of parliamentary diplomacy, will he recall that the IPU, like some beers, can reach places that the Government cannot; that the IPU has played a very significant part in, for example, the re-establishment of diplomatic relations with Guatemala; and that it is able to meet our Argentine parliamentary colleagues in a way that is denied to the Government?

Mr. Marshall: The hon. Gentleman, and perhaps the House, will be delighted to learn that he has just removed paragraphs five and six from my speech. I entirely accept what he says.

Turning briefly to the non-aligned countries, our relationships there are well illustrated by our recent talks with the Tunisians. When they came to this country, their delegation was led by a former Prime Minister. Recent studies show that about 30 parliamentarians active in the IPU internationally are Speakers or former Heads of State. That is a very clear indication of how seriously other countries are taking the IPU. That is why I feel entitled today to remind the House of some of the progress that is being made within our own Parliament.

The visit of the Tunisian delegation led to a first démarche in which we combined to press for acceleration of the process towards a middle east peace conference. That matter is receiving study by a committee set up within the IPU internationally. We must pick up that theme again when we go to Sofia in the autumn.

The hon. Member for Swansea, East (Mr. Anderson) is a good example of an hon. Member who, despite his many responsibilities on the Opposition Front Bench, is helping us in our work, as he showed in his comments about the Argentines. It is true that at many conferences in recent years we have been able to maintain the process of continuity of understanding and looking at practical issues with Argentine parliamentarians—a process which at present is effectively denied to Her Majesty's Government; and, as the hon. Gentleman also implied, when we met in Guatemala last spring, it was after 23 years in which there were no diplomatic relations between Guatemala and the

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United Kingdom. During that time the only effective link had been through parliamentarian contacts within the IPU. Foreign Office Ministers have been good enough to make the point that this process was undoubtedly instrumental in bringing back diplomatic relations between our two countries.

The last category of countries to which I wish to refer can be broadly described as our allies within the IPU. Working within the European Community and with other countries, such as the United States, Canada and Australia, there are certain like-minded Parliaments which over the years, have come together in what, perhaps thanks to a British invention, is known as the 12-plus. I say a British invention because, in a splendidly illogical way the 12-plus involves relationships with some 23 countries. It has, like many other institutions, grown over the years.

Within that grouping we can look back, for example, to the recent talks with a Spanish delegation, at which we immediately focused on the key and difficult issue of Gibraltar. Again, we found that we were able to clear a lot of the basic misunderstandings. I must commend the way in which, on this as on many other occasions, it has been possible for parliamentarians on both sides of both our Houses, without in any way checking freedom of expression, to achieve a line that has a certain unanimity in discussing problems with other countries.

We shall have a delegation from Italy coming here in two weeks' time. I am reminded that when I went to my first IPU conference in Rome it was to speak against a motion condemning Britain for what was described as the invasion of the Malvinas on 5 May 1982—a fairly short, sharp, crash course on international relations within the IPU. That reminds me now that Italy, too, has a key role to play in relationships with Latin America, particularly Argentina, for reasons which are well known to the House.

I come finally to our bilateral discussions with Ireland. With Ireland the relationship is one that I would regard as family in one sense, but of the greatest significance in the wider international context. We have, not only in our conferences but in other informal and to some extent formal talks in recent years, kept up a high rate of exchange visits. We have long recognised that these contacts are, perhaps by their very nature, not enough to tackle some of the deep-seated problems, particularly the problems of perception and understanding and, above all, the need to widen the scope by bringing parties of all persuasions in our two countries into the dialogue.

It would be premature to say much more about the process, but I want to take the opportunity—and I hope that they will not be embarrassed—to pay a particular tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Leominster (Mr. Temple-Morris), who led the delegation to Dublin with such distinction, the hon. Member for Middlesbrough (Mr. Bell), to whom I had a chance to talk earlier today and who I know is particularly involved and concerned, and to my hon. Friend the Member for Berkshire, East (Mr. MacKay). They are now working actively together as a working party which liaises with three Irish parliamentarians in an attempt to find a more permanent structure upon which the dialogue can be sustained. I very much welcome that development and, with regard to the practical problems, questions of finance, and so on, I want to assure them that we shall do all that we can to help to sustain the process until, in due time, it has a life of its own.

As I have emphasised, in all the work of the IPU we rely on Members of both Houses and of all parties. We also rely on Mr. Speaker and the Lord Chancellor, our honorary Presidents, and on you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We are all involved in a process by which we seek not only to put our point of view, but to encourage parliamentarians throughout the world to reflect on the way in which our system works. We believe that we still have things within our system which, although they may not be ideally suited to every system, others admire.

As we move towards our centenary next year we shall continue to draw, as we have in the past, on the kind of willingness and dedication that many Members of this House and of the other place are prepared to put into something which they see as worth while. We are all used to the kind of loose criticism that it is easy to throw at this place and the partial view of life that is reflected in the noise at Question Time, and during Prime Minister's Question Time twice a week. In the solid, continuing endeavours of institutions such as the British group of the Inter-Parliamentary Union I believe there is a genuine example of parliamentarians at work trying to find common cause and, above all, doing what the IPU was established to do a century ago—seeking to resolve international conflict.

7.17 pm

Mr. Ernie Ross (Dundee, West): I will not attempt to cover any area other than the middle east, in particular the Arab-Israeli problem, in my contribution to tonight's debate. I shall certainly try to keep within Mr. Speaker's requested limit of 10 minutes for Back Benchers so that other hon. Members may have a chance to speak.

We are rather fortunate today in that we are speaking about an area of the middle east where for the first time, certainly in the nine years that I have been a Member of the House, there is agreement on both sides of the House on how we should proceed. I suggest to the Government that the last remaining stumbling block over which neither they nor the United States can jump but which clearly has to be surmounted is the question of the international peace conference and the settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict.

On 14 June, Faisel Awiedah, the representative of the Palestine Liberation Organisation in Britain, spoke to the Back-Bench foreign affairs committee of the parliamentary Labour party. On 29 June, Abba Eban, the chairman of the Israeli Foreign Affairs Committee, likewise addressed that committee. What was remarkable was the clear unanimity of those two personalities in their determination to try not to look back, but to see how they could point the way forward. There was unanimity of purpose, although they were talking on different nights in the same place. There was a determination not to cast yet more stones but to look for ways of resolving the problem.

What made those statements remarkable was that some people said that it was the first time that they had heard certain things said by either speaker. It is also remarkable that, although those same representations and organisations have been making those same comments, neither we in the House nor others in Europe and the United States have been listening—or, more important, have insisted that they make those statements in the same room, at the same conference table and at the same time.

I do not wish to refer to last night's comments as though last night was somehow an aberration. Let me simply quote one or two comments to show that this is nothing new for either of those two organisations. In an article published in the *Jerusalem Post,* Abba Eban said:

> "There exist none of the minimal affinities that would make it in any degree normal for 1·5 million Palestinians to live under Israeli rule. A principle that was fervently applauded when it is applied to 600,000 Jews cannot become obsolete when it is applied to 1,500,000 Palestinian Arabs, unless we take refuge with Kahane and Gush and Emunim in a doctrine of racist superiority."

In an article published in the *Jewish Frontier* in November-December 1987, he said:

> "The Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza cannot vote or be elected to anything, have no juridical control over the government that rules their lives, have no appeal against the judgments of military courts, are not free to leave their land with assurance of the right to return, are not immune, as are their Jewish neighbours, from such penalties as expulsion or the blowing up of homes or administrative detention, have no flag to revere, and do not possess the same economic and social conditions as their immediate Jewish neighbors."

In his book "If Only My People", the Chief Rabbi has written:

> "Neither religious discipline nor national sovereignty can be permanently imposed by force on hostile majorities. Such force must in time disaffect the ruled and brutalise the rulers."

He argues for a return to Jewish morals and standards, saying:

> "Such a return to Jewish values would give Israel democratic strength . . . external respectability as a model society; and an eventual accommodation with the Arabs through moral sensitivity for Palestinian sufferings and aspirations compatible with Israel security."

There have been comments from the PLO apart from what Faisal Awiedah said on 14 June. A recent statement by Bassam Abu Sherif, adviser to PLO chairman Yasser Arafat, has raised expectations that something has been said by the PLO that had not been said before:

> "The means by which the Israelis want to achieve lasting peace and security is direct talks, with no attempt by any outside party to impose or veto a settlement. The Palestinians agree. We see no way for any dispute to be settled without direct talks between the parties to that dispute".

The Palestinians feel that it is unacceptable to one or both of the belligerents that a settlement be imposed by an outside power. Such a settlement would not stand the test of time. The key to a Palestinian-Israeli settlement, they say, lies in talks between Palestinians and Israelis.

The PLO, however, accepts UN resolutions 242 and 338. What prevents the PLO from accepting the resolutions unconditionally is not what is in them, but what is not in them:

> "neither resolution says anything about the national rights of the Palestinian people, including their democratic right to self-expression and their national right to self-determination. For that reason and that reason alone, we have repeatedly said that we accept Resolutions 242 and 338 in the context of the other UN resolutions which do recognise the national rights of the Palestinian people."

There has been considerable press speculation about the statement. Is it a statement of fact? Can it backed up? Will it be changed? The way in which to determine the accuracy or otherwise of such a statement is, I suggest, through only one appropriate channel. It can be achieved if Mr. Shultz adds Tunis to his itinerary and, when he is there, asks Yasser Arafat to confirm or deny that such statements reflect PLO policy.

What is certain is that, no matter what is said by the media, the Government or the United States, the Palestinians will act not through more articles in the press but through direct dialogue. The Opposition have recommended that to the American and British Governments. If we are to overcome the years of mistrust that have grown up between the Palestinians and the Israelis, we must find some way of bringing the two together, and everyone is now agreed that that should be done through an international conference.

That is not something new. Since the second world war there have been 40 such conferences—for example, the tripartite conference after the war, the conference on Trieste, the conference that led to the Austrian state treaty, the Geneva conference that promoted peace in North Africa, the Paris conference that brought peace in Vietnam and, more recently, the conference on peace and security in Helsinki, which sought to establish a new international order.

It will be necessary for the super-powers to be involved in such a conference. We must involve states from outside the region. First, all the potential parties to an agreement rely to some extent on financial or military support from outside the immediate region. Secondly, either of the super-powers could, if it wished, use its influence to frustrate agreement by bolstering its 'clients' in an intransigent stance. Thirdly, the super-powers and other members of the United Nations could provide security guarantees as part of a peace settlement as well as economic inducements.

More important, as one of the key protagonists—the Palestinian people—does not enjoy the attributes of state power, the organisations that represent it being scattered throughout the world, it cannot rely on the disinterested support of the Arab states neighbouring Israel. The involvement of the super-powers would give them some confidence that such a settlement could provide lasting peace in the area. Speaking to the parliamentary Labour party last night, Abba Eban suggested the Benelux experience as an example of how the peoples could live together. That, however, could come only after an international conference.

I ask the Minister to take that last vital step and to talk to the Palestinian people. If I must give one final reason, it is the current events in the West Bank and Gaza. Since December 1987, more than 220 Palestinians, whose ages range from four or five to 70, have been harassed, detained, beaten and shot dead by the Israeli defence forces. As Abba Eban freely admitted last night, no time in history provides an example of a people who—once their consciousness has been awakened as it has been in Gaza and the West Bank—have been able to be beaten into submission, or have given up their aspirations and determination to achieve the rights for which they have struggled.

On behalf of those people in Gaza and the West Bank, and those in Israel, I ask the Government to encourage Europe and the United States to take that one last step. As early as March this year, during Foreign Affairs Questions, I told the Secretary of State that it was no good for Mr. Shultz to go to the West Bank, Gaza, Israel, Jordan and Egypt unless he spoke to the Palestinians. Unless and until this Government and the interlocutor for the Israeli people speak to the Palestinians, that peace process cannot be started. I hope that when the Minister

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replies she will say that the British Government will talk to the Palestinians and will take a meaningful step towards peace in the middle east.

7.30 pm

Mr. David Howell (Guildford): The House listened with great interest to the right hon. Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey), the former Opposition spokesman on foreign affairs, and possibly with more interest than to the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman), the present Opposition spokesman on foreign affairs, who in his 50-minute polemic seemed to have difficulty in achieving any balance in his handling of foreign affairs.

I hope that the right hon. Member for Leeds, East is wrong in his analogy of perestroika with the Reformation. Although the Reformation may have underpinned the liberties and independence of this island, it unleashed on the continent of Europe a series of the most ferocious and bloody wars for years. If I have a worry about the right hon. Gentleman's analysis of Soviet affairs, it is that he may be giving too little weight to the centrifugal tendencies that could develop in the Soviet empire as it attempts to rethink its position, and to the enormous consequences, dangers and opportunities that flow from that. It was a fascinating speech, and we were glad to hear it.

It was the ubiquitous Dr. Kissinger who observed the other day that there never was a time when economics was having a more decisive and weighty influence on foreign policy than today. That is a fair point. Since the House last debated foreign affairs we have seen definite signs that the United States faces economic difficulties. It has huge deficits and the dollar is weaker and has been removed from the centre of the world trading system as the key currency, which it has been on and off for the past 40 years. That is beginning to drive and modify its entire foreign policy stance. In a sense that is inevitable. We are moving from the post-war order and it is now perfectly clear that, no matter who gets into the White House, American foreign policy will be largely driven by the economic considerations that that huge nation faces in adjusting its world policy to its economic performance and circumstances.

Meanwhile, we have seen the ever-continuing rise of Japan. Sometimes we forget that Japan's gross national product is greater than that of the Soviet Union and that in terms of income per head on the present exchange rates the Japanese are the richest in the world. Japan now finances the third biggest defence budget after America and the Soviet Union. That is a wholly new factor which cannot be ignored in assessing the new landscape of international relations.

Black Monday, to which my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) referred, is further confirmation of that. It was not merely an economic or financiers' phenomenon. It was as though a sheet of lightning on a dark night revealed in glaring light the new facts of international relations—that the Americans were no longer strong enough to support their currency and decided to let it go, and the Japanese emerged as the world's major banker, investor and lender. They are the decisive influence on the economic affairs of the entire planet. That is the second way in which the landscape has changed radically. To re-establish our nation's foreign policy priorities without understanding that would lead to difficulties.

In talking about perestroika and the reforming and restructuring of the Soviet Union, the right hon. Member for Leeds, East may have underestimated the fragmenting tendencies that that could create and the difficulties in the Soviet empire. That will not necessarily reduce tension because, as we know, a wounded bear can be a dangerous animal. There are many danger points ahead, even if the right hon. Gentleman is right to be optimistic, as I think he is, that the underlying technological and economic forces make it impossible for the Soviet Union to go back to its old highly centralised, secretive and insulated state.

I do not agree with the right hon. Gentleman in his too easy assumptions about what will happen to Soviet defence policy. There was a shade of naivety in his views about the Soviet approach to conventional armaments. If it is intent on conventional armament negotiations and on moving away from its colossal superiority in that regard, let us see some signs that the message of perestroika has reached the Soviet general staff and the military establishment. There appears to be little sign of that, not only in present deployment but in the pattern of procurement and weapons orders that are now being formulated and which will be delivered as weapons in up to four years' time. We have a long wait before we can be sure that the vigilance, on which my right hon. and learned Friend rightly insisted, can be relaxed in the slightest way.

With the relative weakening of the United States and its removal from overall unchallenged predominance in the West, with the colossal economic power of Japan which is trying to relate that to a global political policy, and with the unfolding of the Russian scene in a fragmented and explosive way, we have seen a re-drawing of the map of the post-war world. The settlement of Yalta has now begun to be transformed. We are seeing a pattern in which there emerge new regional interests which do not necessarily match any more with that simple and, to some people, comfortable world of two super-powers, the bi-polar line-up, the Western and Eastern camps and the ideological divide. That is now being replaced by a whole set of new, complicated and sometimes dangerous regional patterns which require a rather different approach to the one which has been adopted for the post-war, Yalta-determined world.

There can be no better illustration of the new complexities and cross-currents than the issue which my right hon. and learned Friend raised—the Iran-Iraq conflict in the Gulf. He was kind enough to refer to the second report of the Foreign Affairs Select Committee on that conflict which has appeared today to coincide with this debate. I am grateful to him for his remarks about it and to my right hon. and hon. Friends on the Committee for their enormous amount of work on it. It provides a fascinating illumination of the point that things are not as they were and the world is no longer automatically to be analysed simply in terms of a Washington-Moscow axis and two super-powers.

The first message that we tried to put across in the report is perhaps rather obvious, but it needs restating to some people. It is that Iran and Iraq are not, in Chamberlain's chilling words,

"faraway countries of which we know nothing",

but countries whose mutual warfare—their horrific engagement in one of the grimmest, most ghastly wars, with a killing total that exceeds almost anything in any other continuing world crisis and begins to put it in the grim league of world wars—interests, future and influence on their neighbours are of extreme, intimate and immediate interest to this island and our immediate allies.

We urge in our report that this is a matter not of any one country trying to solve the problem—it cannot—but of international collective action. We say that it is not necessarily a pattern which will be resolved by the United States and the Soviet Union establishing some deal or arrangement without the support of other countries. On the contrary, the message which came over to our Committee again and again, particularly when we travelled to Washington, was that it is essential for the European allies to mobilise support in the Gulf operation and that, without it, it would be very difficult for the United States to move on from the world policeman role which it told us at the National Security Council it did not really want to play.

We are a little censorious in the report that, if that is the United States' position, it was a pity that when it decided to enlarge the United States navy's role and to extend protection to all neutral shipping, it did not consult the British Government formally. It wants the support of western Europe for the Gulf operation and it values enormously the support of the Royal Navy. It is glad of the lead role that the Royal Navy is taking in co-ordinating other western European minesweeping operations. In stumbling or moving forward, however, the United States somehow failed to make the obvious counterpart step of careful consultation with those allies before changing the terms of engagement of its fleet.

The Select Committee report also mentions the fact that Japan has a key role in all of this. We are not used to thinking of this huge power, which has the third biggest defence budget in the world after the Soviet Union and United States, having a direct role. There are problems about Japan having a military role in the Gulf area, and I do not think that anybody outside or within Japan is suggesting that that should be the case. Nevertheless, Japan draws a great deal of its oil from the Gulf. It is a centrally interested party in stability in the Gulf and it is vital that it should play a substantial—possibly a more substantial—part.

Mr. Madden: Did the Select Committee consider the difficulty presented to the British Government and their credibility when trying to bring about a resolution of the Iran-Iraq war by the fact that we supply arms to both Iran and Iraq, directly or indirectly?

Mr. Howell: I do not know what detailed evidence the hon. Gentleman has for saying that. It is the British Government's declared policy not to supply lethal weapons to the belligerent countries, and I understand that they do not do so. If the hon. Gentleman has detailed evidence, no doubt he will have an opportunity to present it later in the debate.

Mr. Corbyn: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Howell: I should like to continue as I am conscious of taking too much time and I am anxious to share with the House the conclusions of our Select Committee on this issue.

The Committee stresses that the British initiative in the United Nations has by no means been a wasted effort. We think that it has been immensely valuable. There is a point of view which exists in my party—I have even shared in the past—that the United Nations had reduced itself to an absurd reflection of the world's alignments and ideologies —the aligned or non-aligned North and South, East and West—but was achieving nothing constructive. But now the process of the new regional grouping is being reflected in the United Nations and the opportunities are growing for it to play a more effective part than it has during the past few years.

That is well illustrated in the case of the Gulf. All five Security Council members—the Soviet Union, China, America, Britain and France—have agreed a mandatory resolution. That is a remarkable sight and it shows that something is afoot. We would be unwise to go on writing off the United Nations, as many people do both here and in America, as the old, useless and "fixed" talking shop that it was.

The report emphasises the need to ensure the right of shipping to navigate freely on sea lanes,. Shipping should be protected, and we welcome the efforts of the Americans, supported by our own Armilla patrol, to ensure that. If the war escalates, it is difficult to see how neutral shipping, let alone our own flagged shipping, is to be protected. So far, however, the Armilla patrol seems to be highly successful in the limited area it patrols.

Our report identifies the acute and massive British interests in trade, commerce and security, which rely on our keeping and developing close relations with the nations of that stormy region. The Government are apparently considering renewed relations with Iran. As my right hon. and learned Friend said, the report underwrites, underpins and confirms what I understand to be the Government's view—that in expanding again our diplomatic relations with Iran, which effectively means putting an ambassador back into Tehran, there should be no question of that process being linked with any deals on hostages.

Hostage release should rely on pressure for humanitarian, legal and justice reasons to ensure that everything be done by those who can do something to get Hezbollah, or whoever holds our hostages, to release them. The opening of diplomatic relations is a quite different issue. It should proceed cautiously, not in a hurry, and not until there have been certain guarantees that our diplomats' safety will be secure and that they will be treated properly under the Vienna convention.

We have also to consider the release of British nationals held without trial in Tehran. There is also the matter of a few bills to be paid and compensation to be settled both ways. They involve considerable sums, but they must be settled before we have a diplomatically staffed embassy in Tehran again. That is the direction in which the Select Committee points and it is the one in which we should go cautiously.

I hope that that illustration of the broader point about the changed international landscape has interested the House. Considerations are no longer totally dominated by the two super-powers. I hope that nothing I have said weakens what I understand to be the very good bedrock of this island's foreign policy—that we must have a sound economy, which gives us power and influence. I am not the first to say that. We can all remember Ernie Bevin asking for another 10 million tons of coal so that he could have a foreign policy. We have today a modern expression of

[Mr. Howell]

the same doctrine. Given the strength and dynamism of this economy, we are able to pursue a constructive foreign policy role.

Nothing detracts from the responsibility of every country to go for sound national policies and to develop independent views. That is all the more important in this less simple, less bipolar and more complex world.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup made some interesting comments about the European Community. I sometimes feel that the message he put over needs to be shouted a little louder in the House. We hear a good deal about the need to keep our independence. That is vital, but to keep it we must appreciate the interdependence of policy. We must appreciate the role that we must now play in the new organisation and the new groupings which have emerged and are beginning to replace the super-power pattern.

Our policy is making progress in the European Community, but it is not as strong as I should like it to be. We are moving towards a single market, but we have to understand the political underpinnings of that drive and not just dismiss it as a trade association with common rules, which is how I heard one Minister describe it.

We have to play a decisive part in the group of seven Finance Ministers. G7 will become G3 in due course. I do not mean Japan, Germany and America but Japan, Europe and America. Those will be the three decisive currency blocs. We must decide our relationship with the other European continental currencies soon. I am in favour of full membership of the exchange rate mechanism.

In the unfolding world of armaments negotiations, which will be very tricky for western Europe and unsettling to the western European NATO allies, we must fight for, and build with great vigour, the European pillar of cohesive defence in the NATO Alliance. That should be carried on with rather more gusto.

There is much talk in the House and elsewhere of draining influence, declining sovereignty and increasing difficulties in making our voice heard in the world. That talk is becoming old-fashioned and defeatist. The reality is completely different. Britain has not had so much influence in almost all the councils of the world and all the emerging regional groupings for the past 40 years. That influence is available for Britain to use wisely. We have to learn how to deploy that influence and how to exploit our new advantages in the new landscape.

My right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary is a good and wise guide for this new map and this new world. But we need great understanding, great caution and great wisdom in reacting to what has happened on this planet during the past few years.

7.50 pm

Mr. Alex Carlile (Montgomery): It was encouraging to hear the Foreign Secretary speaking of the frequent contact that the British Government now have with the Government of the Soviet Union and of the many meetings that he has held with the Soviet Foreign Minister. We are all clutching optimistically at glasnost in the hope that it will turn out to be a pillar and not merely a straw. I hope that after glasnost in the Soviet Union we shall see the same process developing outwards into the world at large.

I have a particular interest in the Soviet satellite countries. In the past two or three years, through the good offices of the Great Britain-East Europe centre, I have had the privilege of leading two small delegations of British lawyers at meetings with Hungarian lawyers—one in Budapest, and one in the United Kingdom. At those meetings, and at others, I found that we had many common interests. The Hungarians are a very remarkable people. They realised that glasnost existed long before the word was invented. Through their determination, they were able to achieve some significant economic changes, which have given them a much closer relationship with the West. They find it rather offensive to be described as a country of the East and prefer to be regarded as part of central Europe.

I regard nearby Poland with some despair. Unfortunately, the same processes have a long way to go there. Whatever version, if any, of glasnost has reached Poland has been deep frozen and heavily insulated. It has yet to be taken out of the freezer cabinet. I hope that when the Prime Minister goes to Poland in a few months' time she will take with her a copy of Mr. Gorbachev's speech this week, and ensure that it is read by General Jaruzelski. The process that Mr. Gorbachev has begun in the Soviet Union has not seeped through in spirit to Poland.

There are, unfortunately, still political prisoners in Poland who have been arrested without being charged and, because they have not been charged, they are not put on trial. I have evidence of what has happened to one family. After the mother was arrested for her political beliefs, her children were then harassed. Her eight-year-old daughter was subjected to interrogations after being taken from her school, and she eventually suffered a nervous breakdown.

I have corresponded with the Prime Minister about these issues. She sent me a helpful reply, and I hope and trust that when she goes to Poland, she will make it clear to the Polish Government that, although it is not our role to intervene in the internal affairs of other countries, the development of economic co-operation with other countries depends very much on our perception of how they operate outwith and also within their own institutions.

That is essential both for the process that Mr. Gorbachev has started and for the more direct relationship between the United Kingdom and countries such as Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Bulgaria. We hope that they will become countries that apply the same civilised standards to freedom of thought and speech that we at least aspire to. It is far easier to co-operate economically with a country that has a reasonable degree of plurality than with a country that is authoritarian. Such countries give greater confidence to those who sell their goods there. I share the hope that was expressed earlier that there will be a much freer exchange of technology with the countries of eastern Europe and that we shall be able to set up a genuine market in goods, which has been difficult to establish in the past.

There are, of course, exceptions. One example is the success of Wellcome International Trading Ltd. in Hungary. There are other less happy examples, such as the conduct of ICL in Poland. I hope that the Government will give some attention to that matter.

I propose to speak only very briefly about South Africa because I know that many other hon. Members wish to speak in the debate, and some of the earlier contributions were on the long side. I do not question for one moment the bona fides of the Foreign Secretary in his wish to see change in South Africa. Unlike some Opposition Members, I accept that the Government find apartheid abhorrent, that the Foreign Secretary wishes to make a genuine attempt to secure the release of Nelson Mandela, and that real efforts are being made to ensure that the Sharpeville Six are not executed.

As a lawyer, I shall highlight one particular point about the Sharpeville Six. They have been convicted of complicity in murder and they are to be hanged for murder, not for affray or for being involved in a riot. They have been convicted of deliberate homicide—the intention to kill or cause serious injury to a specific person. They were convicted under a system of law that shares much with our system of common law. I say without fear of contradiction by any reasonable common lawyer or jurisprudential expert that in any properly applied common law system the Sharpeville Six could never have been convicted of participation in murder. Their conviction was scandalous; their execution would be an outrage. It would bring upon the South African Government greater condemnation even than the continued and unjustifiable detention of Nelson Mandela.

Although I accept the bona fides of the British Government and their intentions in the matter, I believe that the British Government's method of dealing with South Africa has failed. The South African Government do not appear to believe that the subtle negotiations, the occasional conversations and the gentle nudgings of the British Government will help them to make changes. They are stiffening in their resolve because they believe—probably wrongly—that the British Government support the way they are governing South Africa. Early this afternoon the Prime Minister spoke about the economic summit. That summit produced an example of the intransigence of the British Government and their failure to see that their policy on South Africa has failed.

I hope that the British Government will recognise more starkly the barbarity of many aspects of the South African regime. I cite, for example, the introduction of the Orderly Internal Politics Bill. That sort of barbarity will continue unless sanctions that have a meaningful effect on South Africa are introduced. I hope that the Government will be courageous enough to admit that they have tried one approach that has not worked, and that they will now embrace more direct economic action against South Africa, for only that will be the way in which to bring about real change without widespread bloodshed.

8 pm

Mr. Robert Rhodes James (Cambridge): As always, it is a great privilege to follow the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile). Although we do not agree on everything, he will recall that I was one of the founder members of the Anglo-Hungarian round table, so we share an interest in that as well as in South Africa.

I want to focus on one point in what has inevitably been a wide-ranging debate. It relates to Namibia in particular and southern African in general, and it has already been mentioned by my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary, my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) and other hon. Members. It might seem strange that so much concern should be felt in the House about a vast, faraway country, more than twice the size of France, with a small population, and with which we have little historical connection and few colonial links, but there is something about Namibia and its people that stirs other hon. Members and me.

When I visited Namibia and went to the war zone on the Angolan border with the hon. Member for Swansea, East (Mr. Anderson), what I saw was a deeply shocking and moving experience for me. It was shocking, first, because of the economic situation. As the House knows, I was born and brought up in India, and I have been exposed to poverty. I have seen the ravages of war and poverty in India and Africa; one does not become cynical but one is perhaps occasionally hardened. Nevertheless, what I saw in Namibia shocked me.

It is not amusing to visit a black hospital in which there are no drugs or even bandages and then to go to a white one that is equipped as well as Addenbrooke's, in Cambridge. It is not amusing to see the contrast between white and black education; or to see the South African defence force in operation; or the massive deployment of that defence force, or the suppression of the people. What makes this even sadder is the warmth, kindness and good will of the Namibian people and the realisation that the country has the potential to be economically viable and happy, while maintaining the interests of the South African people.

The hon. Member for Swansea, East and I went to a little village called No Hope town—yet there was hope there. We were welcomed with warmth and encouragement. I give the House the following warning, which I also endeavoured to give to the South African Government and others who are interested in the area. Sarajevo was further away from this country in 1914 than southern Africa is today. Who can say, if a conflagration were to explode there involving the super-powers, that it could be contained?

September will be the 10th anniversary of the passing by the Security Council of resolution 435 on independence for Namibia. That resolution is strongly supported by the Government, the Opposition and, with one or two exceptions, by virtually all hon. Members. Perhaps, in view of the 10 years that have elapsed, certain aspects of resolution 435 will have to be revived; but it is an establishment of principle. It gives the people of Namibia real hope. It also gives the people there who do not believe in violence real hope that constitutional reform and freedom may come about without war. The British role in the contact group is important in itself. There are hopeful signs. There were discussions in London with SWAPO. There were hopeful signs in the Moscow communiqué.

I want briefly to put to the House my thoughts on this matter. Given my views about the President of Austria, it may seem slightly strange to say this, but perhaps the Austrian solution is the answer—the freedom, neutrality and independence of Namibia might be guaranteed by the great powers. That would meet the legitimate concerns of the South African Government and people and give the Namibian people their freedom. We, as one of the guarantors, would have to accept that the new, free Namibia would require aid and assistance, not only with drugs and agriculture, but for many other things. The

[Mr. Robert Rhodes James]

financial cost would not be very great, but the reward, in terms of the prospects for peace and happiness, would be immense.

I have one political ambition—one day to stand in a free and independent Windhoek.

8.6 pm

Mr. James Lamond (Oldham, Central and Royton): It is tempting, in one of the rare opportunities that we have to speak in foreign affairs debates, to mention all the countries and issues in which we are interested, but that is not possible especially if we are to comply with Mr. Speaker's kind request that we confine ourselves to 10 or 15 minutes.

I should have liked to say something about Cyprus, which is gradually receding into the background. Although we are forgetting it, we have a special responsibility to Cyprus. I know that we have tried to take initiatives from time to time and I am hopeful, the recent presidential elections having been completed with the possible chance now of a new start, that we shall again take up our initiatives in that country with renewed vigour.

I want to discuss disarmament and development, which are two sides of the same coin. I listened carefully to what the Foreign Secretary said today. I noticed that he said that we are asking the right questions and making constructive proposals. To ask questions is comparatively easy, and we have certainly been asking them. To make constructive proposals is more difficult.

Let us examine our policy in this respect. I am thinking particularly of the third special session of the United Nations on disarmament, which concluded about a week ago. I had the opportunity to be present at it as a representative of one of the more than 200 non-governmental organisations that sent representatives to keep the official delegates aware of the widespread interest in what they were doing.

I heard the Foreign Secretary speak and I was disappointed. Some of his comments, such as that disarmament is for us all, were correct. He meant that every country has something to gain from disarmament, which, of course, is true. That has been said again this afternoon. But he spoke rather in the old cold-war spirit, not making constructive suggestions but demanding certain demonstrations of sincerity from the Soviet Union, among other countries. He felt that we could not make progress unless certain conditions were met by others. However, I have read his speech carefully, trying to pick out even one constructive proposal for concessions that we were prepared to make in order to make progress.

The Foreign Secretary mentioned towards the end of his speech that the United Nations special session on disarmament II

> "frankly contributed to the difficult climate of 1982."

That was the session prior to this year's. That is correct —it was unsuccessful and a great disappointment. He then continued:

> "Today the climate is much more hopeful. UNSSOD III can add to that hope by sending out a clear message.
>
> The message is this: while we recognise our differences —and there are many—we can all identify our common interest in disarmament. Each state can and must make its own distinctive contribution to the common goal of peace, peace with justice and with security."

The result of that special session was even more disappointing than the second special session. The Foreign Secretary must have been bitterly disappointed by the outcome. I refer to a report in *The Guardian*. It is difficult to obtain information about what happened at that special session, important though it was. This information was provided by the Associated Press in New York and reported in *The Guardian*. The article was headed

> "UN arms cut debate ends in disarray".

It stated:

> "The General Assembly's special session on disarmament ended yesterday after bitterly divided delegates were unable to reach agreement on a document calling for arms reductions."

The whole world would be disappointed—that is, if it knew what was happening—because the United Nations forum is the only way forward for many underdeveloped countries. The United Nations special session ended disastrously, despite all the money spent there. Our country could have done much more to try to make it a success.

Mr. Ray Whitney (Wycombe): Is the hon. Gentleman aware that one reason for the failure of the United Nations special session on disarmament in regard to conventional weapons is the reluctance of many non-aligned Third-world developing countries to reach an agreement? Therefore, to seek to pin the blame on this country is singularly ill advised.

Mr. Lamond: I accept the hon. Gentleman's point. I hope that I was not implying that the blame lay entirely on the shoulders of this country and the Foreign Secretary. However, we could have played a more practical part in resolving some of the difficulties. All that I am saying is that I do not think that we were as positive as the Foreign Secretary would have us believe from his remarks.

Halfway through his speech the right hon. and learned Gentleman said:

> "We must also tackle the Warsaw Pact conventional superiority in Europe: the MBFR negotiations have failed to redress this imbalance over the last fifteen years . . . We remain committed to stability and security at lower levels of forces. We are working with our Alliance partners to launch a new round of conventional negotiations in Vienna."

I think that the Foreign Secretary was referring to the efforts made at the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe in Vienna to reach a mandate which could be carried from the conference which, I hope, is approaching its end, along with proposals about the other baskets being discussed. I have been in Vienna this week to meet some of the official delegations who are negotiating there, including our own, to ask about our circumstances and the problems that we see. Mr. O'Keefe, who is the leader of the delegation, was extremely helpful in explaining what is happening. I also met the Soviet, Polish, Austrian, and Finnish delegations and that from the Federal Republic of Germany to find out what the problems were.

I made a special request to meet the Romanian delegation which has been attacked on all sides for employing delaying tactics especially over human rights, which might mean that it would be difficult to obtain agreement, even at the end of this conference. Human rights are important. I should like to see a great advance made on what happened in Madrid. I do not support the Romanian suggestion that Madrid went far enough and that there is no need to go further. However, Romania is entitled, as are all the other 34 members, to put what it claims are amendments to the draft documents presented by the neutral and non-aligned nations.

The aspect that particularly interests me is the mandate for negotiation—the conference itself does not engage in disarmament negotiations, but it can set a mandate for negotiations to go ahead later this year. I hope that the Foreign Office, which has the guiding hand on our delegation, will let Romania know that we are concerned. We do not want any obstacles to be placed in the way of obtaining the mandate. I hope that an agreement can be reached by 31 July because if it is not, if there is a break and if we begin to try to negotiate again, perhaps in the middle of September, by that time the elections in the United States will be well under way. I doubt whether it will be possible to make any progress until those elections are completed. It will be impossible to begin the negotiations on the mandate during that time.

We should always remember that there are outside pressures demanding that we reach an agreement as early as possible. We should not delay any more than is absolutely essential. We should remember that concessions have to be made on all sides if progress is to be made. It is not enough to say, "Those are the concessions which must be made by the Warsaw pact countries or by the neutral and non-aligned countries"; we should say, "Those are the concessions that we have made in the hope of making progress." There is, for instance, considerable discussion about whether only the 23 NATO and Warsaw pact countries should be involved in the negotiations on conventional weapons. As my right hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey) said, those negotiations are important. The more expensive weapons are the conventional weapons.

The other 12 countries involved in the CSCE negotiations can be placed at a little distance from the negotiations, but they should be kept informed and should be consulted from time to time. All the negotiations should be carried out within the framework of the CSCE and of the Helsinki Final Act. We should not allow any last-minute amendments such as those from Romania to the basket concerned with human rights to prevent progress from being made on the mandate section.

If we can, we should allow the inclusion in those negotiations of naval and air forces as well as land forces. It seems sensible that if one is discussing conventional arms, one discusses all conventional arms and does not try to exclude those in which one may have an overwhelming majority on one's side. If we are entering into negotiations with a determination that we shall not move an inch from the position that we held before the negotiations began, we will not make many deals, because a negotiation, deal or agreement must have something in it for both sides.

Those points should be kept in mind by our negotiators. I hope that their hard work—I appreciate that it is not easy—is on this occasion crowned with the success that it deserves and that there is not the disastrous outcome of the United Nations special session on disarmament.

8.19 pm

Mr. Julian Amery (Brighton, Pavilion): I am sure that those who heard the speeches of the shadow Foreign Secretary, the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) and of the right hon. Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey) will agree that we on this side of the House are lucky that the right hon. Member for Leeds, East is not on the Opposition Front Bench. That is the only party point that I shall make tonight.

Like the right hon. Member for Leeds, East, I salute the speech made by Mr. Gorbachev. I have read the fullest account that I can find. It is brave and frank, inasmuch as any man in that position can afford to be. It amounts, however, to a declaration of bankruptcy. He is saying that politically, economically, socially and morally, the Soviet experiment, which thrilled the imagination of millions of people throughout the world, has failed. For obvious tactical reasons he has sought to put the blame on individual leaders. When we look at the whole picture we must say that what Lenin hoped to do in the four or five years in which he was in charge and what Krushchev tried to do but failed is a small portion of Soviet history. Soviet history is that of Stalin, Brezhnev, Chernenko and Andropov, until the present leader came to power.

Gorbachev talks much of reconstruction, and I wish him well in that immensely difficult enterprise. A story was retailed to me a couple of days ago by somebody who was in a queue in Moscow. According to a joke that was being told, Brezhnev met Kruschev in the Soviet paradise and said to him, "Nikita, did you build much in your time?" Kruschev said, "No, did you?" Brezhnev said, "No. Which is why I cannot understand all this talk about restructuring. We never built anything, so what is there to restructure?"

That joke is misplaced because there is much to restructure. It will be a Herculean task because the best brains in Soviet industry are employed in the defence sector and because it will require a reduction—Gorbachev has made this plain—in the interference of the party in the day-to-day running of industry. It will require the cutting back of expenditure on defence, and, unless I am very much mistaken, securing access to Western technology and credit. Above all, it will require glasnost—freedom. The dilemma facing Mr. Gorbachev is that if he wants to make progress, he will have to extend freedom. If he extends freedom, the power of the regime will be threatened. If the regime has to choose, I fear that it will play safe and limit freedom in the interest of holding power.

That suggests that there will be a compromise. If there is, the regime will not be able to deliver the goods to the Soviet people. I shall illustrate my point with another anecdote that reached me from Moscow this week. A Soviet dog and a British dog met. The British dog said to the Soviet dog, "What is all this glasnost about?" The Soviet dog said, "It is quite easy. I am still on a leash, but it is a much longer one. On the other hand, my food bowl is even further away than it used to be. I am allowed to bark, but not too loud."

Events such as those have taken place before. In 1789, Louis XVI's expert, Mr. Necker, a banker, produced a reconstruction plan. The Estates General had a huge conference in Versailles, but while they were meeting the harvest failed and the French Revolution began.

In the old days it was often the policy to externalise internal problems by going to war—by conquest. I do not believe that that option is open any more. As long as we keep up our guard and maintain our forces, major war is made almost impossible by the existence of nuclear

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weapons. The provision of the Stinger ground-to-air missile has also made it almost impossible to win a regional war against the wishes of the people.

The outposts of the Soviet empire have been crumbling. Afghanistan is the most dramatic example, because the Red army was directly involved but had to withdraw. In Angola, Ethiopia and Cambodia the same has been happening. There is disarray throughout eastern Europe. We must bear in mind that none of those problems confronting Gorbachev would have occurred were it not for the failure of the Soviet system and the determination of the Western allies to maintain a credible and determined resistance against any possibility of aggression abroad.

Economically, ideologically and socially, the credibility of the Soviet system is at a low ebb. That can plainly be seen in eastern Europe. The hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile) mentioned Poland. Poland is no longer a Socialist country, but a sort of South American military junta with a few academics. A distinguished Polish academic, Deputy Prime Minister Sadowski, visited Britain the other day.

Czechoslovakia remains hard-line, but there is almost a war between quasi-liberal Hungary and hard-line Romania. Chaos is developing in eastern Europe. The might of the Red army remains, but its prestige and authority have been weakened. Afghanistan was comparable to what the Red army suffered in Finland in 1940. The tanks could roll into Budapest and Prague again, but would they? Not while the regime is trying to get credit from the West.

We must always remember that the Soviet Union has reached its present position only because of the failure of its system and the firm resistance with which it has been confronted abroad. We must maintain our resistance, be ready to assist with economic help and credit, but on conditions. The conditions will have to be such as to prevent the money being used against us.

On the other side of the world, there is no American crisis, but the weary Titan is becoming tired of carrying much of the burden on its shoulders. It has great interests in the Pacific and there have been anxieties in its Latin-American back yard. That has produced a demand for burden sharing. We must expect the Americans to keep a lower profile in Europe, just as the Soviets will in eastern Europe. That will not happen overnight. There will not be a sudden vacuum, but there is a gap that will need filling. How is that to be done? The main responsibility rests on the European Community. We are making good progress in that direction. Of course, we must strive to achieve the single market.

The financial and economic arguments about the European monetary system are fairly equal. I concede the point of not wanting to go in until we see the effect of France and Italy lifting all exchange controls. But I hope that the Government will not be too shy about joining in the studies into monetary union, and even a central bank. Frankfurt may have the strongest currency, the deutschmark, but we are the experts on monetary union. We often forget it, but from 1931 to 1960 we operated the most successful monetary union that the world had seen until that day—the sterling area. When we went off the gold standard, all the experts thought that the heavens would fall in. They did not, thanks to the sterling area. We and the other countries of the area, the old Commonwealth countries, the colonies and various other countries such as Iraq and Egypt, came out of the depression quicker than anyone else.

The system was simple. There was no central bank, but the individual national banks banked their reserves with the Bank of England. They kept full sovereign control over them, but they consulted the Bank of England and the Chancellor of the Exchequer about how to move. They often had parities at a quite different level from each other, particularly Australia and New Zealand. The system proved an immense success in the 1930s. Even more, it got us through world war two and went on into the even more difficult aftermath. We can give some lessons to the continental banks about how to run a monetary union.

It is urgent to press on because there is another, more dangerous and sinister alternative if we do not. The lower profile of the Americans and the Soviets in Europe is reawakening the dream of German unity. West Germany already has remarkably close links with the German Democratic Republic. Austria may be applying for membership of the European Community. It has not yet taken the decision, but I think that it probably will, and that will not be a bad thing. The Pope held a mass in Austria the other day at which the majority of the congregation were Yugoslavs and Hungarians. Mittel Europa is rising up again, and there would be a strong temptation for the Germans to adopt a neutralist policy if this made it easier for them to secure it. If they did, and if the French went with them, we would face an economic Dunkirk. We must be careful about this.

In 1955, when the Soviets withdrew from Austria, and the need for German rearmament became paramount, we had a great argument as to how Britain should contribute. It is always boring to talk about oneself, but I wrote a memorandum, which was circulated under another name, to the Cabinet, in which I said that NATO was a box to keep the Russians out and that we needed a box to keep the Germans in. It is perhaps not diplomatic to say it now, but we must have that in our minds.

We have to play our part, a full part, in the reconstruction of Europe, and that will mean in the financial as well as the marketing arrangements. From an east European and even a Soviet point of view, it would be much better if it were done on the basis of the European Community, with ourselves and the French as the anchor men, than if we let the Germans go off on a neutralist course. Much will depend on the efforts that we are prepared to make.

8.34 pm

Mr. George Galloway (Glasgow, Hillhead): It is a privilege to follow such a legend in these debates. I hope that the right hon. Member for Brighton, Pavilion (Mr. Amery) will forgive me if I do not follow his arguments.

Like other speakers, I am disappointed that it has taken us more than a year to have this foreign affairs debate, and because we have waited so long for it I was the more disappointed in the speech made by the Foreign Secretary. I had expected it to be a tour de force of the important issues, but he demeaned the office that he holds by his childish knockabout involving the difficulties of my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition. He spent more time quoting *The Independent* than he did on the middle east. I hope that the issue of the middle east, on which I shall concentrate, will occupy rather more of the wind-up speech to be made by the Minister of State, because this is a matter of the most vital importance. As other hon. Members have said, it is an issue full of danger not only for the immediate neighbours and participants in the conflicts but for the world community as a whole.

I have acknowledged before and I acknowledge again the fine words that the Government have spoken about the middle east and the Palestine-Israel conflict in particular. The Minister of State used some fine and brave words when he visited the occupied territories, which were justifiably celebrated. However, the Government are longer on words than they are on action, and I press them to do rather less jaw-jawing and rather more acting in trying to get the peace process, as it is sometimes ironically described, back on the move.

Our predisposition to words rather than action has earned us the consternation of our friends and allies in the area. Many of them are politically conservative states with whom the Government maintain warm relations. I recently visited one of them, Saudi Arabia, with a parliamentary delegation ably led by Lord Pym. At meeting after meeting with all the important people in Saudi Arabia, from the Crown Prince through to the Foreign Minister to other leaders, everyone lost no opportunity to say that while they were grateful for some of the Government's words, they rather hoped for action to back up those words.

Our predisposition has earned us the despair of the Palestinians. Those of us who have been involved in the issue for some time know that it is impossible to meet a Palestinian anywhere, especially an older Palestinian, without being reminded of our personal involvement. To some extent, we compounded the problem of the Palestinian people, so historically we bear responsibility for the tragedy and their plight. However, we seem less than enthusiastic to do something about it.

If our predisposition has earned us the consternation of our friends and the despair of the Palestinians, it is evident that it has earned us the contempt of the Government of Israel. As recent events here have shown, with the activities of the Israeli secret service over many issues and many years, the Government of Israel, whom we treat with as a friendly Government, do not appear always to be behave towards us in an entirely friendly manner.

The chutzpah, some might say the arrogance, of the Government of Israel is well known and charted, from the bombing of the nuclear reactor in Baghdad in 1981 through to the bombing of the city of Tunis in 1985, to the gunning down in a Commonwealth country, Cyprus, earlier this year of important leaders of the Palestine Liberation Organisation and to the most recent and, I believe, one of the most serious examples, the assassination, with hundreds of rounds of ammunition in front of his young wife and daughter, of the Palestinian leader Abu Jihad.

That is not to mention the contempt for international opinion that Israeli security policies in the occupied territories involved. Other hon. Members have dealt with events there, so I shall not dwell on them, but having recently been there, I know that there is a virtual reign of terror there, with tens of thousands of heavily armed soldiers putting down unrest among an entirely unarmed civilian population. The shootings, beatings and gassings mentioned this evening and many other times are ample testimony to the contempt with which the Israelis treat international opinion, including the opinion of Governments such as ours, who are essentially well disposed towards them.

That begs the question, "What will Britain do?", rather than "What will Britain say?" There is little evidence that Britain will do anything. I tabled an early-day motion, supported by three distinguished Conservative Members and three Labour Members, which attracted the further support of hon. Members of all parties, on the issue of limited, selective economic sanctions to try to put some pressure on Israel. After all, the Government are in favour of limited, selective economic sanctions against South Africa, but the answer was that it would not be helpful to the peace process in the middle east to introduce sanctions.

On the issue of the EEC protocols, which will come up for agreement in the next few days in the European Parliament, the Government have sent no message to Conservative Members of the European Parliament to say that they would prefer to see, as a kind of economic leverage, the continued refusal of the Parliament to agree to the protocols with Israel. It is no mean issue when Israel exports to the Community billions of dollars' worth of food, vegetables and other goods every year. The recall of Her Majesty's ambassador in Tel Aviv for consultations has been requested in this House as a means of doing something, but on this, as on other issues, those calls have fallen on deaf ears.

So much for the British Government's action against Israel. Is there any sign of British Government action towards the Palestinians? My hon. Friend the Member for Dundee, West (Mr. Ross) has dealt with that issue, so I shall not dwell on it, but it is clear that there is little prospect of the Government acting. This evening, as we speak, a meeting is going on under the chairmanship of Lord Mayhew at the Royal Institute of International Affairs, involving Mr. Farouk Kadoumi, who is effectively the Foreign Minister for the Palestinian people. He is an important actor in the Palestinian arena, but has any Minister met him? Will any Minister meet and talk to him? I am afraid that the answer is no.

The chairman of the PLO, Yasser Arafat, and, as the Minister knows, a leader of the mainstream and moderate part of the Palestinian camp, has been continually snubbed by the Government. I hope that the Minister of State, when she winds up, will address this point. What is the difference between Yasser Arafat, as the chairman of the PLO, and Oliver Tambo, the president of the African National Congress? Why was it possible for her to meet Oliver Tambo, yet impossible for her or any other Minister to meet Yasser Arafat? There is a huge inconsistency in British Government attitudes and I hope that they will address the matter this evening or before very long.

Why do not the Government respond positively to the important statement, to which other hon. Members have referred, by the principal adviser to Yasser Arafat, Mr. Bassam Abu Sharrif, which, as the Minister must know, has caused some problems to the moderate leadership of the PLO? It would be doing a service to the peace process to respond positively to that statement and to use it as a watershed, which they appear to be seeking, to justify a meeting with the Palestinian leadership.

In short, we need to begin as a Government and as a country to try to match our words with some action. The Venice declaration in 1980 contained some fine words. That declaration ran into the sand when Lord Carrington became the President because, no doubt acting under

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instructions from the Prime Minister, he was unable to continue the process of meetings and dialogue between the European Community and the Palestinians, as the Prime Minister would not allow Lord Carrington to meet Mr. Arafat and to continue the dialogue started by the Community.

We need a new Venice declaration backed up by action because we now have a small window for a very short time. Having recently been there, I see no evidence that, unless something changes—that must mean international pressure—a Government will emerge in Israel after 1 November who will seriously take forward the peace process. That must mean more leverage, more action and fewer words from the international community to try to force some progress and some concessions in Israeli policy in the area.

8.45 pm

Mr. Peter Temple-Morris (Leominster): It is a pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Glasgow, Hillhead (Mr. Galloway). He will forgive me if I do not go down the Arab-Israeli path because there are many things to talk about and all too little time, but he and I would find ourselves broadly in the same camp so far as our attitude to that is concerned. I particularly appreciated his remarks about the situation on the West Bank.

I want to deal with some specifics and to deal with them as succinctly as possible, to the relief of my hon. Friends who wish to contribute to the debate. The principal specific is our relations with Iran. I have followed that subject in some detail, but, in recent years, I have not overburdened the House with it. However, it is important at the moment, not least because of the general political situation there and our relation to it here, but also because this very morning, under the chairmanship of my right hon. Friend the Member for Guildford (Mr. Howell), who has already contributed wise words to the debate, the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs released a report on that subject. It was a good and balanced document, as my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary has been kind enough to say. It reflects the need for good relations between our two countries and, on an all-party basis, it says that there should be no deals whatsoever with terrorism and that we must look elsewhere to secure the release of our hostages.

I agree that Iran—this an important message that should go out at the present time—must, if it seeks better relations, as it appears to be persuading us is the case, demonstrate its sincerity. There is no better way for it to do that than to take one very easy step—the release of Roger Cooper, a British business man and Iranian commentator, who has been languishing in the Evin prison in Tehran for two years, without trial and without any decent charge to boot. We know perfectly well that Iran could help with the hostages as well and it would be much easier for Ministers to address that question of our diplomatic relations if we had some healthy, decent and contributive response from Iran on that matter.

I want to go slightly beyond that and to discuss briefly the background because our relations with Iran go way beyond the Ayatollah Khomeini, the Mullahs, any other Ayatollah or anybody else. They are as historic as, if not more historic than, our relations on the Arab side of the Gulf. It was noticeable when the Select Committee went down the Arab side of the Gulf, but all too easy to forget, the historic relations on the Iranian side and the historic role that Britain has played in the development of that country. Therefore, our relations are very much with both sides of the Gulf.

We must not forget the geopolitical situation of Iran when we decide what sort of relations we should have with that country. It has hardly been in recent years an easy country with which to deal in any respect, but it constitutes 50 million people. They have dominated the region and one only has to look at the map to see the situation with the Arab Gulf on the one side and the Indian sub-continent on the other to realise that it is all-important that that country does not go any more extreme than it is already and reassumes an albeit neutral, but sensible role and relationship with the West. We have, and we have had, our traditional links with the countries of the Arab Gulf, which are smaller and perhaps more vulnerable than Iran. It is fair to say that they are vulnerable to other things than just Iran. It is all too easy to forget that there are wider issues at stake.

Our relations with Iran go far beyond the hostages. All too often the media response, the questions that we are asked and the attention that is given to Iran concentrate on the hostages. That comes to the fore, and perhaps rightly so. We are dealing, however, with the relationship between two important countries. No one will benefit more deservedly and more quickly, I hope, than the hostages if the relationship is improved. That demonstrates the importance of moving forward, and it might not be as difficult as some would argue.

Iran, through its own actions, has put itself in a peculiarly friendless position. It follows from that that it is grateful for a remarkably small degree of support that might be shown to it from Britain or any other country. There are many things that we can do, and the need to do them is made all the more necessary because of the nature of American-Iranian relations. It must be recognised that the ordinary American—this underlines an aspect of the policy of the United States Government—feels a bitter hostility towards Iran, and he does so with a certain cause. I am pleased to say, however, that this feeling is slightly better this year than last.

The Americans feel let down by the revolution. They were the principal supporter and external sponsor, as it were, of many things to do with Iran until 1979. They suffered the storming of their embassy, the taking of hostages, the abortive rescue mission and the tragedy of the events that took place at the United States marine corps headquarters in Beirut. It may therefore surprise us that the Americans, having blasted one third of the Iranian fleet out of the water—and perhaps they deserved it—are now talking to the Iranians. They are doing so nominally through intermediaries. A series of informed reports and other pieces of information suggests that the talks are active.

Why is this happening? The answer is that the Americans are aware of the importance of Iran. They believe that there is a future for that country beyond the Ayatollah Khomeini. The Iranians understand that America is such a powerful country that it has to be talked to. Britain has a more limited area of manoeuvre in which to play its maximum role in the recovery and development of Iran. I am sure that all agree that it will need some recovery and development. It is by actions now that its future friends will be judged.

There is an important need to press on and to act now. There is an active internal power struggle taking place within Iran and delay could make things worse. The war with Iraq is deeply unpopular in Iran and it is a country with a severely ailing leader. I dare say that it will not be long before times of change are upon us. I much approve of the talks that are taking place on embassy reparations between our Government and that of Iran. It was none too soon when the talks started. We are taking the road to better relations behind the French, and I do not condone any deals that may have been done with that country. Nevertheless, relations between France and Iran have already been restored. The Germans, the Italians and the Japanese also have relations with Iran. Britain is the only European Community country that does not have diplomatic relations with Tehran.

In bringing about relations with Iran we should at least consider a slightly more independent policy and attitude. We are seen to be very much part of the alliance with the United States, and most of us in this place back that alliance. There is ample scope, however, for some independence, and especially within the United Nations. We played a formidable role when it came to resolution 598, but there has been precious little follow-through from that. We have done little to extract the maximum Iranian response to it. Indeed, we continued to be a party to even more action against Iran by way of an arms embargo until it proved politically impossible to take that line any further. That is dead, in part because Iraq has felt free to escalate the war in various aspects, some of them extremely unpleasant.

I shall refer briefly to South Africa. My hon. Friends will be relieved to hear that I am not going round the sanctions course. I am concerned, however, that the British position on sanctions, present or future, will lead to Britain becoming isolated internationally. It was evident at the time of the 1986 differences—it has been evident ever since—that we stand alone to some extent.

We are approaching an American election, and until this moment we have been reinforced in our attitude towards sanctions and towards South Africa generally by the United States Administration. If the Democrats form the next Administration, there will be a change of policy towards South Africa—indeed, there could be change whatever the new Administration. That poses a danger for us. If we are to be isolated on anything, it should not be on our policy towards South Africa.

The BBC external services have long been one of my hobby horses. It is an issue that I shall not go into in detail this evening. I have a personal interest and I have spoken before about it. The result of the Government rejecting what I humbly urged is that the BBC is going to the private sector for finance for satellite television news services. It seems that there will be a City initiative, and there is every likelihood that it will be successful. That is good and commendable. I hope that the initiative will be successful, but private capital needs a return.

It is a difficult market, as the ITN Superchannel experience shows. There is a danger that a major strength of BBC external services, which is directed towards the Third world and to giving the right message to the countries within it, will be separated from the developing market of television. I urge the Government to keep the issue under constant review. When they assess the BBC's external services budget, I urge them to bear in mind the Third-world countries at a time of increasing consumption of television. There could well be a case for certain specific subsidies to be given and for certain additional moneys to be provided.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Order. The winding-up speeches are expected to begin at 9.20 pm. If we could have four-minute or five-minute speeches, hon. Members would win golden opinions from the Chair.

8.58 pm

Mr. Chris Mullin (Sunderland, South): I want to address one small aspect of British foreign policy which is very topical and important. I want to refer to the support of Her Majesty's Government for the Khmer Rouge and Pol Pot. In the vote at the United Nations each year we vote for a regime that has no territory and controls no population except people in refugee camps and we supply a small amount of food to the United Nations border relief operation which feeds the Khmer Rouge.

We are only a small partner in this matter. The real villains are China which supplies the guns, Thailand through which the guns travel to the Khmer Rouge, and America which provides the bulk of the food—along with other Western countries—and organises diplomatically to ensure that the fraudulent coalition, which is a thinly disguised front for the Khmer Rouge, is recognised at the United Nations each year.

That is a cynical and wicked state of affairs. With the possible exception of the Minister, everyone knows what is happening. Oxfam has done a great deal of good work in the area for the Kampuchean people. It is desperately worried that, with the withdrawal of the Vietnamese from Kampuchea, the return of the Khmer Rouge is becoming inevitable. I know that that concern is shared by hon. Members on both sides of the House, and more than 230 Members of all parties have signed early-day motion 463.

If the situation is not understood in the Foreign Office, it is well understood in the world at large. Jane Corbin a "Panorama" reporter, was in Kampuchea a few weeks ago. She wrote in the *Radio Times:*

> "The Khmer Rouge are still out there in the jungle—Pol Pot still controls their military strategy and the West supports them and their allies as the legitimate government."

In January this year *The Nation* in Bangkok wrote:

> "Both Thailand and China are staunch supporters of the Khmer Rouge. They consistently insist that the communist group be included in any future settlement to the Kampuchean conflict."

The record of the Khmer Rouge regime, when it was in power between 1974 and 1979, is well known and I will not dwell upon it. The Vietnamese invaded at the end of 1978 in the face of severe provocation, with massive attacks on their western provinces, and huge numbers of refugees were driven into Vietnam. Similar attacks were also made on Thailand. The invasion by Vietnam which removed the Pol Pot regime provided the excuse for the West to continue a trade and aid boycott of Vietnam. I say "continue" because Vietnam's main offence was not to invade Kampuchea but to defeat the United States in 1975. Much of what has happened since then is motivated by revenge.

I have visited Vietnam many times over the past 12 years. My wife is Vietnamese and her family live in Ho Chi

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Minh city. I was in Kampuchea in 1973 and saw American B52s burning the country down. I was in Kampuchea again in 1980 shortly after Pol Pot and his friends left the town. I have some idea of what is involved.

It is my conclusion and that of many who have studied the problem that the object of supporting the Khmer Rouge in Kampuchea is to bleed Vietnam. The object is not to get the Vietnamese out of Kampuchea; the object is to keep them there. I believe that the Vietnamese are desperate to get out of Kampuchea. In fact, they are now so desperate that they are about to call the bluff of those who have been supporting the Khmer Rouge all these years.

The Vietnamese are going and there is no strong evidence that the Heng Samrin regime, which the Vietnamese will leave behind, has the capacity to survive on its own. It is widely acknowledged, as any reader of our newspapers over the past few days, and in particular of *The Sunday Times* last weekend, will know, that there is now a serious danger that the Khmer Rouge will return to power.

Those who continue to support the Khmer Rouge will have to bear responsibility for what happens. I hope that the Minister will refer to this in the reply. However, I hope that the Minister will not pretend, as happened when my hon. Friend the Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd) and the hon. Member for Broxtowe (Mr. Lester) raised the subject in an Adjournment debate some months ago, that none of this is happening.

One of the problems in raising the issue, as I and others have tried to do in the House, is that it is difficult to have a rational dialogue because the Minister directly responsible is Lord Glenarthur who is in another place. The Minister who deals with the matter here specialises in South America and has not, to my knowledge, been a frequent visitor to south-east Asia. I understand that the Foreign Secretary has taken a personal interest in the position in Kampuchea. I hope that one of the Ministers will find time to address the matter and not sit around awaiting instructions from Washington as to what we should do next.

We need to stop voting each September at the United Nations for the Khmer Rouge, and to urge our allies to do likewise. An international force will have to be raised swiftly to fill the awful vacuum that will be left when the Vietnamese leave. We must try to persuade the Chinese —and many people seem nervous about offending them —to cease supplying the Khmer Rouge with guns, and our main western allies, including the United States, to halt the food supply. We must also tell Washington and China that we are no longer prepared to be party to a cynical fraud. Otherwise, we must all take a share of the responsibility for the renewed calamity that faces the people of Kampuchea.

9.6 pm

Mr. Jim Lester (Broxtowe): I believe that I am known in the House as a man of considerable patience but, having sat here for a long time, to be asked to make a proper contribution to this debate in just five minutes is really disgusting. Thirty-five hon. Members wish to contribute their comments on these critical matters, and we are jumbled into a gabbling five minutes at the end of the debate.

The three situations that I wish to mention result from the winds of change—one might call them the gales of change—now proceeding from Moscow. For the first time, we can begin solving regional conflicts, which have been so very serious since 1946. The total of 17 million war dead and 25 current wars is not a record of which the world community can be proud, and neither is the increasing number of refugees across borders and within countries. As was said by the right hon. Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey), we now have a new opportunity to solve those problems.

The first area I wish to mention is Ethiopia, of which I have considerable knowledge, having visited it every year since 1984. Dramatic international action must be taken to crack the war there. There is no way, despite humanitarian aid and other efforts, that we shall save that country from decline unless we halt the conflict there. In 1960, it was the poorest country in the world, and in 1985 it was still the poorest country in the world. I urge my right hon. Friends on the Front Bench to do all that they possibly can, in consultation with the Soviet Union, to bring the warring parties in Ethiopia together. If nothing is done, there is no question but that it will decline into another Palestine.

The latest proposals from the Addis Ababa Government give an opportunity to recognise the genuine aspirations of the Eritrean and Tigrean peoples and to establish autonomous states within an overall situation. The problem is now desperately urgent, and those of us who were in Ethiopia in February could see the consequences of the drought, the war and the degradation. There will be ever-increasing famines, affecting ever-increasing millions of people. All that will continue unless we take direct action.

The second subject that I wish to mention is southern Sudan and the suffering of the Dinke people, who are caught in traditional tribal conflicts. There are now people armed with Kalashnikov rifles who can kill hundreds, whereas before, armed with swords and spears, they could kill only a few. The people there are caught in the trap of a civil war and are fleeing in huge numbers into Ethiopia, where there are now a quarter of a million of them in camps. They are also fleeing in great numbers to the outskirts of Khartoum. Those of us who have witnessed the situation have seen them surviving on rubbish tips and being given the least possible help from the Government of Sudan, who are concerned that, if they offer help, more refugees will follow. No requests have been made to the international community. The problems there are of major importance and should be among our highest priorities.

I welcome the agreement with the International Red Cross, whereby it can operate in areas of conflict in relieving the breakdown of all normal conditions. However, we know that access to the area is still not secure and the International Red Cross has been unable to undertake any surveys of need there. When it does, the results will be devastating. We need to be ready to respond urgently to the terrible conditions of the Dinke people in southern Sudan.

I hope that my final point may be the most helpful, because it was raised by the Foreign Secretary himself. It concerns Cambodia, which I visited at the end of last year, together with the hon. Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd). A reappraisal by the Soviet Union and the Vietnamese has led to a substantial reduction in forces. The fact that the Vietnamese troops have moved away from the Thai border has lessened the tension between those countries and the prospects during July for discussions of all elements directly involved are welcome. I hope that the incredible work done by Dr. Mochtar of Indonesia will bear fruit. The role of Prince Sihanouk could be essential as a catalyst for bringing together all Cambodians of good will to end the nightmare of recent years of those people within the country—not least, those in the camps that many of us have seen on the Thai border.

Active diplomacy by my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary is needed. I am grateful that he mentioned this matter in his speech and I hope that it means, first, that he will ensure China's involvement in reducing support for the Khmer Rouge in line with the Vietnamese withdrawal, and, secondly, that he will be prepared to convene or reconvene an international conference as co-chairman, as we did in 1954 on the Geneva accord.

When the time is right, and is judged to be right, we shall have a role to play, most urgently to ensure that the disturbing reports of movements of arms from the camps in Thailand and of personnel being selectively sent back into villages within Cambodia cannot be used to see the return of the Khmer Rouge by force of arms. There are many reports now in the international press of the real concern about that prospect.

The prospect of a United Nations peace-keeping force would appear to be bleak. The prospect of Vietnamese withdrawal by 1990 or before seems likely. Therefore, it behoves the international community, particularly Britain and America, to be sure to take active diplomatic action to ensure that there is no prospect of a return of the Khmer Rouge in any other form.

We cannot continue to blame the Vietnamese as they start to make positive moves. I recommend my right hon. Friends in the Foreign Office to change their word processor so that it does not keep churning out the same message. Bearing in mind the economic problems of that country, the desire to end the debilitating exodus of refugees and their problems throughout the world, especially in Hong Kong, the European Community should make common cause in anticipating the circumstances of changes in the policy of aid to both Kampuchea and Vietnam and in ensuring that the conditions that we have set are fulfilled. We must discuss in advance the internal response to evolving events as recommended by the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs.

I have great respect for my colleagues in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. I know from contacts that I have had since 1982 that our role in diplomatic channels is out of all proportion to our economic power. However, in the issues that I have tried to deal with in such a short time we have an important role to play. If we start to obtain settlements in those areas, they may be the bricks with which we can start to build the international community that the right hon. member for Leeds, East mentioned in his peroration.

9.14 pm

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): As the representative of the largest Pakistani community in Britain, I wish to refer briefly to two early-day motions that I tabled recently. The first, early-day motion 1239, headed "Democracy in Pakistan", called for free, fair and impartial elections to be held in Pakistan and for those elections to be conducted on a party-political basis. It also urged the immediate release of all political prisoners held in Pakistan. In response to that motion, the Pakistan ambassador in London wrote to me saying:

> "As regards the release of political prisoners, to the best of my knowledge there is not a single political prisoner in Pakistan. There are however some politicians who are serving prison sentences because of the criminal acts for which they were convicted by courts of law."

The campaign for democratic rights in Pakistan has produced a list of the names of 823 political prisoners who are now held in Pakistan. I hope that the Minister of State will agree to pass that list to the Pakistan ambassador in London so that he can forward it to his Government. Certainly I hope that the British Government will also continue to support representations being made to the Government of Pakistan about the denial of human rights and the other matters set out in my early-day motion.

The second early-day motion is 1246, headed "Diplomatic Service", which calls for the Consular Fees (Amendment) Order 1988 to be revoked. That may seem a strange thing to do, but the order increases visa settlement fees for those wishing to enter this country from £50 to £60 and, more important, imposes that charge for every applicant, whereas previously it was a charge in respect of each passport. It means, therefore, that in future a mother with three or four children will have to pay £60 per person, whereas previously that was not the case.

That situation must be recalled when the Prime Minister stands at the Dispatch Box and expresses concern about divided Jewish families and those Jews who are anxiously awaiting visas to leave Russia. Yet it is the policy of her Government to prevent Asian women and children from being united with their husbands and fathers in this country. We have from the Prime Minister and this Goverment compassion for Jews and indifference to Asians wanting to come into this country.

Many people, of all political parties and of no political party, are deeply angry that our Government are now spending less of this country's total wealth on aid and development. Instead of playing around with identity cards to curb young hooligans, many of whom reflect the naked and nasty nationalism that is the badge of Thatcherism, why do we not try to give our young people some new sense of purpose, some new perspectives on foreign countries and the people who live in those countries, by providing more opportunities for voluntary service overseas?

A great many British people are ashamed and angry that the British Government are one of the biggest arms salesmen in today's conflict-torn world. It is wrong that Britain should be supplying weapons to both sides in the seven-year-long slaughter which is called the Iran-Iraq war. It is wrong that Britain should be supplying arms to all countries on the Indian sub-continent, including Bangladesh, probably the poorest country in the world; to Pakistan and India, both of which have a nuclear capability in a critical region of the world. It is wrong that the desperate desire to cement the special relationship between Britain and America should compel Britain to pursue policies in direct or indirect support for dictatorial regimes that suppress their peoples by force and deny human rights, or forces seeking to overthrow democratically elected Governments.

The British people want Britain's foreign policy to be genuinely independent. They want the people of all countries, including South Africa, to have the right to

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determine their own destiny. They want to see an end to all military pacts. They want international co-operation, not international conflict. They want the Government and all who serve the Government to observe the rule of law and to tell the truth. We face great difficulties in this regard so long as our backyard, Northern Ireland, is so torn by conflict of every sort. That is why I welcome today's launch of the "time to go" charter, which seeks to bring peace, reconciliation and a genuine political solution to the troubles of Northern Ireland.

No one in his right mind in Britain today thinks that Russia poses a threat to this country. That has been echoed by a number of hon. Members who have spoken in this debate. I should like to join forces with all those who have urged that we should have a regular opportunity to debate foreign affairs in this House, and certainly that such opportunity should be on a more regular basis than has been the case in recent years.

The vast majority of British people, welcoming the efforts of Mr. Gorbachev to lessen the threat of nuclear war, think it mad for us to spend billions of pounds on Trident submarines. Trident should be scrapped now. The money saved should be diverted to building new homes, rebuilding the National Health Service and increasing this country's manufacturing base, which so badly needs help.

Our people want peace, jobs and freedom for themselves and for their brothers and sisters around the world. That should be the purpose of Britain's foreign policy, and I hope very much that that type of foreign policy will be pursued in the not-too-distant future.

9.19 pm

Mr. George Robertson (Hamilton): I think that all of us hoped that the debate would be longer, so that more hon. Members on both sides of the House could speak. All too frequently so many hon. Members wish to give their views on many important issues. But I shall try to be brief.

I am conscious of time. Last week I attended a conference in the capital of the German Democratic Republic. In a session chaired by the vice-chairman of the Dutch Labour party, Mr. Klaas de Vries, we had the delicious sight of the No. 2 in the Romanian Politburo being ordered to leave the rostrum because he had overtaken a time limit that even the East Germaans thought reasonable for him. That is not a common sight, and I think that we all learned a lesson from it.

It is customary for those who make winding-up speeches to remark that the debate has ranged over a wide area. That is no exaggeration today. It is impossible for me —and, I am sure, for the Minister—to encompass all the issues that have been raised. Many of those issues are very serious. I share the concern of my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Hillhead (Mr. Galloway) about the inadequate amount of time that the Foreign Secretary spent on the crucial issue of the middle east. I know that he is pressed for time and must put as much as he can into his speech, but it seems remarkable that he should give that subject such an inadequate response—two or three sentences—at a time when the area is in ferment and is so critical a part of world events.

As my hon. Friends the Members for Hillhead and for Dundee, West (Mr. Ross) pointed out, there have been important developments recently on which we might have expected a Government view. One of the most important is the statement by Mr. Sharrif on behalf of the PLO, showing a number of crucial movements in the organisation's position on the occupied territories. Considerable dissension has been caused within the ranks of the PLO, but the peace process may have been brought somewhat closer by the clear move towards a position that has been established in the world community and should naturally identify itself at least with progressive elements in Israel. It is sad that the Foreign Secretary did not deal with that.

The European Community has been mentioned by a number of speakers—fleetingly by the Foreign Secretary, because his mistress has spoken before him——

Mrs. Chalker: I have not said anything yet.

Mr. Robertson: The right hon. Lady may confess or accuse in any words that she chooses. The fact is that the Foreign Secretary's real mistress spoke on behalf of the Government, although she did not speak in much detail about the issues on which the questions were put. The Foreign Secretary did not speak about any of them either.

My right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition asked, clearly and without ambiguity, whether this country would use its veto in the European Council against any imposition of VAT on all the items that are now zero-rated. The lack of an answer yet again shows what the British people can expect when the matter comes before the majority-voting European Council in the future.

We heard little or nothing, either in the statement on the Hanover summit or in the Foreign Secretary's speech, about the impact of the single European market on the bulk of British industry. We are left yet again, after expensive advertising campaigns, with the impression that big Europe will be for big business. That is sad news for those who are involved in small and medium-sized business, as well as for those employed by them.

My hon. Friend the Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) and others mentioned Iraq. It is worth putting on record the sense of outrage at the unspeakable use of chemical weapons against the Kurds in northern Iraq. The world community has undoubtedly been revolted by the scenes, fleetingly brought to our television screens, of the bodies affected by these noxious indefensible gases.

Naturally the Iran-Iraq war has been a subject of considerable anxiety, and the hon. Member for Leominster (Mr. Temple-Morris) and others raised it. It is important to underline the fact that if Iran wants to return to acceptability in the civilised world, there are easy options open to it to show its bona fides. There would be no greater sign to this country of its willingness to rejoin the international community than by doing something about the hostages in Beirut or Mr. Roger Cooper, whom it incarcerated directly in its gaols. Those of us who believe that Iran could again play a major role on the world stage look carefully for signs that it will take giant steps forward.

The right hon. Members for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) and for Guildford (Mr. Howell) mentioned the role of the United States of America. Although we tend to get carried away with the developments in the Soviet Union, we should not be diverted from the issues being raised in the American presidential elections. Whoever wins—those of us on this side of the House do not show partisanship, although the Foreign Secretary may squirm and turn, trying to preserve some impartiality—whether President Bush or President Dukakis, he will face massive problems which cannot be dealt with unilaterally. We, together with America's allies elsewhere, are obliged to ensure that multilateral decisions are dealt with properly and adequately.

The hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile), the hon. Member for Cambridge (Mr. Rhodes James) and my right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) dealt with South Africa in some depth. A distinct sense of shame should attach to the British Government after this week's Hanover summit. They may say that sanctions were never raised and that their voice was strong, but we know from the foreign and British press and from everything that has come from the summit that the British Government sought to dilute the strong message that could have gone to Pretoria on the subject of the Sharpeville Six. Any dilution of that message is wholly reprehensible. A bogus system of law is about to be translated into the execution of people who would not even face sentence if they were tried under a decent system of law.

Afghanistan was mentioned and the question about the Pakistan Government's failure to adhere to the Geneva agreement on supplying arms to the Mujahideen. My hon. Friend the Member for Sunderland, South (Mr. Mullin), who has a deep interest in the matter, asked about Kampuchea, and we look forward to the Minister telling the House the glad tidings that, in the light of the exodus of Vietnamese troops from Kampuchea in September, the British Government will for the first time refuse to vote in the credentials committee of the United Nations for the coalition that includes the barbarous and murderous regime of Pol Pot. That would be a symbol of the Government's intention to act independently of the super-power politics that keeps that small country in oblivion.

The debate has inevitably been dominated by today's events in Moscow. The changes in the Soviet Union and their impact on the rest of the world have been profound. There is no doubt that the East-West relationship affects all parts of the globe, whether it be the middle east, eastern Europe, the Gulf, South Africa or even Ethiopia about which the hon. Member for Broxtowe (Mr. Lester) spoke so authoritatively. They are all touched by the ideological and military confrontation between East and West, so any movement will ease many of the problems.

The hon. Member for Arundel (Mr. Marshall) mentioned the work of the Inter-Parliamentary Union in the development of relations between the Soviet Union and Britain. Those of us who have watched the Soviet Union, sometimes there and sometimes through meetings with people here, have witnessed dramatic changes in the attitudes of people there. Their conduct has been moderated and revolutionised. In Moscow this week we are seeing something which has almost totally transformed the situation yet again.

In February 1986, I went to the 27th congress of the Communist party of the Soviet Union. That was radical enough. Being one of the first non-Communist observers sitting in on a Communist party congress was peculiar, new and unique. I said on British television that it reminded me of the Conservative party conference, except that in Moscow they have done away with the cult of the personality. Those of us who sat through the congress can watch the television pictures coming from Moscow this week and see something that is different, radical and original, and yet still full of risks.

Like the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup, I do not believe that we should be patronising or that we should attempt to lecture the Soviet Union. We should encourage the process of openness and restructuring which, as it revitalises the Soviet Union, will reduce tension in the world. We hope that things will develop.

The most direct consequence of the easing of tension in the world and of changes in the Soviet Union is in arms control. Lord Carrington, who I notice lost his peerage in the Foreign Secretary's opening speech—that probably indicates that the Foreign Secretary knows something that we do not—retires as Secretary-General of NATO this evening. In an interview in *The Times* today, he says:

> "It takes much too long to get the NATO act together. We have been slow, slow, too slow. Somehow or other we have let it be thought that arms proposals which were all our idea were Gorbachev's initiatives. In fact, everything that has been achieved was first suggested by the West. That is a failure on our part."

Those words carry substance, authority and the ring of truth.

There is nothing in the NATO act today that suggests that it is getting it together. What on earth is going on in the NATO posture in so many areas of arms control today? The modernisation of weapons is a concept which was dreamt up at Montebello in Canada, and it is now being interpreted, reinterpreted and battled over in the North Atlantic Alliance.

Mr. Carlucci, the American Defence Secretary, in a rare moment of candour, which the British Government do not usually share, is reported as saying at the end of April:

> "The meeting"—

the NATO meeting—

> "had also endorsed the development of a new air-launched missile and a successor to the Lance battlefield missile in West Germany."

My right hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey) spoke with considerable authority about this matter. There are 88 Lance missiles—short-range battlefield weapons—in allied control. The Soviet Union with its Frog and Scud missiles has a 14:1 advantage over NATO forces in such weapons, but an offer by the Soviet Union in a third zero completely to eliminate all such short-range battlefield nuclear weapons was rejected out of hand by the West and more emphatically by the Prime Minister of this country. That has created tremors within the Alliance, as Germany has every interest in these weapons being thrown out and is aggravated by the Prime Minister's stance. Not only do we give the Soviet Union a propaganda advantage, because it has said that it will eliminate the weapons systems, but we lose the opportunity to get rid of a weapons system that everybody knows is much too dangerous.

The news contained in this week's *Jane's Defence Weekly* was cited by my right hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, East. General Kirk, chief of the United States air force in Europe, said that 51 FB111 bombers will be reconfigured as F111G bombers carrying air-launched cruise missiles capable of striking all the targets in the Soviet Union—and more—that were covered by the cruise and Pershing missiles eliminated by the valuable INF treaty of which the Government are so proud.

On the conventional side, the offer made in Moscow, which the Foreign Secretary mentioned in his opening

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speech, has gained only limited approval in the West, despite the fact that its component parts—the exchange of data, followed by unilateral reductions in asymmetry and imbalances in forces, followed by negotiated and equal reductions in those forces, followed by a restructuring and reposturing of forces on the central front—are precisely the ideas put forward so often and so regularly by the West in practically every one of the forums to which we had access.

At a conference that I attended in East Berlin last week, I spoke to Mr. Georgy Arbatov, of the Institute of US and Canadian Studies and a close confidant of Mr. Gorbachev. When I asked him about the offer, he said, "It is genuine. Just test us." The Foreign Secretary should take note of that message, and it is the message that should go out from the House.

Our relationships with the super-powers extend beyond that. Even with our allies, we must be concerned about what is going on. Extra-territoriality is not a word that trips easily off the lips, yet the extra-territoriality of American laws, which extends throughout the world, gives due cause for concern, even to the friends of the United States. The COCOM system is one that people increasingly believe is not being used to starve the Soviet Union of strategic goods that could assist its defence effort but rather as a form of techno-nationalism on the part of the United States. That is worrying, and there must be no collusion in it by the British Government.

Also worrying are some of the attitudes adopted by the Americans in pursuing people who fall foul of their commercial export law. Mr. Brian Butcher and Mr. Clifford Chandwick were arrested last month at Rome airport. Both those British citizens were arrested by United States agents and are now incarcerated in Italian gaols. Their case must send shivers down the spines of many business men involved in activities in which American law is radically different from the laws operating in this country.

We should not take it lying down; we should react when British citizens are being arrested in friendly European Community countries. I do not believe that it is right to be sanguine when agents of a foreign power—albeit a friendly foreign power—stand around on street corners enticing British citizens and British business men into acting in such a way that they can be arrested and subjected to laws with which we do not agree and that we would not tolerate in this country.

I shall ask the Minister some brief questions about that case. Have the Italians offered to repatriate the two business men and subject them to British law? Secondly, did this near-kidnapping violate any agreement between Britain and America to declare the targeting of citizens who are suspected of breaking particular laws? Have the Americans ever applied for the extradition of Mr. Butcher or Mr. Clifford Chandwick? If not, we must and will draw the obvious conclusions.

This has been a long debate covering a wide range of issues. Such debates are rare events these days in this Parliament; they should be held more often. Inevitably, we have to cover too wide a range of diverse issues in a short space of time. Foreign affairs should be given much more time.

What do we discover about Britain's foreign policy from the Ministers who address us in these debates? Sadly, very little. We hear a lot of bluster and glowing notions of an exaggerated British influence in a world in which Britain, through this Government, all too often refuses to play a constructive role. But there is a role for us in the institutions in which we still have a voice. We can be a force for reason, balance and enlightenment in the United Nations, the European Community, NATO and the Commonwealth. Britain needs to speak out in these organisations—it rarely does—to ensure that the new era in world relations is consolidated and strengthened. The sooner it does so, the better for all of us.

9.41 pm

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mrs. Lynda Chalker): As the hon. Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson) said, we have had an interesting debate. As always, the value of almost every contribution has been high and the range of subjects broad. The conduct of foreign affairs frequently stimulates advice from every quarter. We may not always agree with what colleagues say in the House, but we always listen.

The debate has ranged from the middle east to Cambodia, from the Soviet Union to southern Africa. May I say at the beginning how much I welcomed the remarks of my hon. Friend the Member for Arundel (Mr. Marshall) about the work of the IPU. The work done by hon. Members through the IPU is an excellent foundation for building up the necessary relationships on which greater understanding is based and which can often help us through some of the more difficult misunderstandings that Government to Government relationships sometimes cause.

Mr. Michael Marshall: As my right hon. Friend is aware, I had to cut short my remarks and could not touch on the relationship between the British group of the IPU and the Government. The interest that my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary and his ministerial team and officials take is a key part of the way in which the organisation can work.

Mrs. Chalker: I thank my hon. Friend for saying so. We derive great value from doing that.

Because the complex changes in the world happen all too slowly, we should be cautious about rushing to conclusions. Nevertheless, by any standards, there have been some momentous developments since our foreign affairs debate last year. In addition to the notable first visits between Moscow and Washington, the most momentous happening has undoubtedly been the signature and ratification of the INF treaty which, for the first time, will abolish an entire category of nuclear weapons.

We have also made considerable progress on the strategic arms reductions, as well as gaining signs of movement on conventional arms control, which, as my right hon. and learned Friend said earlier, is at the heart of western European security. At long last we are witnessing the beginning of the end of the Soviet Union's eight-year occupation of Afghanistan.

In large measure these positive signs are the fruit of policies pursued consistently by Britain and the West. We have not tacked, nor have we been steered by the prevailing wind, nor have we rewritten our policies every time we met an obstacle. For us, the security of western Europe is paramount, yet we have succeeded at once in maintaining that security, in building up good relations with the Soviet Union and in cutting back on arms levels. The Opposition, by contrast, would sacrifice the unity of the western Alliance for the unity of their party, which I find sad. They would sooner dismantle our own defences than upset the trade unions. That is a strange way to run a foreign policy.

I shall not speak at length about the European Community. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister reported on the Hanover summit earlier this afternoon. We have worked, and shall continue to work, for the prosperity of Britain and Europe. During the past six months, enormous progress has been made towards realising our objective of creating a single market by the end of 1992. We gained agreement on mutual recognition of qualifications that will open up new job opportunities throughout the Community. We have an agreement at last to abolish lorry quotas that have been a block on trade for years. We have an agreement to allow the free movement of capital throughout the Community. I hope that Opposition Members will note that the rest of Europe, of whatever political persuasion, has willingly followed the lead set by this Government in liberalising capital movements in our first term.

We have set an agenda for European work next year. Again, it is a practical realisable agenda seeking progress on issues such as the further opening-up of financial services, the further liberalisation of transport and greater openness of public purchasing. Those measures will benefit not just our companies but our people by creating further growth and new jobs.

At the beginning of the debate, the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) made an unusual speech, to say the least. I said that I was always ready to listen, but today the right hon. Gentleman tested my patience and probably the patience of many other hon. Members. I will not follow his line of argument because I shall cover the points that he made with others on similar subjects. However, he did raise one matter about which I should like to put a direct answer on the record. He spoke in quite exceptionable terms about the events in Gibraltar in March. I shall say no more than a single paragraph about this.

The preliminary hearing in respect of the inquest into the deaths on 6 March of the three IRA terrorists will open next Monday, 4 July, in Gibraltar. It will be held between the coroner and counsel, without a jury, and will address procedural matters only. We expect it, and it alone, to set the date for the main inquest. We hope that that will be held as soon as possible. Until the inquest is completed, it remains inappropriate to comment further on the events surrounding the deaths of the three terrorists.

Mr. Dalyell: Will the right hon. Lady give way on a factual point?

Mrs. Chalker: I understand that the hon. Gentleman was not able to speak in the debate. However, my time is very short, so perhaps he will allow me to get on to other matters.

By contrast, the House really enjoyed the contribution of the right hon. Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey). How much he is missed from the Opposition Front Bench. We were delighted to see him back in our debates today. In giving him that warm welcome back, I should say that it was great to have the most interesting speech of my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath). Both spoke with wisdom and sincerity about the dramatic changes taking place in the Soviet Union.

It is clear that the Soviet party conference is a real landmark in the Gorbachev reform process. We are watching the progress of that conference with great interest and welcome the thrust of the attempts to move the Soviet Union in a more liberal, efficient and humane direction. However, the task of bringing about such political and economic change in the Soviet Union remains enormous and the time scale for noticeable results will be long. We have noted Mr. Gorbachev's bold proposals for constitutional reform. We want to see whether the conference will endorse them.

It is not for us to interfere in Soviet internal affairs, but any measures which tend towards greater freedom and prosperity for the Soviet people and which reduce the total grip of the Communist party on Soviet life are naturally to be welcomed. At the same time, let us be in no doubt that what Mr. Gorbachev seems to have in mind is not democracy as we know it, or anything like it. He wants to reduce the party's abuse of power but retain it as the sole effective political force. There can be no popular choice in such a system. The House must remember, above all, that Mr. Gorbachev is not a social democrat. His inspiration is Lenin, not Limehouse.

The hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile) mentioned human rights in the Soviet Union. Although progress has been made, much more needs to be done. We must continue pushing for an end to human rights abuses in the Soviet Union and for people to be allowed to leave. I know that the hon. and learned Gentleman was concerned about that matter.

Many hon. Members have commented on the INF treaty. It is a good agreement, a triumph for Alliance solidarity and for the strategy of negotiating from strength. There will be assymmetrical reductions because it involves a set pattern for similar reductions that will be needed in other arms control negotiations. Stringent verification provisions are a good precedent for future negotiations. It is the first agreement to result in a reduction of nuclear weapons.

I noted what the right hon. Member for Leeds, East said about his reading of *Jane's Defence Weekly*. The hon. Member for Hamilton repeated those remarks. There is no question of circumventing the INF agreement, and nor will there be. I shall look again at what the right hon. Gentleman said and at *Jane's Defence Weekly*.

Mr. Healey: The right hon. Lady is presumably in touch with the Secretary of State for Defence. The statement made by the general commanding American forces in Britain was quite unequivocal. He will receive over 50 F111 aircraft modified to take between two and four cruise missiles, which would mean that there would be many more air-carried cruise missiles based in Britain than there were to have been land-based cruise missiles before the INF agreement. Circumvention may mean anything to somebody briefed by a Foreign Office official. We want to know whether the Government have agreed to receive those aircraft, as stated by the American general.

Mrs. Chalker: That is why I said that I would look into what was written in *Jane's Defence Weekly* and come back to the right hon. Gentleman. There is no question of us circumventing the INF agreement.

We are not and never have been in the business of building up nuclear weapons. Our determination, through NATO, is to maintain minimum nuclear stockpiles such as are necessary for credible and effective deterrence. Beyond that we shall not go. NATO has agreed that the measures necessary to ensure effective deterrence will be taken on a step-by-step basis. No decisions about modernisation measures as they affect United Kingdom forces have yet been taken. At the same time, we note that, as the hon. Member for Hamilton rightly said, Soviet modernisation continues at speed. He gave the figures for Frog and the SS1 replacements for Frog.

We must never forget that our gravest concern is the conventional imbalance in Europe. The Warsaw pact is ahead of us in manpower—4 million men compared with our 3 million. It is ahead of us in tanks by a ratio of 3:1. It has a 3:1 advantage in artillery and a 2:1 advantage in aircraft. As long as that remains, we must ensure that we carry through all treaties in the interests of the defence of this nation and the West.

We often hear about the INF treaty being based on the acceptance of our zero option. Yes, it is a breakthrough in weapons reduction, but I find the Opposition version of zero option quaint. We would have the zero, but the Russians would have the option. They would take the missiles and we would have to take to the hills. That is about as good as the Opposition zero option.

We want, and are working for, a comprehensive, verifiable and worldwide ban on chemical weapons, and that is a priority both for us and for NATO. We know that, by working actively in the negotiations in Geneva, we shall eventually succeed, but we have always realised that, sadly, early agreement is unlikely.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup asked me about UNESCO. We are following with close attention the work under the new Director-General Mr. Mayor. His attempts to achieve the necessary reforms have to be reviewed before we can reconsider our membership of UNESCO. I assure my right hon. Friend that we are following most closely and with great interest the steps that are being taken.

The right hon. Member for Gorton made a valuable analysis of the middle east, with hardly a word of which I would have disagreed. The hon. Member for Dundee, West (Mr. Ross) also spoke about the middle east, with considerable understanding, as did many hon. Members. It is important that the parties face up to the political reality. That means giving up outdated maximalist claims and recognising the need for mutal compromise—words that the hon. Member for Dundee, East used. We need an end to violence and to repression in the occupied territories. Israel needs to recognise that security will come not from the barrel of a gun but from peace with her neighbours. Time is on no one's side and as my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary has often said, we shall not give up working towards the peace process. We shall explore all avenues of progress on what is clearly recognised as the best basis: "land for peace", an international conference and pursuing the United States initiative.

The hon. Member for Dundee, East asked a specific question about the PLO and its role in the peace process, and the hon. Member for Hamilton asked me about Mr. Sharrif's statement. I understand that the PLO has not yet endorsed that statement, but we shall be waiting to see what happens. As we watch the PLO policies and actions closely, we are encouraged by its recent moderate-sounding paper. We look for this to be confirmed not just in words but in deeds. Until then, the House will not expect Ministers to meet the PLO, and the PLO cannot expect to play a constructive role in the peace talks. We have to take every opportunity to bring about peace.

I shall now say a few words about the vexed subject of South Africa. The hon. Member for Hamilton was wrong about the discussions that we have had about the Sharpeville Six—I was present at the ones in Luxembourg. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said this afternoon that if the legal processes do not work in overturning the death sentences, an appeal for clemency will be made. We shall take every pragmatic and realistic step to try not only to bring about the release of Nelson Mandela and other political prisoners but to find a way to get the necessary dialogue, without the violence, that can bring about a non-racial, representative system of government.

I will have to reply to other points in the debate by letter. For example, the hon. Member for Hamilton raised a point about Mr. Butcher and I know that he saw my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary this morning.

Debates such as this show us, every time that we are lucky enough to have one, that the world is a complicated place. Our foreign policy has to advance British interests against a shifting pattern of events. It is no good hoping, as many seem to, that things will change to our advantage. They will not. We have to do our best to ensure that changes will go in a positive direction. That means sticking to the principles, forging the alliances, building up, year in and year out, a solid framework of relationships and creating a secure western Europe from which we can view with confidence any development in the EC, the middle east, southern Africa, between East and West, wherever we are working.

As the Toronto economic summit showed, the economic policies that we have espoused have become acknowledged as the right way forward in the world, and this decade of hard work has transformed the country and others' perceptions of us. For many years, the values that we upheld have also been on the defensive around the world. That is no longer the case. We have used our strength in Europe and the Western Alliance and we now need to use our strength to help the developing countries, to bring peace and reconciliation, the chances of freedom and justice and real democracy in other parts of the world which today, sadly, still lack it.

It being Ten o'clock, the motion for the Adjournment of the House lapsed, without Question put.

Mr. Dalyell: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. This is not a complaint against anyone present, but it will have been noticed by the Chair that there were a number of Conservative Members who were not called and a number of others who, very unselfishly, truncated their speeches. I speak for a number of my hon. Friends who had wished to speak.

This is not a matter of complaint against anyone who participated, but perhaps the House will bear in mind some figures. For one of these rare debates, we had 319 minutes. Of those, 125 minutes went to the Front Benches, 90 minutes to four Privy Councillors and 103 minutes to 10 rather unselfish Back Benchers.

This is the point of order. Will you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, draw to the attention of the Leader of the House and of Mr. Speaker and your colleagues the fact that these foreign affairs debates are far too rare and that they are sui generis in the sense that they are not normally on the party political agenda as such? Surely, for the honour of Parliament, they should be a little more frequent. I hope that those figures will be taken into consideration.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will realise that certainly the latter part of his remarks were addressed more to the Leader of the House than to the Chair, but his earlier point gives me the opportunity to say that I am sure that hon. Members on both sides of the House who were not called in the debate —many of whom sat through most of it—will echo the hon. Gentleman's remarks. At present, the Chair has no power to limit the length of speeches. The remedy is in the hands of the House, if it wishes to exercise that remedy. There is, of course, a motion on the Order Paper in that regard at present.

Footwear and Textile Industries (Leicester)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Lennox-Boyd.]*

10.2 pm

Mr. Keith Vaz (Leicester, East): This is the first time that a debate has taken place in this House specifically on the subjects of the footwear and textile industries in Leicester. Those two industries are embellished in the history of the city. They are interwoven in its social fabric. I would like to pay tribute to the National Union of Hosiery and Knitwear Workers, its president David Lambett, the National Union of the Footwear, Leather and Allied Trades and its president Bob Stevenson, the British Textile Confederation, the Knitting Industries Federation and the British Footwear Manufacturers Federation and its new president, John Church. Both industries are blessed with good industrial relations and a unity of purpose of workers and management for prosperity and growth. I commend them all.

As early as 1520, of the 151 freemen admitted in Leicester, over one third gave their occupations as connected with the textile and leather industries. The hosiery industry was established in 1640. By the mid-18th century, the county of Leicestershire had become the chief centre for hosiery manufacture in England and the midlands remains its principal seat. The shirt trade began in Leicester in 1796, sock-making became extensive in 1810 and glove-making reached its zenith in 1845.

Today, the textile and clothing industries account for over 9 per cent. of total employment in manufacturing industry. They supply more than twice as many jobs as the motor vehicle and parts industry, and more than three times as many as the aerospace industry. They contribute an estimated £5,104 million to the national economy. That is the good news. The bad news is that textile imports by volume increased by 18 per cent. and clothing imports by 27 per cent. in the first three months of the year. The deficit for the quarter increased to a staggering £939 million.

In the knitting industry, 34,000 jobs have been lost since 1979, with total employment reduced to around 80,000, from which must be deducted the 700 redundancies recently announced by Corah of Leicester. These redundancies have, in some measure, arisen off the back of productivity improvements, but by far the greatest number of them are attributable directly to the industry's continued over-exposure to unfair, low-cost competition. The east midlands accounts for about two thirds of the industry's current annual turnover of about £1,600 million, and well over half of the two thirds is to be found in the city and county of Leicester, where the industry accounts for over one in 10 jobs in manufacturing.

There are three issues that are of concern to the Leicester textile industry. First, serious problems are being caused to the industry by present exchange rate levels and the instability of sterling. The low value of the dollar, and the fact that many of the textile and knitwear exporting countries in the far east link their currencies to it, to a greater or lesser extent, mean that these countries have secured a major cost advantage in the British and other European markets. In the first quarter of this year, imports of pullovers from dollar-related countries have increased by 8 per cent., blouses by 43 per cent., dresses by 56 per

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cent., tracksuits by 31 per cent. and T-shirts by 31 per cent., even despite the restraints that exist under the multi-fibre arrangement.

Secondly, Turkey is a major problem for the textile industry in Leicester and elsewhere. Turkey's subsidies to its textile industry—assistance that is related to a company's investment, and which can amount to more than the total cost of the investment—and the fact that it can export duty-free to the EEC while it charges about 116 per cent. on our knitwear exports to Turkey, are particular grounds for justified complaint by the textile industry. Turkish garment exports to the United Kingdom increased by no less than 66 per cent., in terms of numbers of garments, in the first quarter of this year.

Thirdly, negotiations are due to take place shortly with China for renewal of the EEC's agreement with it under the MFA. China is now our second largest source of garment imports. It increased its sales in the United Kingdom in the first quarter of this year by 27 per cent. It is important that this dominant market position, and the fact that it has a state-controlled economy enabling it to price its exports at less than the economic rate, should be taken into account in the negotiations. Offering large-scale concessions to China would certainly result in major damage to the United Kingdom textile industry.

There is the issue also of the trade policy of the United States. The Textiles Bill, which is currently passing through Congress, would impose global quotas on all textiles and apparel imports into the United States for the next 10 years. It is vital that the Minister makes appropriate representations to the American Government to warn the President and Congress that if the Bill becomes law the Common Market will retaliate against United States trade interests because of the quotas.

I have referred to Corah, which is a Leicester firm. Despite its management problems, which were related to me by the chairman of the firm in a letter that he sent me last week, it appears that during a period of 12 months a total of 59 people were recruited by the knitwear division, even though there are grave financial difficulties. The 700 or so redundancies at Corah, including the closure of its knitwear department, are not a problem that is specific to Corah. There is a problem throughout the companies manufacturing knitwear. There is growing evidence of short-time working, and we know from recently published accounts from local Leicester companies and others that they are also experiencing problems in their knitwear departments. The publicised redundancies in Corah can only cause the industry more problems in recruiting skilled workers.

People, especially school-leavers, will not enter the industry to undertake training unless they see that the industry has a future. There is already an acknowledged shortage of skilled workers in the industry, especially sewing machinists. This is partly related to the image of the industry and to the failure of the industry to put resources into the training of skilled people.

Companies will now be considering investments in new machinery that will become productive in 1989 to 1992. Knitting machinery is becoming increasingly expensive, with a full set of knitting machines costing probably over £1 million. Companies will undertake this level of investment only if they are assured that they can obtain a return on the capital that they are planning to invest. The MFA and its associated quotas will end in 1991. To ensure that companies start planning their investments now, they will need an assurance that the MFA or some other international agreement will be maintained when the current agreement expires. An assurance from the Minister this evening on the continuation of controls on the import of clothing and textile products is essential once the MFA has been concluded.

In the city of Leicester some 25,000 people rely for their livelihood on the prosperity and continued existence of the clothing and textile industry. It is for the future of those 25,000 people that I am seeking assurances from the Government. For women in Leicester, clothing and textiles is the biggest single employer and for about 20 per cent. of female school leavers the clothing and textile industry provides the first job.

The problems are not dissimilar in the footwear industry in Leicester. The first boot and shoe manufacturer was William Moore, at Ansty in 1863. By the 1920s and 1930s, Leicestershire remained the second largest footwear-producing region in Britain specialising in women's shoes, for which it remains the leading area. In 1924, Leicestershire produced a quarter of the total output of footwear in Britain. By 1939, Leicestershire supplied half the output of children's shoes, two fifths of women's shoes and one twentieth of men's shoes in Britain.

That pre-eminent position has been altered dramatically as a result of the huge number of imports from abroad. It is worth reminding the Minister that last year we exported £186 million-worth of shoes and imported £797 million. Import penetration was 62 per cent. of the market in terms of numbers and 52 per cent. in terms of value.

Four countries stand out as having dramatically increased their exports in Britain. We imported 27 million pairs of shoes from Taiwan; 17 million pairs from South Korea; 4·47 million pairs from Indonesia; and 2·87 million pairs from the Philippines. The high level of import penetration is causing massive problems to firms in Leicestershire.

I welcome the decision by the European Commission to investigate imports from Taiwan and Korea. That represents a major change in the Commission's approach which until now has handled footwear import complaints on a country-by-country basis. Several other Common market countries have also lodged complaints about Taiwan and Korea. The fact that the Commission is prepared to act collectively on the issue shows that it is concerned for the future of the footwear industry. I urge the Minister to monitor the position and ensure that the European Commission fulfils its task.

Another concern of the footwear industry relates to 1992 and the arrival of the single European market and the possibility of VAT being imposed on children's shoes. I remind the Minister of the findings of the Munro report, commissioned by the Chancellor of the Exchequer in 1972. It concluded:

> "There is a strong connection between foot defects and ill-fitting shoes. Pressures on feet may pass unnoticed by children whose bones are not fully ossified, but may lead to serious problems, and even immobility in middle or old age."

The economic effect will be even more devastating. The report suggests that if VAT is imposed on children's shoes home production would decline by 3·6 million pairs.

Although that would be offset by imports of 2·2 million pairs, there would be a net loss on the market of 1·4 million pairs. The report states:

> "There would be a net loss of 1,500 jobs in manufacturing and 200 jobs among retailers . . . most of them small, independent businesses of the kind the government is most anxious to foster."

I seek the Minister's assurance tonight that he will not impose VAT on children's shoes before harmonisation or after it takes effect.

There is also the generalised scheme of preference. As the Minister is aware, under GSP rules a tariff ceiling is imposed on each of the beneficiaries. Once that level has been reached, full customs duties may be imposed at the request of a member state. The industry's view is that the figures currently being produced show that the Government should ask the Commission to restore duties on rubber and plastic footwear from Indonesia and Thailand, and on textile footwear coming from the Philippines. The crisis in the Common Market footwear industry is such that we cannot afford to let that opportunity go by.

It is impossible for me to pick up a Leicester newspaper without reading of some crisis in the local footwear industry. John Stone and Jeff Evans, who are correspondents for the local newspaper, have produced banner headlines such as "Worries over rise in shoe imports," "Probe into cheap shoes," "Huge rise in imports" and "China floods the shoe market". That last headline led into this extraordinary opening paragraph:

> "Hot on the heels of the 21p a pair Chinese knickers revelations comes an avalanche of 53p a pair Chinese shoes being sold at up to £3 a pair in British shops."

Yesterday, I received the sad news that the Wallace shoemaking firm in Moores road, Belgrave, in the heart of my constituency, is to close, with the loss of 25 jobs. That is put down to the fact that imports have been rising.

It is not all bad news. In Leicester, we take pride in the work done at Leicester polytechnic's school of design. It offers the only first degree and now higher degree courses of their kind in the country in shoe design. Last month, the polytechnic, with the help of Mr. John Irvin, a governor, who is chairman of Glovese Shoes, launched an appeal for a computer to help polytechnic students to design and manufacture shoes. The appeal is for just £30,000. If the Minister has brought the Government's cheque book with him tonight, I ask him to make a contribution to that worthy cause. I remind the Minister that the Government promised to assist the best practices task force, which was established to advise the industry. If the Minister has his cheque book with him, I hope that he will ensure that those funds are restored.

We all wear clothes and shoes. They are basic essentials without which we cannot survive, and the footwear and clothing industries cannot survive without the Government's support. That is why we want them to act. Rising imports, consequent British job losses, and the decline in morale are worthy of immediate and urgent action. Promises about the future will not save those industries. At two separate meetings with the Minister earlier this year, he asked for proof of damage. We have that proof and we urge him to act.

It is time that the Government backed British manufacturers and encouraged cities such as Leicester, which has historically produced some of the finest footwear and garments in the world. Those two Leicester industries are crying out for help. The Government and the Minister ignore their pleas at their peril.

10.17 pm

The Minister for Trade (Mr. Alan Clark): I have listened with great care to the speech of the hon. Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Vaz) and congratulate him on making a very full survey of two important industries and the problems they face. I would have preferred it had the hon. Gentleman been a little more generous in his reference to their achievements, which are by no means unremarkable.

Together, footwear and knitting provide about 29,000 jobs in the county and contribute in turn 17 per cent. and 22 per cent. respectively of national employment in those sectors. Footwear and textile firms have fought back hard since the recession of the 1970s and the early 1980s. I am very pleased to note improvements in productivity derived in many cases from the use of new technology.

The hon. Gentleman referred to a significant increase in import figures, but increases in exports, achieved in the face of ever-rising competition from low-cost and other overseas producers in export markets, have reached over the past 12 months 10 per cent. in footwear, 15 per cent. in knitwear, and 15 per cent. in clothing. Those industries deserve every congratulation on their achievement. The combination of increased imports and increased exports is largely a function of the general rise in prosperity throughout the United Kingdom.

I shall refer briefly to the widespread problem of skills shortages. Although I cannot make any immediate commitment in response to the question that the hon. Gentleman put to me relating to the Government's cheque book, I shall certainly consider his comment and write to him about it.

Training is primarily the responsibility of employers, who are best able to know their needs. However, the Government have given a lead by more than doubling expenditure on training since 1979. The Department of Trade and Industry is helping four colleges in the east midlands to update clothing and knitting equipment under the textile and clothing education equipment scheme. I am confident that improved experience for students and better courses for those already in industry will result.

Leicester firms are affected by the rise of imports into the United Kingdom, particularly in relation to ladies' fashion footwear and knitwear from the far east. As the hon. Gentleman said, we have discussed that matter on two previous occasions.

A surge in footwear imports is repeated in other EC countries. In response to separate approaches by the United Kingdom and other member states, the Commission has decided to carry out an investigation into footwear imports from Taiwan and South Korea. We have asked that the effect of Taiwanese imports on the ladies' fashion sector be particularly studied. As the hon. Gentleman knows, British footwear manufacturers are already substantially protected by a range of restraint measures against low-cost imports from state trading companies.

None the less, as the hon. Gentleman stated, despite the encouraging success of recent years, I recognise that the footwear, textile and clothing industries in Leicester still face some real problems. Recent fashion trends appear to

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have led to a decline in demand for knitwear and some styles of footwear, and that is undoubtedly giving manufacturers in Leicester considerable problems.

The hon. Gentleman mentioned the strength of the dollar. It is true that some of the newly industrialised countries of south-east Asia have their currencies tied to the dollar, although the United States is as anxious to break that link as we are. As the hon. Gentleman knows, the dollar has appreciated over the past few weeks. However, that has led to increased imports of textiles and clothing.

Our bilateral textile trade agreements under the multi-fibre arrangement, which govern much of the trade, do not place tight quotas on all textile imports. Many quotas have been under-utilised in previous years and are only now being fully used. Therefore, the rate of increase may slow down this year. For other textile categories, restraint action can be taken against a supplier country only when a convincing case of disruption to United Kingdom industry due to those imports can be made. I made that point clearly when the hon. Gentleman came to see me.

I can assure the hon. Gentleman that I am ready to consider pressing Brussels for action on unrestrained textile imports within the rules of the MFA or associated arrangements when a clear case of injury can be demonstrated. There are perfectly plain set criteria for establishing that, and my officials are in consultation with the industry and will be glad to assist in preparation of the case.

There has been a great deal of concern in the textile industry recently about trade with Turkey. The hon. Gentleman made that point succinctly, and I recognise that that is a highly unsatisfactory area and one that requires attention.

Turkish exports of textiles and clothing are covered by separate informal voluntary restraint arrangements between the EC and the Turkish textile and clothing export associations. The restraint arrangement was renewed last autumn after difficult negotiations. As a result of our express concern about acrylic yarn imports, a new restraint level was included. That level was higher than we in the industry would have liked, but at the time of the negotiations we had insufficient evidence of serious disruption.

Success in an anti-dumping complaint depends not only on establishing dumping but on showing that the injury is directly attributable to imports from the country in question. In the case of Turkish acrylic yarn, this is not proving easy. Although Turkish imports rose significantly in 1987, overall import penetration fell from 55·4 per cent. to 49·7 per cent. and the latest import figures that I have show that Turkish imports of acrylic yarn are much reduced this year.

I want to refer briefly to the draft Textiles Bill which has gone through the House of Representatives but on which the Senate has yet to vote. Although there could be another presidential veto, the textile and footwear lobby in Congress might still have this proposal enacted if it could obtain the necessary two thirds majority in both the House and the Senate to override the veto.

The United Kingdom Government and the Community continue to urge the Administration to stand firm against the Bill, and we emphasise that the Community will retaliate in the general agreement on tariffs and trade if the Bill is enacted in its present form. I remain optimistic about the outcome here.

Finally, I want to make a general point about the return of textiles and clothing to normal GATT rules. It is one of the many issues under consideration in the Uruguay round, but progress will depend heavily on progress on the other issues, including the discussions on tariffs, non-tariff measures generally, subsidies, dumping, the balance of payments and infant industry provisions in GATT, the safeguard clause and protection of intellectual property rights. In other words, it will not be treated on its own but will be nurtured very carefully and subsumed into the whole spectrum of progress in the GATT talks. We would wish to ensure that no undue disruption of the United Kingdom market in textiles and clothing would result from a return of textiles and clothing to normal GATT rules.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at twenty-six minutes past Ten o'clock.

House of Commons

Friday 1 July 1988

The House met at half-past Nine o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PETITION

Disabled Persons (Income Support)

9.35 am

Mr. Jack Ashley

(Stoke-on-Trent, South): I wish to present a petition:

To the Honourable the Commons of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland in Parliament assembled. The Humble Petition of members of the Disablement Income Group and 76,000 others sheweth:

That there is inadequate help for very severely disabled people in the new Income Support scheme . . . implemented in April 1988.

Wherefore your Petitioners pray that your Honourable House will enact legislation to introduce a special payment under the new scheme to very severely disabled people living in or wanting to live in the community whose disabilities are such that they cannot live on their own, this payment to help them pay for the personal and domestic assistance they require to live in homes of their own and to aviod institutionalisation.

And your Petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray, etc.

To lie upon the Table.

St. Christopher and Nevis

9.38 am

Sir William Clark (Croydon, South): At the beginning of this month, you, Mr. Speaker, commissioned the hon. Member for Tottenham (Mr. Grant), the Principal Clerk, Mr. Charles Winnifrith, and myself to present a Speaker's chair and desk on behalf of the House of Commons to the state of St. Christopher and Nevis in the Caribbean. Mr. Winnifrith was a great help and he guided us with great efficiency through the various formalities, for which we were most grateful.

When we arrived at St. Kitts, as it is called, we were met by the clerk to the National Assembly, Mr. Alfonso Lewis, who was most helpful throughout our stay, and we owe him our thanks. On Tuesday 7 June the Speaker, Mr. Speaker Buchanan, warmly welcomed us, and the hon. Member for Tottenham and I made short speeches thanking them for their kindness and presented the chair and desk on behalf of the House of Commons. As you know, Mr. Speaker, the chair and desk are magnificent pieces of furniture made in Sussex oak.

The Parliament in St. Kitts is continuously broadcast, but it does not meet as often as our Parliament and I do not think that many people heard our speeches. We had some competition because a test match was being played, and West Indians are probably more interested in test matches than in listening to politicians.

The Prime Minister, Dr. Kennedy Simmonds, gave us a warm welcome. He made an extremely good speech, thanked us and moved a resolution, which, with your permission, Mr. Speaker, I shall read out:

> "Be it resolved that this honourable House expresses its appreciation to the House of Commons for its gift of the Speaker's Chair and Desk to this honourable House in recognition of the attainment of independence in St. Christopher and Nevis on 19 September 1983.
>
> Be it resolved that this House recognises the longstanding relationship between the Government and the people of the United Kingdom and St. Christopher and Nevis and looks forward to the strengthening of these links through a bilateral arrangement or through the Commonwealth and other international organisations."

That resolution was dated 7 June 1988 and was signed by Alfonso Lewis, Clerk of the National Assembly.

St. Kitts and Nevis are interesting islands. I am fortunate because I know them fairly well as I was the director of a sugar factory in St. Kitts and consequently visited the island many times. The island has a long history with the United Kingdom. Many battles were fought between the French and the English and a fort, Brimstone Hill, has been refurbished and restored. It is worth visiting St. Kitts just to see Brimstone Hill if nothing else. The restoration has been carried out by Mr. Lloyd Matheson, and he should be congratulated.

The economy of the island is good and tourism is growing. However, the sugar production is not in good heart because cane cutters are difficult to find and more mechanical harvesters are needed.

We visited Nevis, which is about three miles from St. Kitts, at the invitation of its premier, Dr. Simeon Daniel. We should like to thank him for his hospitality and kindness. The independence that has been granted to St. Kitts and Nevis is unusual because, although there is one assembly, the Nevisians have the right to secede from St. Kitts if they wish.

[Sir William Clark]

Our visit to Nevis coincided with the inaugural meeting of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association and on 8 June Nevis joined that association as a full member. It may be that the hon. Member for Tottenham and myself are founder members of that association and, consequently, if there are any further trips, I believe that founder members may have to go. That is something for the future.

We spent an interesting day at Nevis and saw the entry for the marriage between Admiral Lord Nelson and the widow Mrs. Fanny Nisbet, which was interesting.

Speaker Buchanan sends his greetings to you, Mr. Speaker. We delivered your letter to him and I have one for you in return. I also have in my possession the resolution and I shall hand that, together with the letter, to you, Mr. Speaker, after the hon. Member for Tottenham has spoken. Speaker Buchanan is coming to this country later this month for the tercentenary celebrations of the Bill of Rights and we look forward to seeing him again.

May I say on behalf of the delegation that it was a great honour for my colleagues and I to be the emissaries of the House of Commons. The Kittians and Nevisians have a deep feeling of friendship for this country. We told the National Assembly that the gifts of the chair and the desk will be a constant reminder of the bond of friendship between St. Kitts, Nevis and the United Kingdom.

9.43 am

Mr. Bernie Grant (Tottenham): I agree with everything that the hon. Member for Croydon, South (Sir W. Clark) has said—and it is not often that I do that. The hon. Gentleman's knowledge of the St. Kitts and Nevis region was helpful to the delegation. I felt rather strange because the hon. Gentleman knew more about those islands in the Caribbean than I, and I come from that part of the world.

I was grateful to the House for giving me the opportunity to visit the islands and especially to my colleagues in the parliamentary Labour party who had the foresight to send someone who came from that region. I believe that that was the first time it had happened, but I hope that it is not the last.

We received excellent treatment from the parliamentarians and officers of St. Kitts and Nevis. Our hosts were extremely generous, and we were taken on a tour of the island. We were met by the Prime Minister and a number of other dignitaries. In Nevis we met the deputy governor general, who is more British than the normal West Indian.

We were especially pleased to present the gift, which was excellent. It has brightened up the atmosphere within the House of Assembly, and the parliamentarians were extremely pleased that the British Parliament should see fit to give them such an excellent gift. They were extremely pleased to welcome me as I am from that region. I believe that they were especially pleased that someone who originated in that area was able to come back to present such a gift.

As the hon. Member for Croydon, South said, St. Kitts is faced with some difficulties regarding its sugar cane crop. We understand that this year, because of a lack of cane cutters and mechanical harvesters, it will lose 50,000 tonnes of cane. That is a tremendous blow, but, as the hon. Gentleman said, the economy is strong and tourism is good. The island hopes that any revenue that might be lost from sugar cane production will be made up from tourism.

We visited Nevis, which is one of the most beautiful islands of the Caribbean. Mount Misery, which belies its name, is extremely beautiful. The top of the mountain is covered by clouds and snow. The Nevisians are fiercely independent and, as the hon. Member for Croydon, South said, they are proud of the fact that they may secede from St. Kitts should the need arise. We were there for the inaugural meeting of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, and we forced ourselves to become honorary members. We hope that we will be able to go back to celebrate the first anniversary of Nevis's membership of the CPA.

I took the opportunity to visit the colony of Anguilla, which declared independence some time ago. I believe that the representative from the British Government was chased off the island and the Government quickly sent troops and a squad of London bobbies to restore order. I am pleased to say that now all is calm on the island.

I met the governor of that island and I was invited to the Queen's birthday parade, which is one of the relics of the old Commonwealth days. I was pleased to visit the island and I was cordially met by the Chief Minister and others.

On my visit, a number of residents took the opportunity to raise the problem of wild dogs, which apparently roam the countryside killing sheep and injuring people. I have tabled a question to the Foreign Office about that matter, and I hope that I shall receive a satisfactory answer in due course.

I also wish to thank the staff of the British high commission and, in particular, the deputy high commissioner, Mr. Brian Taylor, and his wife. Not only did they look after the delegation, but they looked after me for about four hours while I was waiting to change planes at Antigua. May I also thank the official of the high commission in Trinidad who met me at the airport and made sure that I was able to get through without any difficulties.

I was very pleased and proud to represent the British Parliament in that part of the world, and I look forward to many similar trips.

Mr. Speaker: I thank both hon. Members for the way in which they discharged the tasks entrusted to them. I shall ensure that the resolution of the National Assembly of St. Christopher and Nevis is entered in the Journals.

BILL PRESENTED

EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES (FINANCE)

Mr. Chancellor of the Exchequer, supported by Secretary Sir Geoffrey Howe, Mr. Kenneth Clarke, Mr. John MacGregor, Mr. John Major, Mrs. Lynda Chalker, Mr. Norman Lamont, Mr. Peter Brooke and Mr. Peter Lilley, presented a Bill to amend the definition of 'the Treaties' and 'the Community Treaties' in section 1(2) of the European Communities Act 1972 so as to include the decision of 24 June 1988 of the Council of the Communities on the Communities' system of own resources and the undertaking by the Representatives of the Governments of the member States, as confirmed at their meeting within the Council on 24 June 1988 in Luxembourg, to make payments to finance the Communities' general budget for the financial year 1988: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time on Monday next and to be printed. [Bill 185.]

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

Ordered,

That the draft Pesticides (Maximum Residue Levels in Food) Regulations 1988 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the draft Farm Woodland Scheme 1988 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments &c.—*[Mr. Wakeham.]*

Fair Employment (Northern Ireland)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Boscawen.]*

9.50 pm

The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Mr. Tom King): The House will have enjoyed that interlude before these lengthier proceedings. I thought that my hon. Friend the Member for Croydon, South (Sir W. Clark) showed deep insensitivity by mentioning cricket and the subject of test matches against the West Indies. It is deeply to be deplored. I could not help wondering, as I listened to the hon. Member for Tottenham (Mr. Grant) expressing his deep appreciation that members of his party sent him to St. Kitts, whether they were trying to tell him something. But he has returned full of vigour and we very much enjoyed his contribution. I know that he will take my remarks in the spirit in which they are offered.

I welcome the opportunity of the debate to review fair employment in Northern Ireland. It was thought helpful to give the House an opportunity to debate such matters and, following the publication of the White Paper, for the House to be able to comment on the Government's proposals. We have published the White Paper and are preparing legislation which we shall bring before the House at the earliest opportunity, and it is proper that the House be allowed to discuss in detail the proposals in the White Paper. If I set the general scene against which we have taken our initiatives and we then listen, with great interest, to the contributions of right hon. and hon. Members, my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State will respond in detail to any points that arise.

This subject has been a thread that has continued through the fabric of the Houses of Parliament for centuries. We must ensure equal opportunities and fairness for all the people of the United Kingdom. Today we have come here to discuss equality of opportunity and the most effective ways to tackle unfair discrimination in employment in Northern Ireland.

In principle, the issue has united the House. We may not agree on every detail or every measure, but we are determined to seek fairness. The direct rule that we renewed in the House on Wednesday started against a background of perceptions, which the Cameron commission found significantly justified, of discrimination in several areas. If there was a programme of work on which successive Secretaries of State, of both parties, embarked during direct rule, it was to tackle the perceived problems of discrimination in housing, electoral practices and employment.

We have had significant success in housing. Of course, there are still problems of unfitness, and a great deal of work remains to be done, but there is now a wide perception that much work has been done to remove unfairness and discrimination in the allocation of housing and there is much greater confidence in the system operating under the Housing Executive.

The problems of electoral practices have been tackled, and the impact of proportional representation in some elections in Northern Ireland has been reflected in the composition of district councils and in the representation to the European Parliament.

We are having this debate because we are not satisfied with the progress in employment and recognise the need to make more progress. I say that because some people are

[Mr. Tom King]

trying to capture the subject as though they had suddenly identified it as a new and important area that has been of no interest to British Governments over the years. My first exhibit for the defence is the Fair Employment Northern Ireland Act 1976, which set up the Fair Employment Agency. Although those steps were taken and much good work has been done, there has been no major statistical change in the apparent disadvantage in employment for Catholic, as opposed to Protestant, members of the community in Northern Ireland.

I accept that there are reasons for that which have nothing to do with discrimination. They relate to location, demography and the relatively greater prosperity of the east as opposed to the west of the Province. After analysing all the reasons that might explain the problem, I am still satisfied that in many significant areas there is discrimination—some of it deliberate, some of it inadvertent, some of it merely maintaining past practices and some of it caused by a shortage of employment and the understandable human determination, of which we are all aware in our constituencies, to ensure that a member of the family or the child of a friend has the chance of a job, and to give him or her special help into employment. In the circumstances of Northern Ireland, that has the effect of perpetuating employment in one community to the detriment of the order.

I approach the debate recognising that there are perfectly honourable and understandable reasons why there is a difference in the relative prospects for employment, but that there are unexplained elements which can be accounted for only by determined efforts to maintain discrimination.

We have prepared our proposal on the basis of the most careful analysis of the background. My predecessor, the present Home Secretary, was concerned about what he perceived to be the lack of change and continuing imbalance. In 1985 he set in hand a study and since then we have been moving forward from his analysis. We have produced a succession of documents, with which the House will be familiar, including the consultation paper. I have with me the Government's new proposals on the fair employment support scheme, a guide to effective practice and the subject of our debate, the White Paper.

Against that background, one can appreciate the detailed way in which we have sought to study these matters. We have produced what we believe to be the most constructive and helpful proposals.

Mr. Martin Flannery (Sheffield, Hillsborough): I notice that first of the documents that the Secretary of State has enumerated was issued in 1973. What document—if any —of a major nature was issued before then on the question of employment?

Mr. King: There were certainly earlier attempts. I should need to check the exact titles, but the old Stormont Parliament produced documents on employment. Work was done earlier and I believe that legislation was passed. I shall check on that and seek to reply to the point.

We have now produced a White Paper and we hope to legislate at the earliest opportunity. Some people have said that although they can see that substantial work has been done, progress in dealing with matters that require urgent attention has been too leisurely. I must make it clear that although we believe that legislation is necessary, we cannot, as the House knows, produce legislation overnight and have it immediately carried through the House. Any legislation must, quite rightly, go through the normal procedures.

None the less, we have been anxious to ensure that what could be done should be done in advance of legislation. That is why we have launched educational initiatives in the public and private sectors. We have produced a support scheme for private sector employers and we have increased significantly the resources of the Fair Employment Agency.

Our proposals follow a substantial number of responses to the original consultative document. Those responses came from a wide range of employers, led by the CBI, and from the trade unions, the Churches and a wide range of individuals and political parties. We have, in particular, been helped by the report of the Standing Advisory Commission on Human Rights. I pay tribute to the quality of the work that it has done under its chairman, Mr. Seamus O'Hara. The House may be aware that his term of office is about to be completed. I have invited Sir Oliver Napier to succeed him, and I am pleased to tell the House that he has accepted that appointment and will become the new chairman. This is an appropriate time to pay tribute to Mr. O'Hara's outstanding leadership in a difficult, complex and controversial task.

I was very encouraged and impressed by the thoroughness of the SACHR report. Many of its recommendations are incorporated in our proposals—not all of them, but no one would expect every recommendation to be included. The commission can take encouragement from the obvious attention and value that we have given to its contributions.

The legislation that we shall bring forward will be tough. It will be much tougher than anything that has been done before, but it will be tough only for people who are determined to flout it. The legislation will require people to register and monitor. Failure to do so will expose people to the criminal law. Some people have taken exception to that. It is, however, a sanction that will apply only to people who are determined not to fulfil what will prove to be a very minor commitment in terms of time and effort, after some initial work. It will not be a burdensome obligation. It will ensure that everybody makes his contribution towards ensuring that the good name of Northern Ireland is established in employment practices, as in others. If an employer seeks to expand his business, it does him no good to operate within a Province that has a reputation sullied by allegations of discrimination and unfairness in employment.

The proposals can help by producing a virtuous, rather than a vicious, circle. They will build confidence, which in turn will create more jobs. That will help to tackle the problems of discrimination in employment more effectively. We know that we have no chance of achieving greater fairness and opportunities if jobs are being lost at the same time, because that builds a trench mentality in which people defend their jobs at all costs. That is why we have opposed so vigorously any proposals that smack of disinvestment or other sanctions that would cause jobs to be lost.

People who care about the issue, as we do, will agree. We do not have to prove our credentials. I am the representative of a Government who, in succession to other Governments, have sought to tackle the problems of discrimination in housing, electoral law and now in employment. We look for the good will and help of people to bring jobs that can genuinely create more employment for the people of both communities. That is at the heart of our proposals.

We seek affirmative action to remedy under-representation. We have set out approaches on the use of goals and timetables as set out in the code of practice. We shall give the new commission powers and sanctions to support it. At the heart of the proposals, however, we still seek to maintain the principle of appointment on merit. We have set ourselves clearly against quotas and reverse discrimination. Their effect could be catastrophic, in the climate of Northern Ireland, to the acceptance by the wider community of the fairness of equal opportunity proposals.

I recognise that this is a difficult area that has been the subject of much debate. There are many points of view and many people worry that the inclusion of the merit principle will somehow provide a loophole through which an escape from real progress will be made. Once we depart from the merit principle and the principle of equal opportunity, and somehow move into reverse discrimination, the whole nature of the approach is changed. We genuinely want to achieve equality of opportunity and appointment based on merit.

I have sought to set the scene, the climate, in which we have brought these proposals forward. Above all, I hope to show my personal commitment and the commitment of the Government to this task. The House will know that in our earlier documents the foreword to the guide for effective practice was by the Prime Minister. I was grateful for that, because it is important that everyone in Northern Ireland should understand that there is a commitment by the Government at the highest level.

I say to those who may feel threatened by our approach, and who may somehow feel that it is an attempt to disadvantage them, that it is profoundly to the benefit of everybody in Northern Ireland that the Province is seen to be a place where genuine equality of opportunity is practised. It is important to say that discrimination is not practised exclusively by one community against another. It is not all against Catholics. In some significant areas of employment there is significant evidence of discrimination against Protestants.

Our proposals are intended to achieve greater equality of opportunity for all. In the context of what I said on Wednesday in the House, if we can do that against a background of a genuine chance for more jobs and more opportunities, our proposals will form one of the elements of a real contribution to improving the atmosphere and the confidence in the Province.

On Wednesday we talked about the evil of sectarianism. It can be fed by a defensive attitude over jobs. We know about some of the problems that have existed in some factories. At every level and in every respect we wish to root out sectarianism from society. Our proposals and the legislation that we shall bring forward should do that. I hope that the response by leaders of opinion in the House and in the Province will not be to seek to exploit the grievances in the Province. Undoubtedly, some people will seek to do that. I hope that people will try to build on a much more constructive basis and see the need, in everybody's interests, for greater progress toward's achieving equality of opportunity. Against that background, I hope that people will see the contribution that these proposals can make towards improving the general atmosphere, confidence and good will in the Province. It is in that spirit that I introduce our proposals.

10.13 am

Mr. Kevin McNamara (Kingston upon Hull, North): May I first join the Secretary of State in the tribute that he paid to Mr. Seamus O'Hara, the retiring chairman of the Standing Advisory Commission on Human Rights. At a turbulent time in the history of Northern Ireland Mr. O'Hara played a notable part both as chairman of the commission and on the Housing Executive. The part that he played in guiding the commission at a difficult time has been instrumental in producing a quite remarkable piece of work in the recommendations on fair employment. I trust that he now has the opportunity to go back to his practice and perhaps repair some of his financial losses and make his peace with his partners. I hope that he will enjoy what he deserves—a successful remainder of his life. We are indebted to him.

Through Mr. O'Hara I should like to pay tribute to the members of the commission who laboured long and hard over this difficult and thorough report. It examines many of the myths and problems and looks carefully at the situation in Northern Ireland. The Secretary of State claims that the White Paper takes up much of what the commission recommends. I should like him to produce a chart of its 123 recommendations and say how many the Government have accepted and why. I say that because I think that in some ways the Government have not got to the root of the proposals. If the Secretary of State has produced such a chart, I shall be happy to receive it.

I am pleased that we are debating this White Paper because less than a year ago there was a suggestion that we would be talking merely about an unamendable order. It will be clear as my argument progresses that I have major reservations about some of the contents of the White Paper. However, I congratulate the Secretary of State and his Ministers on realising the considerable advantage, not only in Great Britain and in Northern Ireland but internationally, of airing the problems and legislating for them in the national Parliament. Having said that, I must make it clear that in some ways I am unhappy that there should be any need at all for a debate on such an issue. I know that the Secretary of State shares that view.

Inequality of opportunity in employment because of religion is the last of the great issues still unresolved from the civil rights marches of 1969 and before. Housing remains imperfect but the greatest disparities have disappeared. Political gerrymandering has been brought under control and great progress has been made there. The Fair Employment Act 1976 was introduced by a Labour Government and supported by all parties in the House. In many ways it was based on a document which I am surprised the Secretary of State did not mention in fairness to his former colleague—the van Straubenzee report. Twelve years after the passage of that Act serious problems still remain. There appears to have been no significant change in levels of religious inequalities of opportunity in Northern Ireland.

The Policy Studies Institute report of 1987 highlighted the continuing problem of discrimination and cited the striking example of Catholic male unemployment which stands at two and half times the level of Prostestant male unemployment. I supported the passage of the 1976 Act.

[Mr. Kevin McNamara]

To my regret, the Policy Studies Institute study also shows that the Act has had little effect upon the practices of employers. Those are my two starting points.

One of the major problems which sparked the troubles of 1969 remains largely unchanged and the laws that we have passed to deal with it have had little effect. It is from the perspective of those two points that I shall examine the White Paper. The Opposition want to see the problem dealt with now and dealt with effectively. The Government claim to want to introduce effective and hard-hitting legislation to end religious inequalities of opportunity in Northern Ireland. I do not doubt the Government's good will, but I doubt the effectiveness of the measures that they are taking to seek to achieve that objective.

We should look at the change in attitude in Government circles since 1966-67 to the present day. Those of us who were engaged in the House or in Northern Ireland in the civil rights movement and in the agitation in the Province, will remember the moves made by the Trades Union Congress of Northern Ireland Committee of the Irish TUC in the days of the old Stormont Parliament to discuss these matters. At this point I should like to pay tribute to the work of the Northern Ireland congress on this matter. It has been in the forefront not only of trying to take sectarianism and paramilitaries out of the workplace but in trying to give a lead to those elements in the work force who did not see the need to end discrimination in the interests of everybody.

When the delegation from the Labour movement in Northern Ireland went to see the then Minister for Commerce, Mr. Faulkner, the record shows:

> "When asked whether the Government would not be prepared to give, at the least, a lead to private employers, Mr. Faulkner replied very emphatically that the Government would not feel justified in interfering with the policies of private employers."

One might say that that was Thatcherism 12 years ahead of its time.

Yet, the Government's White Paper says:

> "It is wrong in itself that anyone's employment prospects should suffer on account of their religious background."

I acknowledge that we have come some distance but I shall discuss whether we have come far enough. I want to look at some matters, which the Government have not examined and which the Secretary of State did not mention in his speech, but which have persuaded this most unlikely of Governments to propose a package of legislative and administrative measures designed to ensure that dilatory private and public employers will end direct and indirect discrimination.

The Government have to satisfy two distinct groups with their proposals. First, they have to satisfy the people of Northern Ireland and the House and then external groups, especially in the United States. That may be regrettable, but it has arisen as a result of the way in which the issue has been put back on the agenda. That is spelt out in a careful and detailed assessment of the White Paper to be published in the *Industrial Law Journal* in September, copies of which were sent to all the major parties. In his paper, Dr. Christopher McCrudden of Lincoln college, Oxford, an acknowledged expert on the subject, said:

> "Inequality of opportunity between Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland has again become a political issue, largely due to pressure from outside the Province. A campaign in the United States was begun to bring pressure to bear on American corporations, state legislatures and municipal Governments with investments in Northern Ireland to adopt a set of anti-discrimination principles called the 'MacBride principles'. The MacBride campaign, despite well-orchestrated opposition from the British and American Governments, has been popular with state legislatures. By June 1988 seven states had already enacted legislation requiring American companies in which they invest to ensure fair employment practices in their Northern Ireland subsidiaries, and many more were considering similar moves."

Those seven states have now been increased to eight. They are eight of the wealthiest and most populous states in the country: New York, Massachusetts, New Jersey, Connecticut, Rhode Island, Maine and Minnesota and Illinois. The last three were added this year. Two other large states are on the point of enacting MacBride legislation. In Florida it has passed both legislative Houses and is awaiting signature by the governor. In Michigan it has been through the House of Representatives and is due for a Senate vote within weeks. When it has been enacted in those 10 states, the bulk of total state investment funds in the United States—nearly $30 billion in all—will be subject to the requirement that companies with subsidiaries in Northern Ireland abide by the MacBride principles. About $1·2 billion invested in Northern Ireland is affected by that. An awful lot of jobs are at stake if the Government do not get their legislation right.

In addition to state legislatures, many major cities—New York city, Boston, Philadelphia, Detroit and Chicago among them—have adopted the principles. The Democratic presidential candidate, Michael Dukakis, signed them, as governor of Massachusetts, and has endorsed them as part of his presidential campaign. In an interview with *The Times* on 17 June this year he made it clear that he would support the principles. He said:

> "Based on our experience it just isn't enough to say, 'Well, we are against it.'. If there's been an historic pattern of discrimination then you really have to take steps to affirmatively act."

In the United States Congress, Representative Brian Donnelly and the chairman of the Friends of Ireland—the moderates on the issue—have legislation on the MacBride principles in the pipeline.

The problem for the Government as they consider their legislation on fair employment is that many employers in Northern Ireland are already worried that the MacBride principles will place an impossible burden on them, requiring them, for instance, to guarantee the security of employees travelling to and from work. That is an impossible thing for a private employer to do, and in any case it usurps the role of the state and the civic authorities. They are also worried about a possible conflict in law between the MacBride principles and the Government's proposals.

My hon. Friends and I have made it clear that we support the spirit behind the MacBride principles but that we seek all-embracing legislation that would go beyond the principles in substance and application, while avoiding any practical problems that may be inherent in the principles as drafted. We are particularly worried about the possibility of reverse discrimination and various other matters. Therefore, it is not the spirit that we oppose but the practicalities. The argument should go beyond the MacBride principles. We should acknowledge that they played a part and ask what the Government are doing to overcome the problems and whether their proposals in the White Paper go some way to meet them.

That catalogue of steps in the United States is not the only cloud upon the Government's horizon if they do not get their policies right. The attempts in the United States to legislate for equality of opportunity in Northern Ireland in the face of British tardiness have gone even further. Legislation on defence procurement has just emerged from a conference or joint committee of Members of both Houses of Congress. Attached to it is an amendment, sponsored by Representative Joseph Kennedy, in the House of Representatives, and Senator Edward Kennedy, in the Senate, which affects all those in Northern Ireland from whom the Pentagon makes equipment purchases. It requires them to conform to United States anti-discrimination legislation on pain of loss of the right to tender for Pentagon business. That is not punitive legislation from liberal Democrats of Irish extraction, as some might wish to represent it; it is a compromise that emerged with Republican support in both Houses, against which the British ambassador lobbied furiously

I shall quote from a press statement on the subject. It said:

> "Congressman Joseph P. Kennedy II announced today that the conference considering the Department of Defence Authorisation Bill have adopted his provision that prevents the largest employer in Northern Ireland from receiving funds from its upcoming"—

a nice American phrase—

> "$60 million aircraft contract with the United States Army unless it commits to support equal employment opportunities for Catholics.
>
> 'I think that this action by the US Congress sends a strong message to the hundreds of thousands of Catholics in Northern Ireland and their supporters around the world that America is ready to use its influence, and the power of its pocket book, to try to correct the wrongs that have existed for too long in the North of Ireland', Kennedy said.
>
> Kennedy also announced the results of his work with Michael W. Stone, Under-Secretary of the Army, in securing specific commitments from Short Brothers of Belfast, Northern Ireland, the contractors for the planned C-25 (Sherpa) aircraft. Specifically, Shorts committed to undertake a programme to develop a subcontracting system for subcontractors within Northern Ireland that have predominantly Catholic work force. Approximately $5 million of the $60 million Sherpa contract will be used for this purpose.
>
> Shorts also agreed to specific employment goals for the recruitment of Catholics as new hires. Under the timetable, 17·5 per cent. of the new hires in 1988 will be Catholics; 25 per cent. in 1989; and 33 per cent. in 1990. Currently, Catholics represent 16 per cent. of the new hires at Shorts.
>
> Kennedy described Shorts' acceptance of goals and timetables for minority hiring as a particularly important breakthrough."

Kennedy then went on to talk about his visit to Shorts earlier this year.

Shorts, no doubt doing its best to avoid domestic flack, issued on Saturday what I can only describe as a non-denial denial which was reported in a *Belfast Telegraph* article headed,

> "Planemakers deny Congressman's 'RC quotas' claim".

I do not want to make life difficult for Shorts, but it might help to clarify things if the Minister will confirm or deny Mr. Kennedy's statement that Shorts undertook 17·5 per cent. new Catholic hirings, 25 per cent. new hirings and 33 per cent. new hirings in 1988, 1989 and 1990, respectively.

I read with interest the article that appeared in the *Belfast Telegraph,* but newspaper articles in the United States spelt out clearly the pattern of events which took place. They disclose that Representative Kennedy contacted the Under-Secretary of State for the Armed Forces and that the Under-Secretary went to Short Brothers with Representative Kennedy's message, only to return with a proposition that Representative Kennedy would not accept. It appears that the Minister returned to Shorts and came back with a compromise. If that is the position, it demonstrates the significance of these matters in federal legislation in the United States.

That is not the last of it, and the Secretary of State and his Cabinet colleagues must be sighing with relief that that is all that they have to face at present. Some time ago I warned the Secretary of State that if the Government did not get their act together they would be dealing with measures affecting United States investment in Britain as well as in Northern Ireland. If it had not been for some effective Israeli lobbying, Israel being alarmed that it would be affected, the Kennedy amendments would have applied to British as well as to Northern Ireland contractors to the Pentagon. As an aside, it would seem that the Israeli lobby is more powerful than the British lobby in Washington, despite our special relationship. On that, I have the Secretary of State's full support.

Mr. David Alton (Liverpool, Mossley Hill): I was interested in what the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara) said about Shorts. He will have seen the publication that was produced by the Northern Ireland Office in April 1987, entitled "Fair Treatment for All". If the figures in that publication are to be believed—I refer specifically to those on page 5—the initiatives that Shorts has taken to improve Catholic employment in Shorts have been useful and the trend is in the right direction.

Mr. McNamara: Yes, the trend is in the right direction. Whether Shorts has gone far or fast enough is another matter. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman would agree with me about that.

It is clear that in determining their policies the Government have responded to outside pressures. I do not doubt their good will, but, as the MacBride campaign developed, so did the amount of money that was directed to the Fair Employment Agency along with the number of staff. The success of the MacBride campaign can be set against figures of that sort. The campaign wonderfully concentrated the Government's mind.

It is clear that the Government have fundamentally mishandled their response to concerns in the United States from the start. Instead of welcoming the concern and interest and taking the campaigners on board in their efforts to end inequalities of opportunity, the Government have sought to confront those involved. They should have been able, especially since the publication of the Standing Advisory Commission on Human Rights report, to show that their own proposals are at least as positive, practical and all-embracing as those being proposed and introduced in the United States, and much fairer. The MacBride principles apply only to United States investment. I understand that they would not include all sorts of foreign investment, and that would be scarcely fair. The Government have effectively heightened distrust and suspicion so that even some of their more positive proposals have been dismissed as cosmetic.

Cities, states, the United States Congress and, potentially, the next President are legislating for fair employment in Northern Ireland while we are still discussing the White Paper. The Donnelly Bill, which

[Mr. McNamara]

would apply to all United States subsidiaries in Northern Ireland, would require affirmative action, which the White Paper proposes should be made illegal. What choice would that leave United States companies? Would they pull out or defy their own Government? The principle of the set-aside provision of $5 million in the Shorts contract was addressed in the excellent report on fair employment by the SACHR, but it is ignored in the White Paper. What are Shorts and other contractors to do about such requirements in future? Are they to shut their eyes and hope that they will go away?

The Government must realise that United States pressure will not go away. It is here to stay and it must be addressed. I am not sure whether the White Paper does that effectively.

I shall direct my remarks now to some of the specifics of the White Paper, but in the course of discussing them I shall return to some of the issues that I have already mentioned. My colleagues and I want to see effective legislation that will end discrimination and inequalities in Northern Ireland. Such legislation requires that attention be paid to the devil of the detail because the devil is in the detail. Attention must be paid to detail as well as to the grand design. We have examined the detail of the Government's proposals and we find either perfidy—it seems that the drafters hoped that no one would read the fine print—or a failure to understand what is needed to address the problem. It seems also that the drafters failed to do their homework.

There is much in the White Paper with which we agree but there are seven specific issues to which I shall refer. I do not want to detain the House on the development of what might be called the McCrea principle. The seven issues that I wish to bring to the attention of the House are as follows: the so-called merit principle; affirmative action; indirect discrimination; the appeals procedures; grant and contract compliance; the proposed code of conduct; and targets and timetables.

The Secretary of State made much of the merit principle, which was introduced for the first time into British proposals in the consultative paper that was issued by the Department of Economic Development in 1986. It was a sop to the Prime Minister's instinctive dislike for anything which could be construed as interfering with the diktats of the market or giving preference to some troublesome minorities. In the form in which it was defined in the consultative paper, it threatened to gut the proposed legislation before it ever reached the House. The ridiculousness of proposing legislation to deal with a major problem of discrimination and inequality while specifying that remedies cannot address the causes of that problem will be clear to hon. Members on both sides of the House.

The White Paper does not provide an alternative definition, but, fortunately, it makes it clear that the Government have shifted their position considerably, and I welcome that. As the term is used in the White Paper, merit would apply only at the stage of appointment and would operate

"in the context of an overall programe of affirmative action."

It would allow some affirmative action but it would be harmfully restrictive at the appointment stage. For example, it would prevent employers from giving due weight to social factors, such as one candidate being employed and the other unemployed.

The United States audience, which the Government need to address in putting forward these proposals, will be aware that British and United States discrimination legislation has so far survived without the strange and problematic concept that is set out in the White Paper. In many instances it will enable a coach and horses to be driven through the legislation that stems from the White Paper. The American audience will wonder at the Government's insistence on a nebulous, restrictive and dubious concept. It will be necessary to convince it, my right hon. and hon. Friends and the people of Northern Ireland that the concept of merit will not restrict the effectiveness of the legislation. At least it should be confined to the code of practice, where it could be thrown out relatively easily if necessary, and specifically defined to allow for essential affirmative action measures to be taken. The affirmative action that is taken will be crucial to the success of the proposed legislation.

The feature that concerns us especially about the affirmative action proposals outlined in the White Paper is that they are considerably narrower than those currently provided for by race relations and sex discrimination legislation in Britain. The White Paper outlines possible types of affirmative action with which we are in broad agreement, but whereas existing British legislation specifically exempts affirmative action from anti-discrimination provisions governing both direct and indirect discrimination, the Government's proposals in the White Paper limit the exemption to indirect

That would mean, for instance, that whereas it would be legal in Britain for an employer to make special arrangements to interview pupils from a school attended predominantly by members of an under-represented group, that would be illegal in Northern Ireland. That is ludicrous. It would severely limit the ambit of affirmative action and run counter to what is accepted practice in both Britain and the United States of America. In such circumstances, the people of Northern Ireland would have every right to demand to know why they were being denied effective legislation. At the very least, there must be provision for the encouragement of applications from, and specific training for, under-represented groups, as is allowed in Britain.

To return to an earlier theme, I should say that the Donnelly Bill would specifically require religion-specific training provision. There is the real potential here for British and United States legislation to meet head on, with disastrous implications for jobs.

My next point relates to indirect discrimination. We welcome the Government's stated intention of outlawing indirect discrimination for the first time in Northern Ireland, but we are concerned that that step should be taken in an effective way. There are two aspects to our worries. The White Paper has defined indirect discrimination in terms of what cannot be shown to be "justifiable" on jobs-related criteria. In explaining "justifiable", it uses the term "necessary". Since case law in Britain suggests that "justifiable" is open to too wide an interpretation in the courts, we would like to see the word "necessary" used instead. The term should be "necessary" discrimination rather than "justifiable".

In addition, the White Paper's definition in its use of the terms "requirement or condition" may fail to include the complete range of discriminatory practices that should be dealt with under the proposals. For that reason, the Opposition would prefer to see the definition provided by the standing advisory committee that indirect discrimination should constitute:

> "Any practice, policy or situation which is continued, allowed or introduced and which has a significant adverse impact on a particular section of the community defined by religion and which cannot also be demonstrated to be necessary."

That is the definition that we would like in the legislation. So far the Government do not appear even to have reacted to SACHR's proposed definition.

People in the United States—that most litigious of countries—will understand my reason for raising the question of the appeals procedures on my fourth point. The Opposition cannot support multi-stage appeals procedures in law against the enforcement decisions of the new Fair Employment Commission. The British experience has shown that legal harassment can emasculate enforcement commissions. It has long been accepted that one of the weaknesses of the Commission for Racial Equality in Britain has been excessive timidity in issuing enforcement notices in the face of possible litigation by private employers. It would be a great mistake if the proposals were to leave the FEC in a similar position. The Government have moved some way to simplifying procedures, but continue to resist the recommendations contained in the SACHR report that appeals on pattern and practice cases should go direct to the High court. Similarly, they have given no sign of an intention to limit the scope for judicial review.

Grant and contract compliance has been a particularly difficult issue for the Secretary of State and his colleagues. We are all well aware that while he was pushing for it in Northern Ireland, his Cabinet colleagues were seeking to outlaw it on this side of the water. I should begin by congratulating the right hon. Gentleman on sticking to his guns on the issue. Having said that, I think that he needs to look again at how effective those guns, as presently loaded, are likely to be.

Contract and grant compliance, used properly, can be among the most effective tools available to the Government for the enforcement of anti-discrimination measures. The danger at present is that the Government will throw away that advantage by circumscribing them so severely that they cease to be effective. At present, the White Paper proposes to exclude non-Government public sector grants and contracts—for example, Harland and Wolff would be excluded—to exclude subcontractors, and to limit the proposal to those grants linked to employment creation or maintenance, thus cutting out large sections of the public sector, including local education authorities, agencies, National Health and so on. In addition, the Government have added a rider and proposed a general security or public interest exception.

We recognise why on occasions that should be necessary, particularly in view of the security position in Northern Ireland. However, we also believe that the pecise circumstances in which that defence may be advanced should be tightly drawn. We would like to see the implementation of SACHR's recommendation that appeals against the proposal should go to the ombudsman. We recognise the necessity of the proposal, but there should be more and better safeguards for the individual.

If we are looking for a test of the Government's determination to introduce effective legislation, the question of grant and contract compliance must be it. There are no reasons to limit that in the way that it appears to be limited at the moment in the White Paper. There is no greater spur for an end to the evil than the fact that Government grants, assistance and contracts are specifically and directly connected with grant and contract compliance provisions.

The Kennedy amendment illustrates exactly how effective contract compliance can be. Shorts was faced with the stark choice of losing a $60 million order for its aircraft or signing an agreement to undertake specific measures to remedy its religious imbalance in its work force. In addition, it had to agree to subcontract $5 million of the work directly to companies employing predominantly workers from the under-represented part of the community. It would not be helpful to our image in the United States if we were less wholehearted in our measures than the United States Congress.

The penultimate issue in my list is the code of practice which, the White Paper states, will occupy a central position in the new system. The White Paper concedes that the code of practice, which spells out proposed affirmative action measures, should be part of the legislation rather than outside it. Although it continues to resist making it universally applicable, it concedes that compliance with specific provisions in the code can be required of individual employers through the issuing of legally enforceable directions by the new Fair Employment Commission.

Despite the progress that has been made, the Government continue to resist incorporation in the primary legislation. The Opposition believe that it should be in the primary legislation, but the Government deny that even to the principles of the code, let alone the code itself. The Government continue to insist that, on its inception, the code should be drawn up by the Department of Economic Development—the Department which, for 10 years, complacently refused to acknowledge that there were any major inequalities persisting in Northern Ireland. After that, the code will go to the new Fair Employment Commission and then to the House. I concede that there are practical problems about that process.

Although the code will come before the House at the same time as the primary legislation—a concession that we welcome—neither the code nor the underlying principles will be subjected to detailed scrutiny in Committee or to legislative amendment. That is completely unacceptable to us.

The affirmative action proposals, as I said earlier, will be central to the success of the legislation. It would make a mockery of our procedures in this House if right hon. and hon. Members on either side were to be denied the opportunity to seek to amend the crucial part of this legislation. I began this morning by congratulating the Secretary of State on seeing the sense of legislating by a Bill on this matter. The same logic demands that at least the principles and definitions which will inform the code of practice should be in the primary legislation.

Mr. James Couchman (Gillingham): As I understand the White Paper, the code of practice which will be produced initially will be an interim code of practice. The new commission will amend that as it sees fit in the circumstances in which it finds itself working. Does the

[Mr. James Couchman]

hon. Gentleman believe that it is appropriate that an interim code of practice should be written into the primary legislation?

Mr. McNamara: The code will come through one, two or possibly three filters. First, it will come through the new Fair Employment Commission. The commission will prepare the code which will have to go to the parent Department, the Department of Economic Development. The commission will have to decide what it can get past the DED, and the record ofthe DED has not been terribly good. The DED will consider the matter and decide what it will give to Ministers. Ministers will have to consider what they can get through this place with the least possible row in an order lasting one and half hours. The order will not be amendable. That is why we should have the principles and at least the definitions—if we cannot have more of the code—in the legislation.

Dr. McCrudden continued:

> "the minimum safeguard must be that the primary definitions, those of direct and indirect discrimination, the scope of the affirmative action permitted to an employer, the definition of equality of opportunity, and the scope of remedies available to the FEC must all be in the primary legislation itself. The Code is only suitable for advice, guidance and interpretation, not basic definitions."

We know that people will work from basic definitions.

My seventh and last point relates to targets and timetables. The Government have accepted that employers should adopt targets and timetables for remedying any religious imbalance in their work force. We are unhappy that the Government should continue to recommend that targets and timetables should be used only in relation to applications, but we are pleased that they have accepted the principle.

The Government have resisted strenuously in the White Paper the standing advisory committee's recommendation that targets and timetables should be established for the legislation. If the Government genuinely want to remedy inequalities, surely the most basic thing is to set targets against which the effectiveness of their proposals can be measured. Their refusal to do that suggests that, even before legislating, they are trimming their sails to meet the squalls of possible failure.

At the start of the White Paper the Government use evidence of disproportionate unemployment among Catholic males as an indicator of inequality, but in the final two extraordinary paragraphs, they specifically reject unemployment differentials as measures of the same inequality.

Having made it clear that they regard legislation as part of a package with social, geographical and economic elements designed to tackle inequalities, the Government argue against the use of unemployment as an indicator on the ground that the unemployment differentials between Catholics and Protestants will be at least as strongly influenced by social, geographical and economic factors as by fair employment policies. I found it regrettable that the Secretary of State should use those arguments when the standing advisory committee, based on the PSI evidence, exploded the argument that size of family, training, geographical location or social material could ever account for more than 0·5 per cent. of unemployment.

Mr. Tom King: I was giving a balanced account.

Mr. McNamara: That would be most unusual for any Tory. My right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition once described the well-balanced Nationalist as one with a chip on each shoulder. The same is probably true of Tories, except that in their case it is the City on one and Lloyd's on the other. The Government have refused to accept the argument advanced by SACHR or to commit themselves to a goal against which they can measure the effectiveness of their legislation. Our fear is that the 1976 legislation may be replicated here.

I accept, as the right hon. Gentleman said, that we need more investment to get more jobs, but we must not forget that more than 100,000 jobs change hands in Northern Ireland each year. Having rejected unemployment differentials as a measure of effectiveness, the White Paper uses them as an argument against setting any targets or timetables. It is difficult, in the face of such specious and tendentious argument, to reach any conclusion other than that the Government are not convinced that their proposals will work and that they do not want to provide future critics with ammunition. We should like to be more confident—and I have suggested how we could be more confident—about the working of the legislation.

I have spent some time talking about the influence of the United States of America. Those of us who were engaged in the civil rights movement in Northern Ireland or in this House in the middle and late 1960s will remember the influence that the civil rights movement in the United States had on us. It is strange, but if we now go to the United States and speak to Senators or trade union officials, they say, "What the hell is the problem? We went through it 20 years ago. After six months it was all over. What are you worried about?" They cannot understand why the Government are dragging their feet.

Mr. Harold McCusker (Upper Bann): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. McNamara: With the greatest respect, the hon. Gentleman could have intervened earlier. I have spoken for some time, and I have just reached my peroration.

I want to pay a compliment to the influence that the United States had on us in the 1960s, especially in regard to discrimination against blacks. I have already mentioned the steps taken by Senator Kennedy and by his nephew Representative Kennedy, but I should like to mention another Kennedy—President J. F. Kennedy, who made a statement in 1963 when the Americans were at a crossroads. In their case, the problems were racial, and in ours they are religious. He said:

> "It is not enough to pin the blame on others, to say that this is a problem of one section of the country or another, or to deplore the facts that we face . . . Those who do nothing are inviting shame as well as violence. Those who act boldly are recognising right as well as reality."

We hope that the Secretary of State will act boldly and use what I have said, what my right hon. Friend has said and what is in the SACHR report to ensure that we get effective, prompt and bold legislation that meets the dream of the civil rights movement in Northern Ireland, and that will eventually achieve equality in employment in Northern Ireland.

10.57 am

Mr. James Couchman (Gillingham): I am pleased to have caught your eye, Madam Deputy Speaker, although in view of the emptiness of the Chamber, that was not particularly difficult.

I rise to speak as an English Member who takes an interest in Northern Irish affairs, and as an employer for many years of Irish people. I, my father and my grandfather before me have employed many thousands of Irish people during the decades that we have run public houses in London. We have employed them in all grades of work and, even today, nine out of 10 of my managers and manageresses are Irish.

I believe that I can say without equivocation that nobody whom we have employed has ever been employed on the basis of his or her religious beliefs or upbringing. It is incredible to me that such a qualification should play any part in recruitment, employment or promotion policy. Surely, when one takes on a new employee, one looks for a willingness to work, competence to do the job, honesty, courteousness and a good appearance. One might consider educational qualification or success, or the training of a potential employee, if one is looking for an academic or specific skill, but surely no employer in normal circumstances will examine religious belief or background as a qualification for employment.

I know that people encounter bias, prejudice and discrimination on the basis of gender, the colour of their skin, a disability or deformity from which they suffer and even sexual proclivities.

It is clear from the figures in the White Paper that people in Northern Ireland encounter major discrimination on the basis of which of two sorts of Christian religion they have been brought up in. The figures for dependency on social security in paragraph 1.5 make it clear that Catholic Nationalist families are much more likely to be dependent than are Protestant Loyalist families. That cannot be right, and from that point of wrongness people such as myself——

It being Eleven o'clock. MR. SPEAKER *interrupted the proceedings, pursuant to Standing Order No. 11 (Friday sittings).*

Sports and Leisure Facilities (Competition)

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Colin Moynihan): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I should like to make a statement about the Government's proposals following the recent consultation exercise on competition in the management of local authority sport and leisure facilities.

My right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for the Environment and for Wales and my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland have considered very carefully the wide-ranging responses to consultation. They have decided that the competitive tendering regime provided for in part I of the Local Government Act 1988 should be applied to the management of sport and leisure facilities. We will therefore lay an order under section 2(3) of the Act to make the management of sport and leisure facilities a defined activity for the purposes of the Act. Before laying the order we shall undertake the consultation on it provided for by section 2(4).

The competitive tendering regime should yield greater value for money from local authority expenditure on sport and recreation through more effective management and marketing of facilities, and a greater sensitivity to the needs of the community. At the same time, we have recognised the main concerns raised by consultees. As a result, subject to consultation on the terms of the order, we propose, first, to exempt from compulsory competition the management of all sports facilities provided or made available for community use under section 53—whether alone or in conjunction with section 41—of the Education Act 1944, and, in Scotland, under section 6 of the Education (Scotland) Act 1980. This applies to facilities at primary and secondary schools and further education establishments. The exemption from compulsory competition would also apply to facilities that are termed "dual-use" and "joint use" facilities, and to community centres in Scotland.

We propose, secondly, not to limit or restrict local authorities' existing discretionary powers over pricing, admission and opening hours policies under section 19 of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 and section 16(1) of the Local Government and Planning (Scotland) Act 1982.

Those decisions should help ensure that significant further progress is made towards maximising the use of educational facilities provided by ratepayers and taxpayers, and that disadvantaged groups and promising young sportsmen and women continue to have every opportunity to make use of sport and leisure facilities.

We propose that compulsory competition should apply to a range of facilities provided by local authorities under section 19 of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 and, in Scotland, under section 15(2) of the Local Government and Planning (Scotland) Act 1982. Those facilities would include sports centres, leisure centres, swimming pools, leisure pools, golf courses, bowling greens, putting greens, tennis courts, athletics tracks, pitches for team games and other games, cycle tracks, water sports and leisure facilities whether inland or coastal, bowling facilities. Community or village halls, where sport is a secondary or minor activity, would not be included.

[Mr. Colin Moynihan]

We also propose that the management function should include taking bookings; collection of and accounting for fees and charges; cleaning and day-to-day maintenance of buildings, grounds, sports surfaces, plant and equipment; supervising activities—for example, lifeguards at swimming pools; providing instruction in the sport and recreational activities offered; catering and the provision of refreshments; provision and hire of sports equipment; paying for heating, lighting and other services; marketing and promotion of the facilities; employment, and relevant training of staff to undertake these duties.

There is some overlap between that management function and other activities aleady included in the 1988 Act. Under section 2(5) of that Act authorities will be free to decide whether the catering, cleaning and ground maintenance aspects of the management function are best treated as part of sport and leisure management, or as part of those other activities. It would also be for local authorities to decide whether tender specifications for the management of their sport and leisure facilities should be drawn up on an individual facility basis or otherwise.

As regards the implementation timetable, we appreciate the concerns of many local authorities and the private sector about the potential difficulties of bringing competition to this activity in addition to the activities on the face of the Act. We accept that authorities and the private sector need time to prepare for this aspect of competition. Consequently we propose that all counties, non-metropolitan districts, parish councils, local authority joint committees and Scottish local authorities will have to have exposed the management of their facilities to competition by 1 January 1992; that half the London boroughs and half the metropolitan districts will have to have done so by 1 August 1992; and that the remainder of the London boroughs and metropolitan districts will have to have done so by 1 January 1993.

We further propose that those London boroughs and metropolitan districts included in groups 1, 2 and 3 of the Department's "Implementation of Competition" letter, issued to all chief executives on 30 March, should comprise the authorities that will be required to introduce competition to their sport and leisure facilities by 1 August 1992, and that authorities in groups 4, 5 and 6 of that letter should do so by 1 January 1993. A separate announcement is being made about the proposed implementation timetable for Wales.

We appreciate and welcome the desire of some local authorities to press on voluntarily with competition in this activity in advance of the necessary legislative provision. We hope that, in advance of the necessary consultation on the terms of the order, the information set out above is helpful to those authorities. We aim to begin consultation on a draft order before the turn of the year.

Finally, and further to my reply to the hon. Member for Stalybridge and Hyde (Mr. Pendry) on 25 January, in column 40, copies of the responses to the consultation paper issued in September 1987 have been placed in the Library.

Mr. Denis Howell (Birmingham, Small Heath): The confused thinking in the Minister's statement clearly explains why the Minister hoped to make his announcement by means of a written answer, which would have been outrageous and no doubt accounts for the leaks in this morning's editions of *The Times* and *The Independent*about what he would say. The statement should have been made in the House right from the beginning. Hon. Members are entitled to know the result of such disastrous and confusing Government policies.

The decision to exclude educational and dual-use facilities and to allow local authorities to set pricing policy and determine public interest policy—that is, the philosophy of sport for which they are providing—is to be welcomed. It will, however, make nonsense of everything else that the Minister has told us today. It is important to clear up the confusion about the right of local authorities to decide pricing policy.

On 22 July last year, the Secretary of State said:

> "The enabling power . . . will also allow the level of fees and charges under existing, new or amended charging powers to be prescribed or varied."—[*Official Report*, 22 July 1987; Vol. 20, c. *277*.]

Does the Minister's statement repudiate the Secretary of State's overall doctrine, or is he now saying that, although local authorities can decide their own pricing policy, the Secretary of State retains the right to intervene and instruct them on prices—which would make nonsense of the statement?

The evolving contortions of the Government are a recognition of sustained hostility towards all sport and local government. I have not yet had time to look at the responses that the Minister has only this morning put in the Library for hon. Members to see. That is an outrage. Before any statement of this nature is made, we are entitled to have time to consider the purposes on which the Minister has based his statement.

This started out in the consultation document as an intention to privatise all local authority sports facilities —including, so we were told, those in schools. The Minister, to his credit, was obviously often distressed at having to defend that policy. Then we had phase two of the policy on sports and local government, which was that the facilities would not be privatised, but the management would. Now in phase three we are told that that is not exactly correct and the Government are allowing local authorities to retain control of pricing and public policy. Wherever this has been tried it has had a disastrous effect on the users. Local authorities which have privatised these facilities ahead of the Government's intention have made no real savings whatever.

Mr. Timothy Wood (Stevenage): Nonsense.

Mr. Howell: They have not, and cannot make savings for the simple reason that they are left to pay the loan, maintenance and insurance charges and to meet the cost of equipment and plant. That is a substantial cost on local authorities and ratepayers which is excluded from all these management considerations.

Mr. Frank Cook (Stockton, North): It is theft.

Mr. Howell: Yes, it is theft and piracy. No wonder that throughout the country local authorities which have tried this have fallen flat on their face.

The facilities in Wandsworth and at the Castle centre in Blackpool were privatised, both went bust and the facilities had to be returned to the local authorities. Wandsworth decided to privatise its swimming pool and called it Splashland. Before it did so, the charge to the public was 50p; after privatisation the charge increased to £5 for adults and £3 for youngsters. No wonder the company went bankrupt. I am told that it still owes many thousands of pounds. The council has had to take it back into municipal ownership and the charge is now £1·50. In other words, the charge is now three times what it was before this lunatic exercise began. What lesson has the Minister drawn from those debacles?

I wish to ask the Minister a detailed question on contract compliance under the Local Government Act 1988. Will local authorities be entitled in these contracts for management to insist that all employees at, for example, swimming pools, are properly qualified in life saving and resuscitation procedures and, in all other sports facilities, in first aid and public health protection? That is important. Every local authority must ensure that that is the case and we need assurance on that from the Minister.

At a time when vandalism, hooliganism and anti-social activities are rampant and on the increase in all our communities, both rural and inner-city communities, this action is a massive distraction to local authorities in the performance of their duties, and a complete disincentive to the voluntary work of governing bodies of sport. It is a disgrace, and if the Minister had any self-respect he would resign immediately.

Mr. Moynihan: The right hon. Gentleman spoke from a written note about confusion in a statement which he had not even heard. I am appalled that throughout his blind campaign——

Mr. Denis Howell: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: No. The right hon. Gentleman will have a chance to reply later.

Mr. Moynihan: —the right hon. Gentleman continually resorted to misleading and wholly inaccurate gloom and despondency on this issue.

Mr. Frank Dobson (Holborn and St. Pancras): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. What the Minister said is plainly false. A copy of his statement, as is customary, was supplied to my right hon. Friend, who read it and based his response on it. We demand that the Minister withdraws his wholly false allegation.

Mr. Speaker: That is up to the Minister. What he said was not out of order.

Mr. Moynihan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The right hon. Gentleman referred to confusion in a statement which he had not heard, and that is precisely what I said: he had not heard my statement.

If the right hon. Gentleman had read the statement, he would not have talked such blatant nonsense on pricing policy. Where a council wishes to continue to subsidise its pricing policy, it is perfectly entitled to write that into the contractual arrangements. That is the major difference between Wandsworth and these proposals. Local authorities can retain their discretionary powers over pricing, opening hours and admission policy. If they choose, they can draw that up in the tender specification.

I repeat—obviously this was neither read nor listened to accurately by the right hon. Gentleman—that that means that the free market must not control completely the pricing level. We have rightly taken into account the fact that local authorities should decide local priorities for sport and recreation. If they wish to continue with a subsidised pricing policy, they can do so. We are talking about putting out contracts to competitive tender to get value for money in local authority expenditure and more effective management of facilities.

I, too, attach importance to safety. Health and safety at work legislation requires owners and operators to pursue strict conditions, and guidelines for swimming pools were set down only this year. It will be up to local authorities to write safety guidelines into specifications.

The right hon. Gentleman expressed concern about the fact that he had not read all the replies received from those whom we consulted. Clearly there are many months before the end of the year and the order is tabled for debate, so he will have adequate time over the summer months to review in detail all the replies to our consultation exercise in order that he may be fully briefed, possibly for the first time, before we debate this issue.

The right hon. Gentleman is worried about the implications of this statement on hooliganism, and towards the end of his comments he somehow linked the two. That is utter nonsense. Where contracts placed in the public domain for the management of these facilities are available and pricing controls remain, if that is the council's wish, it can only be right for other companies to consider the specifications for tender documents and to assess that the best way of making a profit is by getting more people through—

Mr. Dobson: Profit?

Mr. Moynihan: Yes, profit—and by increasing efficiency. By doing so, the main objective of sport for all will be achieved because the motivation will be to get more people using the facilities.

Mr. Tim Smith (Beaconsfield): Is my hon. Friend aware that the decision that he announced this morning is most welcome because local authority ratepayers are as much entitled to expect value for money as taxpayers? The most sensible way to ensure value for money is to put local authority services out to competitive tender so that we can see whether they are being provided economically, efficiently and effectively, and whether they are being adequately and competently managed.

Mr. Moynihan: I wholly agree with my hon. Friend. He is absolutely right in saying that by putting local authority facilities out to private tender we shall see whether there is value for that expenditure. For the first time many local authorities will be required to identify the specific costs of operating those facilities, and that must be good for future community charge payers as well as users.

Mr. Tom Pendry (Stalybridge and Hyde): Does the Minister realise that he has pleased nobody by this dog's breakfast of a statement? Clearly it is a victory for dogma over common sense. Even private contractors could not make the profits that they would want under the proposals that the hon. Gentleman has announced unless they cut corners by cutting staff and health and safety standards, despite what the hon. Gentleman says. Will it be optional for local authorities to make specifications for health standards?

I should like to refer to the final paragraph of the Minister's statement. He knows that I asked him on 25 January to place in the Library the responses from the consultees. They were placed in the Library at 10.55 this

[Mr. Tom Pendry]

morning, 158 days after he had promised, and after many courteous promptings to his office. He has treated hon. Members with a great deal of contempt.

As my right hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Small Heath (Mr. Howell) said, we shall oppose the measures, but I should like to ask specifically about football and cricket grounds owned by local authorities, such as Leeds United, Halifax and many others. Will they, too, be subject to the conditions that are laid down?

It is clear that the Minister cannot stand up for sport against his philistine boss. Should he not reconsider the proposals?

Mr. Moynihan: The hon. Gentleman needs only to look at the range of facilities that are already managed by the private sector, not least by Crossland Leisure and Sport and Leisure Development plc, to see that it is absolute nonsense to say that companies have cut corners and reduced health and safety standards. Hon. Members who represent the constituencies concerned will know that there has been increasing participation, more effective management and far better value for money for the local authority ratepayers in those areas.

The hon. Gentleman referred to football clubs. We are talking not about the ownership but about the management of football clubs. If the hon. Gentleman examined the matter closely, he would see that the only people who would be subject to this form of competitive tendering would be those who are paid by the local authorities to run football clubs. There is no example of one of those in the four divisions of the football league. We looked at that carefully when the hon. Gentleman brought that point to our attention in advance.

I have been asked to name one of the facilities. I could name many, but hon. Members need only to look at the Arena leisure centre of Surrey Heath borough council, the Albion leisure centre at Erewash, the Kingfisher leisure pool and Hadleigh swimming pool of Babergh district council, Cromwell squash and snooker club of Alton town council, and the Romford ice rink, owned by the London borough of Havering and run independently by Sport and Leisure Development plc. Thus there are not just a few but many examples of where this system is working effectively.

Mr. Neil Thorne (Ilford, South): In general, I welcome my hon. Friend's statement, but will he assure the House that any reasonable reductions for the disabled will not be obstructed by the Government? What provision will be made for quickly removing control from operators that cannot measure up to the standards that are required? It would not be satisfactory to let a facility to be run badly for a long time when young sportsmen, in particular, rely on services so that they represent our country.

Will my hon. Friend consider laying down much more stringent regulations on first aid? Despite what he said, authorities, paticularly St. John Ambulance, are genuinely concerned about standards, particularly in clubs, where the provisions that are laid down by Act of Parliament do not necessarily apply.

Mr. Moynihan: On my hon. Friend's first point, local authorities have the discretion now with their facilities to make appropriate pricing policies for certain groups. My hon. Friend mentioned the disabled. It will be proper and in order for those local authorities to continue to exercise their current discretionary powers over pricing for the disabled, and they will be able to write that into the tender specifications.

With regard to the contract period, that issue must rightly be addressed and reviewed regularly to avoid the potential problem that my hon. Friend raised. That will be looked at in detail when the draft order comes out for consultation. My hon. Friend voiced his concern about safety, particularly at sport and recreation facilities. Incidentally, the matter goes far wider than merely facilities run by local authorities. Safety is a matter of concern for the Government. We are actively looking at it and welcome the fact that guidelines have already been issued for swimming pools. We shall consider in more detail whether to propose additional specifications. That will be examined in the context of the draft order.

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): Is not the Minister confirming that the consultation was a charade, because the whole of the informed sporting world and all local authority associations were against compulsory competitive tendering? Indeed, the Association of District Councils said that it was especially inappropriate in relation to sports and leisure management.

The Minister gave the game away when he said that the provision would produce

"greater sensitivity to the needs of the community."

In reality, that just shows the Minister's insensitivity and lack of belief in local government. Instead of community facilities being paid for collectively by the community, all over the country there will be higher charges at the gate and the door. With the announcement, the Minister is putting the playing fields of England—Scotland and Wales, too—up for grabs and for profit. Instead of more sport for all, there will be more sport for all who can pay and less for the rest.

Mr. Moynihan: That is absolute nonsense.

Mr. Denis Howell: It seems that everything is nonsense.

Mr. Moynihan: The right hon. Gentleman may say that, but virtually everything that I have heard from the Opposition Benches has been nonsense. It must be nonsense to suggest that prices will go up, because local authorities will retain control over pricing if they wish, so what the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) says militates against logic.

The hon. Gentleman mentioned the consultation exercise. Many points were raised which were taken on board in the statement by the Government, not least the timing of the introduction of the system and the main concern expressed by many local authorities and governing bodies, in all their replies, about pricing policy, admission and their desire in some cases to continue with an appropriate level of subsidy. We have responded positively to all those points, so it is inaccurate to say that all governing bodies in all the sports are against the proposals. If the hon. Gentleman takes time over the next few months to read the 347 responses, he will see that many of the points that I have raised have been taken into account. I am certain that, as a result, the proposals will be widely welcomed, in seeking greater efficiency and increasing participation and use of those facilities.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I remind the House that we have an important Irish debate today. I shall allow questions on the statement to continue until 11.45 am, then we must move on. I ask for brief questions. I also remind the House that the matter will be subject to debate later.

Mr. Tim Devlin (Stockton, South): If, as the hon. Member for Stalybridge and Hyde (Mr. Pendry) said, this is a matter of political dogma, and if it is political dogma to increase the scope for traditional Labour councils such as mine to offer services to the public at lower cost when the community charge is introduced in a few years' time, is not that political dogma to be welcomed?

Mr. Moynihan: I very much hope that value for money is not an issue that will divide the House. It should not be an issue for political dogma.

Mr. Simon Hughes: Let them decide.

Mr. Moynihan: We need to ensure, as the hon. Gentleman says, that local councils are able to decide and to judge the difference between the service that is currently provided by their direct labour organisations and the opportunities that can be made available for other people to manage more efficiently and in the greater interests of the local electorate, even within price controls. For example I cite the interests expressed by the Professional Golfers Association, which looks with considerable interest at the possibility of managing a number of municipal golf courses. If it can do it, it should be allowed to do it.

Ms. Diane Abbott (Hackney, North and Stoke Newington): Is the Minister at all concerned about access to sports facilities in the inner city for young people, black and white, given that unemployment among young people in inner cities is as high as one in three? Given that access is not simply a matter of pricing but depends on how sensitively facilities are managed, it is perfectly possible to manage facilities in a way that specifically excludes poor and unemployed people, although the price may be set at a certain level.

The Minister has said a lot about local authorities' power over charging, but it might still be possible for a local authority to subsidise charges to unemployed people on benefit and for the private contractor managing the facility to restrict such people to certain unpopular hours, leaving the popular hours for people driving Porsches from outside the inner cities, and paying full charges. How will that conflict be resolved.

Mr. Moynihan: Very easily—by writing it into the specification for contract. Of course we recognise the need for the continued use of facilities by disadvantaged groups and promising young sportsmen and women. That is why local authorities will retain discretionary powers over pricing, opening hours and admission policy.

Mr. David Wilshire (Spelthorne): Will the Minister assure the House that he has no intention of giving in to the bogus howls of anguish that we are hearing from the Labour party and that we are certain to hear from local government, since the cosy monopoly of local government services provision is bad for users and payers? Will the Minister confirm that councils will be forced to hand over services only if they cannot get their house in order and do it properly themselves? Does he agree that the introduction of competition will lead to new investment, new facilities, better services, better safety and better value for money for those who foot the bill?

Mr. Moynihan: I agree completely with my hon. Friend. *It ill becomes anyone who purports to promote* participation, competition and excellence on the tracks to champion a cosseted trade union monopoly protecting the local councils' direct labour organisations to manage facilities.

Mr. Frank Doran (Aberdeen, South): It is a pity that no Scottish Minister is present on the Front Bench, but the hon. Gentleman will be well aware that some local authority leisure and sports services are unique facilities of world-wide significance. I am thinking in particular about St. Andrew's golf course, which is the home of world golf and has been run successfully by local authorities not only for decades but centuries. The prospect of St. Andrew's being put out to private tender, and the prospect of souvenir shops over the Swilken burn, and hamburger stalls on the 18th fairway would make old Tom Morris turn in his grave, and cause offence to the great names that have been associated with that golf course.

What steps does the Minister intend to take to give local authorities the power to protect such unique facilities? Has he considered the effect on St. Andrews if, for example the Royal and Ancient golf club decided that the privatised golf course was no longer suitable for the Open?

Mr. Moynihan: The hon. Member should be aware that we are talking about not the privatisation but the management of facilities. The tender document and the specification, which rightly should be detailed, will cover all the points of concern that he has expressed, because local authorities will continue to write into the tender document whatever specification they believe to be right. On that basis the private sector will be able to assess whether it wishes to compete against current local authority management.

Mr. Wood: Is my hon. Friend aware that there will be a wide welcome by Tory Members for the distinction being drawn between the duty of a local authority to ensure that sports facilities exist and the management of such sports provisions? Most people are aware of the gross inefficiency of the sports provision in many local authorities, and want competitively-provided sports facilities so that participants will have better value for money and there will be a greater take-up of facilities and, at the same time, there will be a better deal for local government and for the taxpayer.

Mr. Moynihan: My hon. Friend is right. We are seeking not only more effective management of facilities and better value for money, but a private company managing such facilities will be keen to increase the throughput and make sure that as many people as possible use those facilities. Given that that is its interest, it will have a joint interest with the Government and with all local authorities to increase participation and throughput and make sure that the facilities are used to maximum possible extent. That is better marketing of facilities. That objective is in common with the Sports Council's sports policy and will have my full support.

Mr. Allen McKay (Barnsley, West and Penistone): Does the Minister realise that in the Local Government

[Mr. Allen McKay]

Finance Bill the Secretary of State has 344 new powers? The Secretary of State can compel local authorities to charge when they do not charge now and to increase charges when he does not consider them sufficient. Therefore, where did the Minister get his information that local authorities are free to subsidise? Is it not a fact that by "subsidisation" the Minister means subsidising for profit and not subsidising for the community? Is he aware that the Sports Council comes down heavily against this idea and is most disturbed that the excellence that has been provided through local authorities to Olympic and international standards will gradually disappear and that we shall have not sport for all, but sport for all who can afford it and not for those who cannot afford it?

Will the Minister answer a question about ethnic minorities and about disabled and mentally handicapped people who have private facilities at sports centres because of the nature of their problems? What will the local authorities do if sports facilities which are run only on a profit-making basis go bust and disappear?

Mr. Moynihan: With regard to the powers of the Secretary of State, a draft order will be coming before the House on the regime of competitive tendering specifically for the management of sport and leisure facilities. It is recognised that an appropriate level of subsidy, if required, not by the private sector managers but by local authorities, to achieve certain objectives of the sports policy of a particular council—and the hon. Gentleman was right to cite some important considerations of local councils—will enable local authorities to continue a specific level of subsidy to achieve the goals about which the hon. Gentleman is concerned.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): I must declare an interest as I am the honorary president of two sporting organisations for schoolchildren from London. Like other hon. Members, I hold coaching qualifications in several sports.

I welcome the Minister's statement. He must do something about providing coaching for children and adults because of the serious decline of the teaching of sport in schools. In many areas, only one in eight primary schools teach cricket. The statement will help in that respect.

As a result of the statement, will more children be taught to swim and will poor people be safeguarded in their access to sporting facilities? Will my hon. Friend the Minister underline what he said to the hon. Member for Hackney, North and Stoke Newington (Ms. Abbott)? Will the statement lead to more sport being taught to more children and adults in public sports centres, as I believe it will?

Finally, will my hon. Friend take note of the fact that many hundreds of adults, pensioners and others use private facilities in my constituency to go dancing and take part in healthy sporting activities, and that his statement will help them, too?

Mr. Moynihan: A private sector manager must respond to the increased participation trends for sport and recreation. The figure increased from 17 million in 1977 to about 23 million now. He will also note the national trend to be involved in a wider range of sports than previously was the case. As a result, he will be keen to respond to demand, and for that reason he will ensure that as wide a group of people as possible come through the door and are catered for by as wide a range of sports as is demanded. I am confident that that objective will be achieved.

Swimming pools are equally important. There is much demand to learn to swim, and the number of swimming pools has increased from 910 in 1982 to 1,032 now. Managers will be keen to ensure that more people learn to swim, which is essential, and I welcome my hon. Friend's support for that campaign.

Mr. Robert N. Wareing (Liverpool, West Derby): Does the Minister realise that the average deficit on a swimming pool is £200,000? Does he believe that all this ideological claptrap will mean anything to people other than those who wish to make a profit? Does he believe that the sports which are improving the health of our people will thrive as a result of what he has said? Is it not a fact that since 1972 the number of sports centres has increased from 20 to 1,500—all of them provided by local authorities—and that their growth has been limited only because the Tory Government have robbed local authorities of funds?

Mr. Moynihan: It will be of interest to the House to know that there has been a more rapid increase in the number of facilities provided under this Government than there was under the Labour Government.

There will need to be recognition of the sensitivity about providing sufficient subsidy where that is thought appropriate by the local authority. That will be critical in drawing up the tender specification. But I am confident that, given more positive marketing, more efficient management and better value for money, we shall achieve greater sensitivity to the needs of the community, which will lead to more participation.

Mr. James Couchman (Gillingham): Is my hon. Friend aware that, if his proposals lead to the better management, marketing and promotion of sports facilities, and that if that draws more people in, it will reassure those of us who are worried about the diminution of sport in schools? Will he answer two specific questions? Has he thought how his proposals will affect centres such as the Black Lion facility in my constituency, which is jointly managed between two local authorities? Will his proposals cover ancillary facilities such as sauna baths and beauty treatments which are currently undertaken in that centre?

Mr. Moynihan: On the second point, where they are managed by local authorities the answer is yes. The joint management of facilities by two local authorities will be covered by the draft order that we shall publish later in the year.

Mr. Frank Cook: I sympathise with the Minister because I cannot believe that his heart is in this statement. But I offer him the assurance that he will go down in history as a handicap. Ironically, he is both the smallest and the largest handicap ever visited upon sport and leisure.

The Government have called for competition in sport. Now we know what they are after: competition for profit. Will the Minister take note of the fact that the Billingham Forum in my constituency, Clareville stadium in Middlesbrough and the Gateshead facility on Tyneside are all centres of excellence of national and international prestige that were built with local money? Whatever some Conservative Members would have the public believe, we do not mind private establishments. We are against the fact that, after paying the risk capital to establish them and then paying the on costs, facilities will be taken away from local authorities and given to someone else who will cream off the profit that belongs to the ratepayers. That is what we are against, and that is what I charge.

Mr. Moynihan: The hon. Gentleman's allegations are wrong. If they are to compete and win contracts against the direct labour organisations, the new management teams will have to identify opportunities for greater efficiency and ways to attract more people to use the facilities. It will be a real incentive to achieve sport for all.

Mr. Denis Howell: Does the Minister accept that, in the history of local government provision and private enterprise practice, there has been nothing to stop private organisations building any sports facilities that they wished? They have completely failed to do so, and that is why local authorities have had to provide this social service for the community and for sport.

Mr. Moynihan: That is not true.

Mr. Howell: It is correct. When the Minister replies, perhaps he will give us examples of where he says that has happened.

Will the Minister confirm the calculations that we have made in the past 35 minutes while the debate has continued? From the responses that he placed in the Library at five minutes to 11, it would appear that the consultation exercise produced 340 organisations opposed to his proposals and five in favour. If those figures are accurate, it explains why he tried to avoid giving a direct answer to the House today. The Minister placed those replies in the Library at a time when he thought we would not have an opportunity to read them. It was disgraceful treatment of Parliament and of sport.

Will the Minister provide Government time for a full debate—not just for one and half hours—on the social implications of the draft order?

Mr. Moynihan: The right hon.Gentleman's arithmetic and speed reading are at fault. Many of the responses—[HON. MEMBERS: "How many?"] We can go through them all if hon. Members wish, but I can say that 93 local authorities expressed doubt. They did not come out against the proposals, but mentioned issues that have now been satisfied in my statement—*[Laughter.]* Opposition Members laugh because they do not like the facts. Far more of the governing bodies than the right hon. Gentleman mentioned came out in favour and, completely contrary to what was said earlier, the Sports Council is in favour of any proposal that leads to more effective management and value for money. Private sector companies were in favour, as were professional bodies and trade unions. Other organisations that responded were also in favour. The Opposition have not read the responses —*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. Hon. Members should allow the Minister to finish.

Mr. Moynihan: I take heart from the fact that the core objections from the Opposition relate to the number of responses and the views in the responses placed in the Library. They will not face facts and accept that obtaining better value for money through the range of proposals that we have introduced will benefit sport and ratepayers and will provide more effective competition in the provision of local authority services.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Documentation is always a matter for the House. On 25 January my hon. Friend the Member for Stalybridge and Hyde (Mr. Pendry) received an answer saying that documentation would be placed in the House as soon as possible. You have heard that it was not placed in the House until 10.55 this morning. The Minister had also recently provided written answers to my hon. Friend about what the responses contained. In answer to my hon. Friend's question, the Minister did not explain why it was impossible to place those documents in the House between January and this morning. It is now for the Minister, perhaps by rising on a point of order, to explain why it was not possible to do so.

Mr. Speaker: That is patently not a matter for me, but perhaps the Minister will assist.

Mr. Moynihan: I will help the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing). The hon. Member for Stalybridge and Hyde (Mr. Pendry) is aware that we placed a condition upon the publication of the documents that we should consult each and every consultee to make sure that they were happy for their individual responses to be placed in the Library. Regrettably, that consultation exercise could not be done overnight given that there were some 347 responses.

The key point is that it is unnecessary to place full documentation of that kind in the Library for a statement. It is absolutely critical that such information is in the Library for a debate; but the debate on the order will not take place for another six months.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. This is an Irish day and it is unfair on Irish Members and others who have come here to discuss an important matter to continue with this subject.

Mr. Dobson: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. I have no wish to be unfair to those people who wish to debate important matters connected with Ireland. It is not the Opposition's fault that the statement had to be dragged out of the Government today. If what the Minister has said is true and certain inhibitions existed that prevented him from putting the English responses in the Library, why were the Welsh responses put there in good time?

Mr. Martin Flannery (Sheffield, Hillsborough) *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Is the hon. Gentleman seeking to be called in the debate?

Mr. Flannery: I have not stood up to be called at all except on this. I wish to raise a point of order about the habit that is now developing of making statements in the midst of debates on Fridays. It is disgraceful. Nearly everybody went home last night because they did not know that a statement would be made,.

Mr. Tim Smith: Why?

Mr. Flannery: Most hon. Members did not know that this statement would be made, and it was wrong to interrupt the serious Northern Ireland debate.

[Mr. Flannery]

I used to run athletics in Sheffield and I know what will happen when people hear about this statement. I want to know why we are interrupting an extremely important debate on Northern Ireland—one of a length that we practically never get, except late at night—and it is a disgrace that this statement is intruding on it. The statement has an importance of its own.

Mr. Pendry: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. The Minister has rightly said that there was a condition that the consultees had to agree to their responses being placed in the Library. I have been in touch with some of those consultees and they gave their authority months ago. Therefore, what the Minister has said is not an excuse. Will he therefore place in the Library the responses to his request for them to be placed in the Library?

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. There have been several questions about the authenticity of the documents that went missing for some considerable time and which were not placed in the Library until five minutes to 11 today. Investigations have been carried out at certain levels and it transpires that the documents were sent to Westminster council for verification. No doubt that was done in view of the fact that it is expert at selling off cemetaries for 15p and that it was thought advisable to check with Lady Porter. The result is that the Government have learnt no lesson from Westminster council, which should face a surcharge. That council is chucking away the assets of ratepayers. The Government should learn a lesson.

Mr. Speaker: None of that is a matter for me.

Fair Employment (Northern Ireland)

Question again proposed, That this House do now adjourn.

11.53 am

Mr. Couchman: The hon. Member for Sheffield, Hillsborough (Mr. Flannery) expressed concern that our debate had been interrupted by the statement and the lively exchanges that followed. My concern at that interruption was even greater than his, because I was in mid-speech when the interruption occurred.

Before I was interrupted by the important statement, I had accepted that there is a problem in Northern Ireland affecting employment and that it arises out of the apparent disparity between unemployment figures for those from the Catholic Nationalist tradition and for those from the Protestant Loyalist tradition. That is wrong, but people such as myself, who are somewhat cynical about whether the law can remedy discrimination, are forced to conclude that we must seek a legal remedy given the intractable situation in Northern Ireland.

The law may be good at compensating for hurt caused by discrimination. I suspect, however, that its ability to re-educate or remould the prejudices and even bigotries of those who discriminate is somewhat more speculative. I have read the White Paper carefully and I believe that it makes an honest attempt to confront the problem of unequal opportunity in employment in Northern Ireland. However, it will require a wise head and a deft and sensitive hand to apply its proposals if new resentments are not to be spawned, notably among employers, who will see the new Fair Employment Commission and fair employment tribunals as simply more sophisticated versions of the present onerous bureaucracy of the Fair Employment Agency.

I am concerned that the emphasis of the White Paper seems to be heavier on stick than carrot. Talk of fines and imprisonment for non-compliance with the registration, certification and monitoring processes is a negative incentive to an employer struggling to start or to run a business in the difficult climate of the Province. Although I understand that help to set up the monitoring system will be available, I believe that the emphasis of the commission must be to mould and persuade rather than to bludgeon. The prospect of being cut out of private sector contracts —unless, of course, the public sector cannot manage without a specific product or service; a bit of pragmatism if ever there was some—looks suspiciously like insidious contract compliance. It seems very much like a bludgeon to me.

I am slightly puzzled by the semantics of paragraphs 3.24 to 3.28, which seek to differentiate between the illegal quota and the highly desirable and legal goals, targets or timetables. I believe that the principal difference is flexibility of time scale. I am pleased that there is no intention to impose positive discrimination, as that would be divisive and corrosive.

I am worried about paragraph 3.22, which deals with catchment areas and I hope that my hon. Friend can deal with my worry. A fortnight ago I visited Belfast with three other hon. Members. We went to meet members of the Federation of the Retail Licensed Trade and we were generously hosted by Bushmills distillery and by Bass, Ulster. We visited the Ulster brewery of Bass on Glen road, Belfast, which is situated alongside Andersontown.

It is a modern and well-run brewery and it employs almost a completely Catholic work force for its weekly-paid staff. The management is worried that the White Paper proposals could, if not applied sensitively, end up by reducing good job opportunities for Catholics in west Belfast. That would be an unfortunate result of well-intentioned legislation.

My final worry is about the method of monitoring. Paragraph 3.8 emphasises the need to be open, not covert, in monitoring arrangements. Paragraph 5.5, however, suggests that monitoring should be done by requiring employees, or potential employees, to declare their school backgrounds, preferably primary schools, but, failing that their secondary schools, in order to assess their religious-cultural background, rather than by asking a direct question. I believe that those two paragraphs of the White Paper conflict. It is a supreme irony that discrimination in Northern Ireland begins in an institutional way at school.

I believe that my right hon. Friend has no option but to set up a new legislative framework to try to overcome the serious affront to decent employment opportunities represented by religious discrimination. The precedents of racial and sexual discrimination legislation are not altogether encouraging and do not lead to optimism. I shall support the Government, however, in the quest to provide equality of employment opportunity irrespective of the traditions and background in which the employee has been raised.

I hope that, if they have the opportunity, my right hon. and hon. Friends will talk to Michael Dukakis and the other influential Americans mentioned by the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara) and persuade them to discourage rather than encourage states in the United States from incorporating the MacBride principles in their state law. In the final analysis, one of the most potent weapons against the men of violence is a thriving economy, with reduced unemployment and much fairer employment opportunities as between Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland. Withdrawal of overseas investment from Ulster, or the withdrawal of the opportunity for Ulster companies to bid for American contracts, would only damage that aspiration. I hope that my right hon. and hon. Friends will make that clear to present and putative Administrations in the United States, should they have the opportunity.

I wish my right hon. and hon. Friends success in turning the White Paper into legislation, but legislation that relies on re-education and persuasion, rather than on draconian criminal penalties or commercial sanction. The legislation will achieve its aim only if it is supported by a consensus among employers and employees of all traditions.

12.1 pm

Mr. Eddie McGrady (South Down): In introducing the debate, the Secretary of State set the theme—equality of opportunity for jobs and all that flows from it. He encapsulated the parameters of the origins of the problem and highlighted the fact that, in the late 1960s, the three basic demands for civil rights and liberties in Northern Ireland were housing, electoral reform and equality of job opportunities. The right hon. Gentleman was correct in stating that the first two—housing on merit and electoral reform—have been dealt with satisfactorily. Twenty years later we are dealing with that most annoying and pernicious of evils—discrimination of livelihood, which strikes at the core of not only the individual but family life and the community.

Almost a year ago to the day, on 7 July, I made my maiden speech and one of my two major criticisms of 13 years of direct rule was that little had been accomplished in terms of fair employment. I said in my opening address to the House that I had hoped that equality of opportunity would be high on the list of the Government's priorities and that they would ensure that discrimination was immediately and effectively penalised in every way. I said that I hoped that a

> "fresh and vigorous look will be taken at the problem to initiate immediate changes."—[*Official Report*, 7 July 1987, Vol. 119, c. 225.]

I hope that today is the start of that fresh and vigorous look.

There should be two overriding objectives of fair employment legislation: first, to ensure that discrimination does not occur in the future; and, secondly, where possible, to eradicate the injustices of the past where those employment practices continue to affect the equality of opportunity of any community.

The SDLP's policy on fair employment is firmly embedded in, and has developed from, article 14 of the European Convention on Human Rights, which fully expresses the right of all people in our society to enjoy equal and just opportunities of employment. We are conscious, however, of the statement in paragraph 3 of the foreword to the White Paper, which reveals that a statistical review in Northern Ireland in 1985, just three years ago, found that

> "despite almost ten years of anti-discrimination legislation and enforcement, the Catholic community remained at a serious disadvantage in employment in both quantitative and qualitative terms; that this obtained throughout the Province (even in areas of relatively high employment); and that it persisted despite progressive convergence of educational attainment between the Protestant and Catholic communities."

Such a finding puts paid to the rather facile response from the Confederation of British Industry. Of all people, its members have had the opportunity over the years to make considerable progress and to ensure redress. The CBI has given a hostile reception to the White Paper. The CBI carries the major share of blame for the unjust and un-Christian discrimination in employment that has taken and is still taking place. The CBI had the capacity to bring about change and could have given Northern Ireland enormous encouragement in trying to achieve peace, community prosperity and harmony but it failed to do so.

I should like the House, and English Members in particular, to be in no doubt about the people, firms or companies that perpetrate this crime of injustice. Many people have an image of a mean-minded and uneducated employer who is embittered by his environment and has turned to sectarianism, which was part of his upbringing. Nothing could be further from the truth. The list of firms that were investigated and found to be guilty of serious discrimination includes household names that could be taken from the stock exchange list. It includes insurance companies such as Commercial Union, General Accident, Royal Insurance and the Prudential, all of which were found guilty of gross discrimination to the extent that 90 per cent. of their work force were Protestants. The Progressive, Leeds, Halifax, Gateway, Abbey National, Nationwide and Woolwich building societies are all in the bracket of 77 to 91 per cent. discrimination in favour of

[Mr. Eddie McGrady]

Protestants. Those employers do not fit the image of the narrow-minded Northern Ireland employer. The high street banks are all British-based and are administered from London, yet they are major employers and major discriminators in Northern Ireland.

I do not wish to give the impression that it is only the financial sector that is named in the reports copied from the Fair Employment Agency investigations. They named companies in the engineering and linen industries including Harland and Wolff, Short Brothers and James Mackie and Son. The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara) mentioned Harland and Wolff. He did not say that in the third monitoring the percentage of Catholics employed had fallen from 17 to 14 per cent. That was a backward step.

Gross discrimination in Northern Ireland knows no sectoral boundaries. it is as diverse as the Civil Service, the museum service, the fire authority, local authorities and the railways. The cases that I have mentioned are only those that have been investigated, so the House should not think in terms only of Northern Ireland-based companies or of non-Government employers. All are guilty. That injustice has been compounded by the refusal of so many employers to do anything about it. It has led to a deep sense of personal and community grievance, which has fostered disaffection with the system of government, given rise to disorder and prevented community reconciliation. As the Member for Kingston upon Hull, North said, potential investors, especially from the United States, are unwilling to put their money into an area where, in addition to violence and political instability, unacceptable labour practices prevail.

I sincerely hope that we are now engaged in a new and radical phase and are building, as we should, on the 12 years' experience gained since the Fair Employment Act 1976 established the Fair Employment Agency. It is obvious that the inadequacies of that Act and the experience over the 12 years since its passing have led to the proposals in the White Paper.

These proposals require considerable and detailed consideration, even though they have been produced after a gestation period of almost two and a half years. The most significant and welcome proposal is for the introduction of compulsory monitoring of the religious affiliation of all employees in work forces of 10 or more. To date, that information has been available only after the Fair Employment Agency has instigated an investigation. To continue on the old basis would mean that the majority of instances of discrimination would remain hidden and uncorrected.

In case anyone thinks that compulsory monitoring is a gross infringement of the rights of employees, I should tell the House that a survey by the Policy Studies Institute in London, published on 29 October 1987, said in paragraph 23:

> "Two thirds of both Protestants and Catholics said they would be prepared for their employer to keep a record of their religious group to check on the fairness of recruitment and promotion procedures."

That shows that the proposal was endorsed by two thirds of both communities in the Northern Ireland work force. The introduction of compulsory monitoring will, where appropriate, enable directives to be issued or affirmative action to be taken to correct any imbalance that there might be.

Another significant proposal is for the application of sanctions and fines against errant employers. Those employers will be subject to a range of sanctions, including specific penalties, enforced directions and, in the words of the White Paper,

> "Exclusion from a range of Government grants and from public sector tenders".

One hopes that these and other proposals will achieve their stated objectives of fair employment and of redressing imbalances.

Regrettably, some criticisms must be made of the White Paper, which contains some serious deficiencies and loopholes which may enable those employers intent on discrimination to continue with their abominable practices. The most glaring weakness is the failure to follow the logic of creating targets or goals and timetables. This logic demands that the new legislation should require of all employers whose work forces have an unacceptable imbalance to redress the imbalance through the achievement of target ratios within certain time scales. The ratios of the timetables would have to take account of such criteria as the location of the workplace, the skills required and the likely turnover in the work force. A clear requirement to meet such criteria would provide bench marks by which progress could be effectively measured.

The differences that arise when this issue is discussed show a failure of nerve on the part of the Government. The differences appear to arise from an unwillingness to legislate in the one direction that would make clear to employers what they must do to achieve a just balance in the work force. To suggest, as the White Paper does in paragraph 3.29, that the new code of practice to be prepared by the Fair Employment Commission will provide the necessary guides in this area is to cloud the issue. It adds weight to the impression that in spite of their experience the Government still hope that in some spontaneous way employers will become more co-operative than they have been in the past.

In the corresponding Canadian legislation of 1986, section 5 explicitly requires employers to prepare annual plans indicating the goals by which they intend to achieve employment equity and the timetables for the implementation of those goals. Since the Department of Economic Development has acknowledged that the Canadian approach to fair employment has influenced its thinking, one must ask why it has not adopted this crucial provision affecting a key instrument in achieving employment equity.

Of grave anxiety to me are the proposals for dealing with individual complaints. Hitherto, individuals have received considerable support from the Fair Employment Agency, both at the investigative and judicial stages of complaints about alleged discrimination. The proposals in the White Paper will, if enacted, reduce support by placing a graver onus on the individual to pursue his own investigation. The apparent justification for this proposal is to allow the new Fair Employment Commission to select only those cases that are of strategic value in highlighting specific aspects of fair employment legislation.

That approach is unacceptable, because every individual is entitled to have his complaint investigated in the necessary way. Individuals are unlikely to be able to pursue by themselves cases of alleged religious or political discrimination. They need assistance, and if the new Fair Employment Commission is to be the only means of public support, it must be required to provide reasonable support.

I suggest to the Secretary of State and to the Department of the Environment that if individual cases are not seen to be pursued with the same vigour as hitherto, irrespective of what happens in general, the perception in the communities will be that this is a retrograde rather than a progressive step. The importance of the individual case which the individual is frequently unable to pursue has been grossly underestimated, and I urge the Government to rethink this issue.

I shall now deal with compensation and remedies for individual cases of indirect discrimination. The White Paper has nothing whatever to say about that. While it is a step forward to bring indirect discrimination within the scope of the legislation, it is a glaring omission not to say how the individual might be compensated when the findings are in his favour.

Another cause for concern is the White Paper proposal that employers be allowed to appeal against findings in the "pattern and practice cases" to the Fair Employment Commission. This contains a number of dangers. Obviously it would be unjust to employers to deny them the right of appeal against Fair Employment Commission findings. The problem is whether allowing such appeals would result in the whole process of dealing with imbalances in work forces becoming log jammed. That appears to be a real possibility if the White Paper proposals are enacted. Appeals of this kind should be possible only to the High Court. This would result in careful consideration being given to the grounds for such an appeal, reduce the likelihood of appeals being mounted on an unsound basis and prevent frivolous or preventive action from being taken.

I am worried about the absence of any proposals that would oblige employers and workers jointly to ensure that workplaces are free from any form of bias in terms of flags, emblems, rallies or parades of a political or religious nature. The White Paper seems to depend on the Public Order Act 1986, and that is not an adequate response. The absence of neutrality in the workplace has been a major factor in discrimination.

There are a number of other matters that will require considerable clarification before the legislation can be fully effective. For example, there is a need to bring all public bodies, especially district councils, fully within the scope of the legislation on contract compliance. District councils, no less than other public authorities, must be required to deal only with employers who comply fully with the fair employment practices. The White Paper is less than clear on how public bodies other than Government Departments will be made to meet their responsibilities in that regard. We have sufficient experience in local government to know that that requires considerable, if not detailed, attention.

A critical issue, to which attention has been drawn by previous speakers, is the so-called merit principle and the way in which it should be upheld in the context of the need to redress imbalances in a given work force. The attitude of the SDLP has always been that jobs should be offered on merit. However, where several candidates of equal merit are being considered by an employer who is also seeking to redress an imbalance in his or her work force, the latter obligation must also become a determining factor in deciding who will be appointed. If it is not, the very principle may become an excuse for not redressing imbalances, and progress towards equality of job opportunities could become frustrated. The White Paper continues to emphasise the overriding importance of the merit principle in a manner that leads one to suspect that narrow employer interests have received more consideration than that of equality in the work place. The ongoing and five-year review that will test the efficacy of the proposed legislation will tell its own tale. Only time will tell us whether an adequate response to the problem has been made by the proposals before us.

I should like to point out a grave responsibility of the Government. They must play a major role. They cannot, having passed the legislation, walk away from it. The Government help to keep much of the economy of Northern Ireland afloat and, therefore, they have a great deal of clout over what happens in the economy and the job sector. The Government must face their responsibility in several ways. They must provide training for skills, and new skills, and they must provide it in areas accessible to both communities, not just one. They must actively encourage a proper geographical spread of industrial location, and new industry location, which has not taken place before. They must administer Government funds and the New Ireland Fund so that disadvantaged areas are given at least some new advantage in job creation. Perhaps a policy of decentralisation to the less-favoured areas might be the necessary embryonic factor to enable job development to take place there.

Above all, the Government must give a moral lead. They must exert a moral, as well as a statutory, pressure. The Secretary of State's first job should be to bring together all the Departments under his command and co-ordinate a policy for the eradication of job discrimination. He should formulate that policy and pursue it in all the activities of the Departments and the Government in Northern Ireland.

My party welcomes the proposals for legislation. My community, of which I am the only representative out of the 650 Members in the House, has waited 60 years for the redressing of these wrongs. In my teens I suffered gross discrimination in job seeking. I have waited all my adult life. The proposals will be given every support by my party and the community of Northern Ireland, I hope both Protestant and Catholic. I sincerely pray that they will be the commencement of a new era of community reconciliation, which will be another prop to a better Northern Ireland for us all.

12.26 pm

Mr. Harold McCusker (Upper Bann): I did not approach this debate with great enthusiasm and, as I listened to the opening three speeches, my enthusiasm grew even less. I am grateful for the tone and content of the speech made by the hon. Member for South Down (Mr. McGrady) because it enables me to play what I hope will be at least a partially constructive role in the debate.

An Ulster Protestant coming to the House to listen to the opening speeches in the debate has no alternative but to put on sackcloth and ashes and plead guilty. I do not wish to do that because I do not feel guilty. If I oppose or reject any of the proposals in the White Paper, I am seen as justifying the imbalances. I will be pointed at, as I was 12 years ago, as an example of why the legislation is

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necessary, as if I were trying to defend some vested interest. If I reject some of the White Paper, I will be accused of being against the principle of appointment on merit or equality of opportunity. I am not against either.

I again place on public record my own experience. For a period of only six years I was in a position to employ people. I challenge anyone in the House to find anybody in the arena in which I was employed who can make or sustain an allegation that I discriminated against them. At both supervisory and operative level, the majority of the people employed were Catholic. I pay tribute to the job they did for me and I hope that they will acknowledge the job I did for them. We were the only department in the Goodyear Tyre and Rubber company that ever made a profit during the 10 years of its existence in the area.

I have nothing to be ashamed of in that regard. When I hear the comments that people occasionally make about the social disadvantage of Catholics, I put my experience on the public record. Like many other hon. Members who represent constituencies in Northern Ireland—I do not know whether this applies to the three representatives of the minority community who are in their places today—I came from a poor working-class area. I lived in a terraced house. Until the age of 25 years I had to shave within inches of where my mother cooked my breakfast. We had a cold water tap, an outside toilet and no bathroom. I have often wondered what advantage I gained from being a Protestant. I gained no advantage when it came to housing, nor did I have an advantage in employment opportunities. I had to work extremely diligently to achieve anything which I might have achieved.

I am in favour of equality of opportunity and appointment on merit. I am saddened by the remarks of the hon. Member for South Down, and I apologise to whatever extent I can for whatever he has suffered. He says that during his late teens and early twenties he experienced vicious religious discrimination. I would not want to experience that, and nor would I want others to do so.

Twenty years ago Ulster Protestants were reviled around the world for being obsessed with trying to determine the religion of those in employment or seeking employment. It is ironic that it is now to be a criminal offence for an employer not to ascertain the religious associations of those who are available for employment.

I shall put on record why Protestants have resisted and opposed some of the attempts that have been made over the past 15 or so years to deal with the problem that the White Paper seeks to resolve. That has much to do with the approach of those who have spoken from the two Front Benches this morning, the Secretary of State and the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara). I regret that they did not take the approach of the hon. Member for South Down. Whether intentionally or not, they plant guilt and invoke the collective responsibility of the Protestant community in Northern Ireland. Let it be understood that about 90 per cent. of all the Protestants in Northern Ireland are not in a position to discriminate against anyone. That is because that 90 per cent. do not employ anyone. I accept that that is only part of the answer because the allegation can be made that Protestants seek to retain the present position because they want to reserve their privileged position.

Whatever direct rule has done, it has certainly distanced substantially the employing classes in Northern Ireland from Unionist politicians and the Unionist community. The Secretary of State is much closer to those who are accused of being guilty of mass discrimination than I am. They are the people who have offered him succour over the past three years. They have dined at his table at Stormont castle at Hillsborough. That has not been done by those such as myself or by those whom I represent.

Paragraph 1.6 of the White Paper states:

"while it is very difficult to quantify its impact"—

that is a reference to religious discrimination—

"it is clear that it is by no means the sole nor even the main explanation."

If religious discrimination is not the

"sole nor even the main explanation"

for the disadvantage that is suffered by Roman Catholics, what are we talking about? It is all very well for the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North to brush aside the other factors as if they had no significance when it comes to employment.

I am the father of three children. My next-door neighbour is an affluent Roman Catholic and he has six children. Will he have more or less difficulty than me and my children in ensuring that we have full employment? He will have more difficulty, but in all the circumstances I do not think that his difficulties will be very much greater. If the principles that are set out in the White Paper are placed in legislation and implemented, it would mean that one of my children would have to be permanently unemployed so that four of my neighbour's children could be permanently employed.

Ms. Diane Abbott (Hackney, North and Stoke Newington): No.

Mr. McCusker: I hope that it will be explained to me why that is not the position. We face a statistical minefield. If we do not face the realities, we shall never change statistical patterns. Family size is important.

Let us take the example of a Roman Catholic living in the hills of south Fermanagh, where there has never been any industrial development. Let us say that he is the member of a large family that is in poor circumstances. It is probable that such a person will have no industrial experience. His education may or may not be all that one would wish. He will be at a great disadvantage when it comes to finding employment opportunities. The various relevant factors do not count for much when they are considered in isolation, but collectively they assume some significance. That has ramifications for us all. There has been a persistent resistance to what is now being proposed because the Protestant community has been branded as guilty.

The hon. Member for South Down said that, when Protestants were asked whether they objected to their religion being monitored, two thirds said that they did not. I believe that most Ulster Protestants are reasonably fair-minded people, just as fair-minded as anyone else. They deeply resent the destruction of their self-respect and self-esteem which has continued for so long.

As I said earlier, I want to try to avoid emotion and the temptation to outdo my opponents in this debate. The hon. Member for South Down listed various organisations that have discriminated against Catholics. For the sake of balance, he could have referred to the Allied Irish Bank and the Bank of Ireland which are substantially guilty of discriminating against Protestants. Similarly, the insurance companies Britannic Refuge and United Friendly, from a statistical point of view, are also guilty of such discrimination. I do not believe that any of those organisations are guilty of face-to-face, brutal, individual cases of discrimination. That is the difficulty.

When the first fair employment legislation was passed in 1976, the idea that there were massive, widespread, systematic, and individual cases of discrimination against Catholics was prevalent. It was thought that if a fair employment agency was established charged with rooting out that evil, it would deal with the problem. After 12 years, 52 cases of religious discrimination have been established. Let no one tell me that the Protestant community has become so skilled at discriminating that it can keep it to that absolute minimum. Fifty-two cases of religious discrimination have been established by an agency charged with finding and rooting out discrimination. Of those cases, one third have been against Protestants.

I do not believe that there is widespread and systematic discrimination against Protestants or Catholics in Northern Ireland. I do not believe that the brewery in the Glen road—and it sounded very much like special pleading—is guilty of discrimination against Protestants any more than I believe that certain other organisations in Northern Ireland are guilty of massive, systematic discrimination against Catholics.

Mr. Couchman: It was not my intention to suggest that the Ulster brewery was guilty of discrimination. The mere fact of its location in west Belfast has led to an almost totally Catholic work force. I raised that point because, if the matter is not handled sensitively, the proposals could lead to new discrimination against Catholics.

Mr. McCusker: That is precisely the point that I wanted to come to. I would like the hon. Member's sympathetic understanding to be directed elsewhere. However, the matter is more complex than he has suggested because that industry has been traditionally and historically associated with one religious community in Northern Ireland. Two such companies in my constituency will face grave difficulties when the legislation comes into effect. These matters were referred to in the debate on this matter in 1976. One of the principals of one of the companies to which I am referring was on the Terrace with me when that debate was taking place in 1976. He employed 80 people, but only one Protestant. He told me that he had tried to attract other Protestants to his company, but without success. I think that he probably does not employ any Protestants today, through no fault of his own. Should he somehow or other turn that position round and have a 55 : 25 Protestant-Catholic ratio? If that is not proposed for him, why should it be proposed for other employers in Northern Ireland?

There are difficulties and problems involved in this business which are gravely misunderstood. I regret that the Government have decided to concentrate on this very emotive statistic of unemployment. It appears that a Roman Catholic is twice as or two and a half times more likely to be unemployed than a Protestant. That has led to hon. Members claiming that two and a half times more Catholics are unemployed in Northern Ireland than Protestants. That is wrong. The two things do not follow. The statistic also invites people to jump to the conclusion that one is two and a half times more likely to be employed if one is a Protestant rather than a Catholic. That does not follow.

The Government might have put it this way—about nine out of 10 Protestants are employed while slightly fewer than eight out of 10 Catholics are employed. That means the same thing and would have been more acceptable to the community. It might also have shown that the Government are anxious that about nine out of 10 people of both religions should eventually be employed. The thrust of this proposed legislation is that everybody will be happy if eight and a half out of 10 Protestants, and eight and a half out of 10 Catholics, are employed. Why does the Secretary of State have to look at it negatively? Why can we not be positive?

Why do we not find out exactly what the situation is? We might find that Catholic males are more than two and a half times as likely to be unemployed as Protestants. Let us find out. Why cannot the Government produce a register showing the religious affiliations of the unemployed? That would be useful. We would have precise statistics. We could draw up an accurate profile of the type of person who is likely to be unemployed, establishing factors such as geographical locations, skills and experience. If the Government did that, however, they would have a responsibility to do something about what they found. I believe that that is why they refuse to take such a step. I shall table an amendment for the Report stage when we shall hear what the Government have to say on the matter.

A recent report shows some of the disadvantages suffered by the unemployed. The report, by the Rupert Stanley college in east Belfast, is based on a survey of 1,237 trainees. Under the heading:

> "Three 'Rs' crisis faces youngsters on TYP schemes",

it says:

> "it is disturbing to note that 82 per cent. failed to fill in a simple application form".

It found

> "extremely low standards of spelling, reading . . . and basic maths . . . just over one fifth could subtract one weight from another . . . only 16 per cent. could work out the area of a room nine foot by six . . . Only a quarter of the trainees could answer a simple question . . . on VAT".

If we know that there are problems which confront the unemployed and what they are, we can develop programmes to tackle them. If the emphasis is now to be switched to the imbalance in unemployment or the lack of opportunity, why do we not have a survey to find out exactly what the situation is? Why do we not build up profiles to see where the real problem is?

The Government could also see the difficulties with their exercise in monitoring. Their only advantage would be the protective screen between them and the person whose religion they are trying to determine. Despite what anybody says, most of us feel the hair on the back of our neck rising when somebody asks, "What is your religion?" It will not be easy for employers to ask that question.

People from both religious groups ask my advice on this issue. I tell them that it is a matter for them, and that they are not compelled to reply. They are being asked the question but they are not required to answer. I tell them that if they do not answer, someone will make an assumption, which may be right or wrong, so they should consider answering the question accurately. It might be better if we have the letter "P" or the letters "RC" tattooed on our foreheads so that when we touch our forelocks to

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our betters it is clear what we are. It would save a lot of bother. It is not so much a matter of what religion people are as what religion they are perceived to belong to. At least that problem does not arise with race.

One cannot opt or change. A person who is born Protestant or Catholic remains Protestant or Catholic for the rest of his days despite what happens to him. The difficulties in that respect should not be underestimated.

I am not here to defend the Confederation of British Industry, but it should be put on record who the main employers are. The main employer is the Secretary of State. There are 30,000 people in the Northern Ireland Civil Service. The next major employer is probably the police authority, which employs 12,000 or 15,000 people. The next after that may be the Ministry of Defence. I say in all sincerity to the hon. Member for South Down that if we try to put the finger too firmly on the manufacturing sector we may find it incapable of dealing with the problem. It may not have the scope to achieve the redress that the hon. Gentleman seeks.

Ms. Abbott: The hon. Gentleman said earlier that he did not think that there was systematic discrimination against Catholics in Northern Ireland, and I have listened carefully as he has developed his speech. If there is no such discrimination, how does he account for the massive differential in employment levels? Is he trying to argue that it is merely coincidence?

Mr. McCusker: I have already conceded that there are historical, cultural and many other reasons for those imbalances. What I am saying is that those imbalances may not be so massive, depending on how we view them. I feel that, while the fact that nine out of 10 Protestants and eight out of 10 Catholics are employed suggests an imbalance, it does not suggest a massive imbalance. It does not suggest face-to-face, one-off instances of discrimination. I do not think that an employer will deliberately employ a Protestant whom he knows to be second rate, aware that he may be rejecting someone better able to do the job. There is no evidence of that from the past 12 years. Certainly there is none from the Fair Employment Agency, despite all the work that it has done to establish the existence of such discrimination.

Ms Abbott: Is the hon. Gentleman implying, then, that the reason Catholics fail to obtain employment in Northern Ireland is that they have not the competence, the skills or the education?

Mr. McCusker: Catholics do obtain employment in Northern Ireland. That is precisely the point I am making. What we are arguing about is the differential between the two communities in terms of either the Government's unemployment statistics or the statistics about which I am talking. The hon. Lady may not realise that some 50,000 Protestants are also unemployed in Northern Ireland. If matters were so simple—if there was discrimination on the scale that she decribes—I imagine that no Protestants would be unemployed in Northern Ireland. You might as well be hanged for a sheep as for a lamb. I have accepted that there is an imbalance—I believe that Catholics do suffer a disadvantage—but I am concerned with ensuring that the whole community addresses the problem in a way that is likely to remedy it.

Two issues have been avoided in today's debate, and I hope that some comment will be made on them before we finish. First, what is the position of Sinn Fein? We know that Sinn Fein supporters constitute about a third of the Roman Catholic community in Northern Ireland. If I were an employer there, I could not employ a Sinn Fein supporter. He would probably be seeking my death, or he might be happy to collude in setting me up for murder. If he was not after me, and I employed others who were members of the security forces, he might well be engaged in activity that would lead to their murder.

How do the Government intend to deal with that problem? If a known Sinn Fein supporter is refused employment, will the employer lose whatever grants are available to him? Will he be prosecuted? Or will he be able to say that he is not prepared to risk either himself or his other employees by employing such a person?

The other issue is employment in the security forces. Between the police, the Ulster Defence Regiment, the prison service and associated ancillary workers, there must be about 30,000 jobs going begging. If the Catholic community took up its share, 10,000 or 12,000 might be available. What difference would that make to the figure? It would be bound to have some effect. In Northern Ireland, 10,000 or 12,000 is a large slab of jobs. We sometimes forget on how small a scale the problem exists there.

What assurance are we being given that efforts are being made to ensure that the Catholic community plays its full part in the security endeavour? Or are we reaching the point at which we say to that community, "You can refuse to take up these opportunities, but you can go on demanding sufficient jobs in other spheres to compensate for the fact that you have not taken up those jobs"? I hope that the Minister will respond to that.

What is the position of contractors working on security bases? Are we to make a special exception for them, as we made for the brewery in the Glen road? Will the Government say, "Unless you have your proportions right, friend, you will not get a contract here"? Naturally, no one else will carry out the contract. I am looking forward to some of these monitoring returns. Will they be open to public scrutiny or available only to the agency or Ministers? That will be an important aspect of the debate on the legislation.

As I said earlier, I intend to take a fairly low-key, positive approach to this debate because for an Ulster Protestant there is nothing to be gained from doing otherwise. I hope that a sensitive approach to the problem will be adopted. It will not be easy. It is not just a matter of the initial time in building up the monitoring returns. Many employers will have to spend a great deal of time producing their defence. If they cannot meet their target, their only justification will be if they can show that they did everything to try to meet it. Presumably they will have to keep records of the various applicants, show what they have done on recruitment practice, and so on. It may well produce shocks for some who were not expecting them.

I want to see a fair society in Northern Ireland, as do most Protestants, and I hope that whatever detailed legislation comes from these proposals will lead to that. But, I wish to add one note of dissent. It is remarkable that neither Front Bench spokesman mentioned terrorism. It was as if the campaign of the past 20 years had had no effect on employment. Yet it has had a dramatic effect. In 1973, there were only about 40,000 unemployed in

Northern Ireland. On the basis that the same proportions applied, that would mean that there were probably equal numbers of Catholics and Protestants unemployed in employment terms, nine and half out of 10 Protestants and nine out of 10 Catholics in work. That does not fit with the case that some hon. Members are trying to make. I am not suggesting that the terrorist campaign has been solely responsible for the massive increase in unemployment but it has been substantially responsible.

I do not accept that the primary cause of the lack of investment in Northern Ireland has been the perception overseas of Northern Ireland as a vile, discriminating place. It is caused when people across the water see two soldiers being dragged from their car, stripped naked, beaten and slaughtered; a Remembrance Day parade being attacked; and six soldiers returning from a charity run being bombed. That is what deters people from investing in Northern Ireland, as is the campaign of the IRA to destroy factories and murder business men, Protestants and Catholics alike. Some Catholic business men in my constituency have been murdered by the IRA. That is what prevents growth in employment, and more employment is ultimately the answer in securing the opportunity for work for everyone, which is what we all want.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean) Order. Four or five hon. Members still wish to speak in the debate, which has been shortened because of the statement. Only about one hour is left before the expected time for the winding-up speeches, so I appeal to all hon. Members whom I call to make brief contributions.

12.54 pm

Mr. Martin Flannery (Sheffield, Hillsborough): I listened with interest to the hon. Member for Upper Bann (Mr. McCusker). I have deep respect for him, as he well knows. Indeed, he shares a great deal of my thinking and that of the Opposition, but he should not talk as if nothing went wrong. That is not on. The civil rights march of 1969 did not come from nowhere. The reality, which must be faced, is that I want, as much as he does, every Protestant and every Catholic to be employed. There was a time, whatever the hon. Gentleman says, when that was not true. The Catholics were held in a subjection that was bound at some time to produce a civil rights march or something like it.

We, as much as the hon. Gentleman, are on public record all the time as being against terrorism. Just in case people think that we are not, because of the propaganda machine, I should tell the House that we are on record even more regularly than others as being against terrorism. It is so easy to think that because we differ from the Government on many aspects we might just support terrorism. That is an easy accusation to make. When people on either side are killed, it is a terrible thing, and we are deeply aware of that, but it began to occur at a greatly accelerated rate after the civil rights march of 1969. It was not the civil rights marchers who attacked others; it was a peaceful demonstration. They were attacked because they were demonstrating for precisely the civil rights that are embedded in the White Paper that we are debating.

One of the things that I feel sad about—I am sure that there must be an explanation—is that it has taken a long time to reach this stage. I, for one, welcome the White Paper. There might be shades and nuances, and there might be something bigger that I have not understood yet, where I might differ, but I profoundly agree with it, as I understand a large number of people do.

The hon. Member for Upper Bann said that he hoped there would be a sensitive approach. In God's name, what sort of sensible approach have the Unionists had for all these years? As I said in the debate the other night, never have they admitted that they made a mistake or were wrong. That has never happened, and I have listened to them in the House for 15 years now.

I was glad to hear my hon. Friend the Member for South Down (Mr. McGrady) read out paragraph 3 of the foreword. I can show him that in my copy it is marked. I had intended to read it out. If I cannot have paragraph 3, let me read something else, which is in the introduction:

> "There are clear and long-standing differences between the employment experiences of the Catholic and the Protestant sections of the community in Northern Ireland. In particular, unemployment rates are significantly higher among Catholics and they hold relatively fewer senior positions."

The hon. Member for Upper Bann does not seem to agree with that, from what I heard. The introduction continues:

> "There are many reasons for these differentials which arise from a range of social, geographical and historical influences."

In my opinion, they are basically historical influences which arose from the plantation of Northern Ireland when the British had trouble with the Irish and the Scots. Astutely the Government did what they used to do when I was a soldier in India, with the Moslems and the Hindus. No matter whether that is denied, I saw it with my own eyes. The introduction states:

> "The phenomenon of a cycle of disadvantage is an experience common to parts of every industrial society and Northern Ireland is by no means unique in demonstrating that such a cycle can be very difficult to break."

I do not agree with that. Northern Ireland is unique because of its history and because of the occupation of Ireland for hundreds of years. The problems sprang from that. Therefore, it is not correct to equate the problems in Northern Ireland with the slump. The slump exists, but superimposed on it are historical reasons for the lawful killing that takes place. The hon. Member for Upper Bann underestimated, or played down, what had happened in the past.

The introduction continues:

> "Higher levels of unemployment are reflected in higher dependency on social security benefits (23·8 per cent. of the population of Northern Ireland, compared with 15 per cent. in Great Britain)."

There are many reasons for that, and I think we all know them. Some areas are so gravely disadvantaged that many Protestant working-class people are in dire and terrible poverty, and I want them to be helped and given the same rights as everyone else.

The issues with which we are confronted have become more terrible because of the new situation. In Strabane, for instance, largely due to a lack of investment and the slump, 47 per cent. of the people are unemployed. In Derry 30 per cent. are unemployed, and in Foyle and West Belfast the figures are probably even higher. I do not have the figures, but the hon. Member for Foyle (Mr. Hume) gave me some figures and attributed a great deal of that to lack of investment. Lack of investment is not due only to the

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present troubles. There has been lack of investment for a long time. Whether or not the trouble was violent, it existed.

As the speeches from the Front Benches have made clear, members of the Catholic community have been disadvantaged in housing, in the voting procedures and in employment. Therefore, the need for investment, of which they have been starved, must be examined. It is mentioned in the document because sectarianism in a particular area leads to an increasing lack of investment in that area.

There are many kinds of sectarianism. We constantly argue about sexual sectarianism, which occurs in many communities. In many areas this side of the water there is sectarianism against trade unions and many employers can sack their entire work force because they belong to a trade union, and can get away with it. An employer in my constituency sacked the whole work force when they went on strike. When religious discrimination is superimposed on discrimination of that nature, the situation becomes desperate and needs desperate remedies.

It is all the more difficult to attempt to achieve fairness in the context of such an appalling situation, because the finest method of achieving no discrimination is to have full employment. The hon. Member for Mid-Ulster (Rev. William McCrea) nods in assent, but I must say to him, as he is a Unionist, that, sadly, it was not true until the troubles came about. When there was really high unemployment in Northern Ireland, sectarianism existed and was engaged in by those who led that particular grouping.

We cannot talk sectarianism out of existence. It must be faced, just as in another great country the people are having to face their past and do something about it. Some of the people who have opposed us in the past and who we want to work with us in the future still talk as though nothing ever went wrong and as though someone utterly wicked started doing something bad in 1969 and carried on doing it. We shall get nowhere unless we admit to what went wrong.

The Secretary of State had with him many pamphlets on fair employment. They have all been published since 1973, and there is not the slightest doubt that they were published because of the killing that was going on. The problem was running away with us, and it looks as though it will continue for a long time unless we admit that somthing must be done. Some people believe that if Northern Ireland was governed as it was before 1969 there would be no problem. All that they want to do is to return to the old Stormont and the same old mentality. I do not include the hon. Member for Upper Bann in that. Many of the points that he made were adequate and correct defences of himself, but the much wider group of which he is a part did some of the bad things that happened. A fightback was inevitable.

The last major legislation on the subject was in 1976. We have waited 12 years for the White Paper. Ulster Members of Parliament are in grave danger all the time and my heart goes out to them. I do not know how they face it. Having visited the Province many times, I know that they stand up to it wonderfully. It must be a terrible thing, but they must accept that something went wrong.

In paragraph (e) on page 12 the document deals with the likely impact on inward investment of sectarian discrimination in employment. I hope that the Under-Secretary of State will refer to this when he replies. The Prime Minister and other Ministers constantly tell us that we are more prosperous than we have ever been and that things are going well. If we are more prosperous than we have ever been, why in God's name are not more people employed in Britain and in Northern Ireland? Many of the people who are supposedly employed are not employed at all. More than 3 million of them are on training schemes, and all the signs are that real unemployment has decreased very little.

The harsh reality is that much of the prosperity is poured into the pockets of the wealthy, and the poor—including the unemployed in Northern Ireland—are suffering because of the mentality of people who want to get rich quick but who accuse ordinary working people of being greedy if they ask for unemployment benefit, or if they resist being paid unemployment benefit in order to do a day's work. As on the mainland, there are many problems in Northern Ireland, but they are accentuated by its political and historical background. That must be admitted before we can make any progress.

In conclusion—I believe that hon. Members should make short speeches today and I have been aiming at 10 minutes—I believe that the White Paper is welcome. Whatever the weaknesses, they are not terribly important compared with the likely effects of the White Paper and subsequent legislation. I believe that many people in Northern Ireland and over here will agree with me. I hope that the White Paper will produce a bond that will bring us closer together and bring us to the table to talk out our difficulties. The greatest enemy of terrorism is democracy —it cannot flourish where democracy exists. Therefore, it is our collective duty to aspire to that democracy, and there is a great deal of it in the White Paper proposals.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I am extremely grateful to the hon. Gentleman for responding to my appeal to make a short speech.

1.10 pm

Mr. David Alton (Liverpool, Mossley Hill): I agree with the hon. Member for Sheffield, Hillsborough (Mr. Flannery) that the White Paper is long overdue. The hon. Gentleman followed the hon. Member for Upper Bann (Mr. McCusker), whose speech was welcome and its tone helpful to the debate. I do not believe that there is any point in trying to apportion blame or guilt. We must consider the reality of high unemployment in Northern Ireland and see how best we can address that issue to ensure that, instead of sharing the misery around, we can find the maximum number of opportunities for people from both parts of the divided community. Last year, at the height of a bleak period the hon. Member for Upper Bann provided a gleam of hope with the publication of the task force report. Today his contribution has had a similar effect and helped to make this debate highly constructive.

It is somewhat ironic that this debate has been initiated by this Secretary of State, given that the present Government pride themselves on allowing market forces to let rip. Generally they are opposed to intervention in the market, yet paradoxically they have produced this welcome document today. I was even more surprised when I heard the Secretary of State talk about a commitment to a fair electoral system and describe the virtues of proportional representation for local government, the now defunct Assembly and the European Parliament. I hope that he will extend the logic of his commitment to a fair electoral system and also apply interventionist methods of tackling economic problems to all of the United Kingdom, not just to Northern Ireland.

I welcome the right hon. Gentleman's announcement that Sir Oliver Napier is to be appointed as the new chairman of the Standing Advisory Commission on Human Rights. It would not be right to pass on without paying tribute to Seamus O'Hara on the remarkable contribution that he has made to Northern Ireland public life. Sir Oliver Napier is a friend and former leader of the alliance party in Northern Ireland and I do not believe that anyone would gainsay the contribution that he has made over many years to breaking down the sectarian barriers in Northern Ireland. I believe that he will be a worthy successor to Seamus O'Hara, and I am sure that the whole House will wish him well.

The Secretary of State spoke about the need to maintain the principle of appointment on merit. I agree, but it must not be used as a way of stymieing fair employment. We shall consider the legislation when it is introduced to ensure that a proper balance is struck. I am sure that it will.

The Secretary of State has said that the Fair Employment Commission must not be seen as a beleaguered organisation simply on one side of the argument or the other. The hon. Member for Upper Bann echoed that. It is important that fair employment cuts both ways and it must look after the interests of everyone. The commission must be seen to be on the side of fairness and justice.

I am aware of the inevitable problems that terrorism is bound to create regarding any type of employment in Northern Ireland. Difficulty is bound to be caused when someone from Sinn Fein, for instance, presents himself for employment. Yet, I believe that, after security and political questions, fair employment is the single most important issue and, despite the difficulties, the Government are right to introduce the White Paper today.

The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara) said that he would like the code of practice incorporated in primary legislation, but I disagree. There will be considerable differences between big firms which employ thousands and small firms which may employ no more than 10. In those circumstances it may be better to have some degree of flexibility. With the acute problems with security and terrorism in Northern Ireland the commission must have some scope for manoeuvrability. I shall watch carefully, as will others, the Government's full proposals on the code of practice when they are published. We on these Benches would not wish to see them in the primary legislation.

I was surprised to hear the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North call in aid Senator Joseph Kennedy, whose outbursts in Northern Ireland have had more to do with pleasing voters at home than with addressing the problems facing a divided community. I do not accept that the positive discrimination policies adopted in many parts of the United States have been easily, universally or wholeheartedly implemented. We should not see such policies as a panacea. However, I agreed with many of the other comments of the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North and am happy to associate myself with the majority of his remarks.

I congratulate the Government on bringing forward this initiative. It must be seen in the context of the figures issued by the Department of Economic Development, which show that 116,156 people in Northern Ireland are unemployed—17·1 per cent. of the population. My primary reason for supporting this initiative, which attempts to create equal opportunities, is that it will enhance the north's prospect of attracting new work and investment.

The present image of a sectarian Northern Ireland, where people merely look after their own, drives away potential investors. As the White Paper properly says, no society can afford the waste of talent or the sense of unfairness that such persistent disadvantage entails.

The White Paper's proposals demonstrate a commitment to a new Northern Ireland, marked by equality of opportunity for all. They represent a repudiation of those who wish to turn the clock back to a society of discrimination and one-sided prejudice. The proposals are sufficiently powerful to combat and neutralise the determined attempts by Republican interest groups in America to damage the economy of Northern Ireland through disinvestment by American business men.

The White Paper is the long-awaited answer to those who promote the MacBride principles which sound so enticing to American politicans and business men, yet, in practice, would inflict only further misery on Northern Ireland's long-suffering people. These proposals will inspire confidence in the international community and among the minority in Northern Ireland. The White Paper has teeth that look sharp enough to rip the north free of bigoted practices in the workplace, and I welcome that.

I am glad that the Government are using the public Bill procedure to introduce this legislation. It is good that we have had the chance to debate the White Paper and that an amendable Bill will be introduced. It would have been outrageous if a 90-minute debate had been announced on an unamendable order. That would have left many people extremely angry. As a contrast with the Orders in Council procedure, this has been an extremely useful exercise. It demonstrates how we should conduct more Northern Ireland business. Opportunities for debate across the Chamber, for sophisticated amendments to be moved, and for cross-community co-operation to take place in debating the nuances of legislation add to the texture of Northern Ireland politics. That is extremely welcome. It helps people to come out of tribalistic bunkers and to deal with important political issues.

There are some obvious problems that the House will wish to address, one of which is what the SACHR report described as the chill factor. As the hon. Member for Gillingham (Mr. Couchman) mentioned, there will be Roman Catholics who, if offered the chance to work at Harland and Wolff, would be too scared to do so because of the possibilities of retaliation, harassment and intimidation. Clearly, the House cannot legislate for the chill factor, but it will have to take it into account.

Similarly, we must take into account not only discrimination but historical and educational factors. Traditionally, employment in the predominantly orange east has been based on manufacturing, skills and enterprise, unlike in the predominantly Catholic west, which is inevitably more green. We must recognise that, for demographic and historical reasons, there will be major problems to overcome, and the White Paper can only be a starting point.

[Mr. David Alton]

When we look at the education system we see that in the past Roman Catholic schools have undoubtedly concentrated on the arts and humanities while Protestant schools have concentrated primarily on science and engineering. That has led to different employment patterns, and we must take that factor into account. This also requires legislation to be flexible in its operation.

I have some questions about the scheme and I should like to put them to the Minister who is to reply to the debate. My first question is about the employer. If affirmative action is to be one of the Bill's principles, there will have to be some protection for the employer; otherwise he could be accused of discrimination in reverse. Where an employer goes out of his way to employ someone from the minority community or, indeed, a person from the majority community if the Andersonstown example were taken, what will happen to him? Will the legislation protect an employer who goes out of his way to redress some imbalance in his factory?

I should also like to ask about the fair employment support scheme. I am sure that the Minister would agree that at present the financial incentives for encouraging fair employment have been modest. The scheme has been long on sentiment but short on cash. I hope that the Minister will say something about further financial incentives to employers who implement the full spirit of the proposals in the White Paper. Undoubtedly the scheme will increase the burden on employers. There is no escaping that.

Turning now to the position of employees, I welcome the move away from the biased county court appeal system. However, the complexity of the new referral system may be a major disincentive to many employees. I agree entirely with the hon. Member for South Down (Mr. McGrady) who spoke about the problems facing individual employees who take their employers to the tribunal. He argued that legal aid should be made available just as it would be for cases before industrial tribunals. I hope that the Minister will answer that point because I strongly believe that legal aid should be made available. In the past some trade union help has been available, but in future that will not necessarily be the case with the new tribunals. For that reason, an individual complainant could find himself worse off than before. The cost may prove quite prohibitive and he may not be able to match the professional representation that employers may have. That is an important issue, and I hope that the Government will address it.

The Secretary of State will appoint the tribunal after consultation with the Lord Chief Justice. Will there be any consultation with the political parties in Northern Ireland as well, and what will be the precise make-up of the tribunal? Can the Minister, in his winding-up speech also tell the House about the sensitive issues of security mentioned by the hon. Member for Upper Bann? Will meetings be held in camera, as I think has been the practice in the past? In normal circumstances, will they be open and reportable by the press?

I welcome the commission's ability to choose its own targets. It should be there primarily to cajole, encourage, persuade and negotiate and it should not necessarily be combative. When it does act, how is the success of the commission to be measured? Will it be on the basis of a dearth or surfeit of prosecutions? At what point will the Commission decide that an employer is not acting in good faith?

A firm in my constituency, which is a stone's throw from Toxteth, where a riot broke out five years ago, had problems of discrimination of a different kind. I recently visited that factory, after complaints from members of the local black community who said that only three or four people from an ethnic minority were employed there. They were obviously anxious to see an increase in the number of black employees. Whilst I accept the sincerity of that particular employer that it is its intention to recruit more black people in due course, the problem is how long it will be before that happens. The company says that next year it intends to employ more black people if they apply, and that it will take affirmative action to demonstrate its commitment to good race relations. The problem is that that is perhaps a year away.

In the context of similar reactions from Northern Ireland employers, I should like to hear from the Minister what sort of time scale he will be expecting from employers, otherwise "some day never" will be the order of the day. Employers will try to push into the future the need to take on employees from the minority community or even, as in the case mentioned by the hon. Member for Upper Bann, from the majority community.

Surely, also, the commission should be able to refer direct to the High court without going to the tribunal. That would cut through some of the red tape and bureaucracy. It would hit employers who do not implement the scheme more rapidly.

Will the commission have the necessary resources to meet its massive new responsibilities in registering and certifying employers? To whom will the commission be accountable? A great deal of work will be involved and it will need more employees. Clearly, there could be an excessive work load with which to deal. I hope that the Minister will be able to say something about the resources that it will be given.

May I also ask the Minister about the penalties that will be open to the commission if a company refuses to register or where a false claim is made? It may be that the penalties will be insufficient—just £2,000 may be the maximum. If someone has just won a contract or tender for perhaps £200,000 or even £500,000, £2,000 will seem a very small penalty. I hope that the Government will say something about the scale of penalties where an employer has deliberately put in a false claim of certification.

May I also ask about the nature of the questions that will be asked of employees to determine their religious background? Surely, it would be better to ask the direct question, "What is your religious background?" rather than to ask about the primary school that a child attended. I have been heartened to hear the Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Peterborough (Dr. Mawhinney), speaking at the Dispatch Box about the Government's objectives of promoting integrated education. I welcome that. I am a patron of the Belfast Trust and, along with many hon. Members on both sides of the House, I believe that we should encourage and give incentives to schools that provide integrated education.

I am told that when the forms are completed, if the child went to an integrated school, the religious background will be listed as "Not known". With the Government's objective of increasing the number of children in integrated education, how will it be possible to determine religious backgrounds and whether or not the policies are working? That will make the monitoring of such a scheme difficult. Other hon. Members have also dealt with the question of monitoring.

I also wish to ask about other minorities. If integrated schools are to be left out of the equation, what will happen to people of neither religion? The hon. Member for Upper Bann suggested that it was not possible to be born in Northern Ireland without being one religion or the other. I suspect that in the vast majority of cases that is true. However, increasingly in the city of Belfast there are people drawn from ethnic minorities. What will happen to them? I hope that the Government will also give that point further consideration.

Anxious as I am to conclude my remarks so that other hon. Members may contribute, I should say that there is no point in simply sacking Protestants in order to employ Catholics. The overriding need is to create a stable atmosphere in which prosperity can develop and investment can occur. A prerequisite for that must be fair employment. Fair employment will make the best use of human resources. It will assist in creating a more united community. It recognises that the status quo is not an option. For those reasons, it would be churlish not to welcome the White Paper. Although we shall scrutinise the Bill when it comes forward, we welcome the debate today.

1.30 pm

Rev. William McCrea (Mid-Ulster): A serious issue is before us which has exercised the minds of many of the representatives of the Province and it deserves to be considered seriously.

For about 20 years a massive propaganda campaign has been waged against Northern Ireland in an attempt to discredit every positive aspect of life in the Province. The hon. Member for Sheffield, Hillsborough (Mr. Flannery), who has left the Chamber, cannot expect me to defend the employment practices of the past or those of the present. My party has never been in government in Northern Ireland. Therefore, my party and I are not in a position to defend anything that went before. For four years I was a chairman of a district council, and during that period no Roman Catholic or Protestant claimed that the council had discriminated against him in employment. The only criteria for a person's employment were merit and whether he was the best person for the job. That should be the principle on which we operate, rather than seeking a bogeyman or a religious tag to put on someone.

My hon. Friend the Member for Upper Bann (Mr. McCusker), in an excellent speech, drew attention to paragraph 1.6 of Cm. 380, which is headed "Religion and disadvantage". Part of the paragraph states:

> "while it is very difficult to quantify its impact, it is clear that it is by no means the sole nor even the main explanation."

I thought that the Opposition spokesman, the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara), would have commented upon that or referred to paragraph 1.7, which reads:

> "While allegations of discrimination against Protestants are less frequently heard, it would be wrong to imagine that it is something which affects only the Catholic section of the community, as a number of cases determined by the Agency indicates."

That puts the matter in its proper context. The paragraph refers to a fact which has been forgotten by many speakers in the debate.

Discrimination is suffered for reasons other than religion. Given the party and the denomination which I represent, perhaps I know more about discrimination than anyone else. If an applicant for a job writes on the application form that he is a Free Presbyterian, he can be almost 100 per cent. assured that he will not be given the job. I have been discriminated against in providing children with religious education, which is a right that is granted to me by statute. The school concerned has given every denomination except mine the right to carry on religious education in the school. I have to walk the children across the road and take them into my garage to give them religious education. No classroom is provided for me. When I did have access to the school, the headmaster ruled—no doubt this was done to discourage me from entering the school again—that the children must sit on the floor rather than on chairs. When it comes to discrimination and claims of discrimination, I do not need a lecture from anyone. I know the facts. I should be happy for anyone to inquire into the matters which I have mentioned in passing.

Irrespective of whoever has been discriminated against, I shall not defend discrimination. Surely it is the job of the Opposition spokesman, especially when we have a Labour Opposition, to demand more jobs for the Province. Surely that should have been done instead of talking, in effect, of knocking someone out of a job to give it to someone else because of his religion.

I did not hear much emphasis placed on the fact that the best way to avoid discrimination in the Province is for the Government to carry out an extensive programme to provide employment for everyone, or at least practically everyone. The idea that everyone should be employed is not a reality in 1988. However, everyone should be given the right to the possibility of a job, irrespective of who they are.

In 1968 only 27,000 people were unemployed in the Province at a time when there was a charge that there was extreme discrimination. At the moment there are 120,000 people unemployed. In the light of that rise, the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North should have argued that the Government should provide employment. He should not have referred to a head count. The hon. Gentleman's speech was devoted to unemployment among the minority. However, the report that we are discussing today establishes that there is no sectarian head count and that there is discrimination affecting Protestants and Roman Catholics.

My hon. Friend the Member for Upper Bann stated that only 52 cases of discrimination have been established in 12 years. The old cliché may be applied that if one says something long enough, people will begin to believe it and one believes it oneself. Therefore, everyone else may take up the cause. Some Americans tell us that they are distraught about the employment position in Northern Ireland. We must remember the main fact that unemployment has risen from 27,000 in 1968 to 120,000 today. Many multinational companies have pulled out of Northern Ireland and caused job losses. Now theyhave the cheek to tell us that they will dictate the terms of how jobs will be maintained in the companies that still remain in the Province.

Those are the solemn facts. It was sad to hear the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North stating that there was a threat to British industry. He said that if the Government did not take action American firms, under

[Rev. William McCrea]

pressure from Congress, would threaten jobs on the mainland. That is disgraceful. Jobs should not be threatened. The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North should realise that threats to jobs are a matter for the trade unionists and that the United States pressure is here to stay and will not go away.

Instead of trying to encourage the Irish caucus to pull out of investing in Northern Ireland, we should seek to bring investment into Northern Ireland. If the Irish caucus is worried about investment in west Belfast, Londonderry and Strabane, it should be aware of the fact that there are opportunities and Government incentives in the form of grants to attract investment to the area. It is easy to talk about this problem, but we must consider the reality to understand why the situation is as it is.

I am not claiming that there has not been discrimination in Northern Ireland. However, we must consider the present position. It is easy to set off on a hobby horse. However, we must recognise that discrimination is not confined to Northern Ireland. We should consider the mainland. I believe that we are opening a can of worms here. If I were a member of the coloured population in Great Britain, I would be interested in this. This is a great bonus.

I have travelled extensively in the United States. Listening to the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North, one would think that blacks in the United States lived in a paradise. Those who go to the towns and cities there can immediately find where the blacks live and where the whites live, so the Americans should not pontifcate on something which they have not been able to handle. My plea is that, both in America and on the mainland here, we should give members of ethnic minorities greater consideration. Blacks and others have not been treated properly in employment. We should be open.

I hope that the Government have opened their mind to discrimination of all kinds and that the Opposition will press the Government for an effective and vital extension of what is here proposed to the mainland to ensure that members of the ethnic minorities and others who are under privileged in employment are supported. Northern Ireland Members will be with the Opposition on that.

If the Minister cannot give me an answer today, I should like him to write to me saying when measures concerning discrimination against blacks and other minorities will be taken on the mainland. Discrimination is defined in paragraph 3.12 of the Government's guide to effective practice which says:

> "a person discriminates unfairly on grounds of religious belief or political opinion if on those grounds he or she treats that other person less favourably. Equality of opportunity of employment means equal access to employment opportunities."

I have no difficulty in saying that the person who is given employment ought to be the most suitable candidate, chosen on merit, no matter what his or her religious or political affiliations are, and no matter what the religious or political affiliations of the firm might be. My aim, and that of my party, is to achieve equality of emphasis, effort, information and training opportunities for all sections of the community, and employment of the best qualified people available whatever their class or creed.

I have no doubt that the hon. Member for South Down (Mr. McGrady) is concerned about unemployment. The United States tells us how it will force certain things down our throat or that it will disinvest. A Fair Employment Agency report on the constituency of the hon. Member for Foyle (Mr. Hume) said that, to all intents and purposes, two firms, Lee Apparel (United Kingdom) Ltd., Londonderry, and Essex International, Londonderry, employed no Londonderry Protestants. I should have thought that the hon. Member for South Down would have mentioned that in his analysis of the whole picture rather than one section of it.

I also would have thought that the hon. Gentleman would mention Daisy Hill hospital, Newry, which is near his constituency. The Fair Employment Agency found that 77 per cent. of all nursing staff in the Newry and Mourne district are Roman Catholic. I should have thought that the hon. Gentleman would be happy to mention that. Mourne is in his constituency. I know the area well because my wife comes from it. I should have thought that that information would be helpful to the hon. Gentleman and to the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North if they wanted to give the full picture. I should also like to know—perhaps the Minister can find out—how many Protestants are employed in Beleek in Enniskillen, and in Tyrone Crystal, and how much Government grant has been given to those firms. Rather than judging whether there is an imbalance, I should be happy to leave it to the Department to tell me the answers. If I have to put my query down for Question Time, I shall be happy to do so.

What about Toome eel fishery? The Minister ought to know about that, because I wrote to the Department some years ago about possible financial improprieties that I wished it to investigate. A substantial sum may be involved. How many Protestants are employed there? I know that there is an equal balance of Catholics and Protestants in the surrounding area. On the one hand, there are Antrim and Ballymena, both largely Protestant areas. Magherafelt is 46 per cent. Protestant and 54 per cent. Nationalist.

Mr. McGrady: May I comment on the statistics?

Rev. William McCrea: I wish to allow other hon. Members to intervene. I am not trying to cut out the hon. Gentleman, but I wish to finish my speech.

I am merely saying that it is not good enough to bandy the name of one firm against that of another. If that is the game, it will be found that the Unionist population employed in the west of the Province will be looking very carefully at the compilation of the work force, and will also demand that the Department takes action.

I sent a dossier to the Fair Employment Agency some years ago, when I was first elected to the Northern Ireland Assembly, asking for an investigation into the Government's employment of nursing and other staff in the Omagh hospitals, in the education and library board for the western area and in the health and social services department in the area. The House will be interested to know that so far no information has been given.

Members of the Democratic Unionist party, and all right-thinking people, will not approve of discrimination, irrespective of who suffers it. That cannot be allowed. I am anxious to ensure that there is fair employment in Northern Ireland, but I want fair employment in the whole of the United Kingdom. We should not simply bandy one statistic against another; the Government should look at the matter as a whole. They are one of the major employers. I should like them to ensure that there is fair employment in my constituency. As the statistics that I gave to the agency show, there is not fair employment for people in my community. Merit must be the basis of future employment in our Province

1.48 pm

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): I thank the hon. Member for Mid-Ulster (Rev. William McCrea) for finishing early to give me an opportunity to speak. I shall try not to abuse that, by confining my speech to 10 minutes or so.

The hon. Gentleman seemed at times to be trading off more jobs against more institutionalised fairness. I do not believe that they are necessarily exclusive alternatives. A major problem in Northern Ireland is unemployment, and action is needed to mop it up. Other problems may then remain, such as how that employment is distributed and how promotion is organised, so legislation of this nature may need to be extended to other areas and introduced throughout the United Kingdom. The prime question, which we must press, is about the availability of jobs.

I make no apologies for being a non-Irish novice on the subject of unemployment in Northern Ireland. Non-Irish Back Benchers should try their hands at discussing the problems of Northern Ireland because of the desperate situation that exists there, even if in doing so we learn more than we contribute to solving the problems.

On page 28 of the Standing Advisory Commission on Human Rights' report on fair employment a table shows the problems of the distribution of employment. Obviously, the Catholic community is discriminated against in advancing within employment. Social workers have produced other sets of statistics on gender, race and social class for the est of the United Kingdom, and for Northern Ireland and we would find similar maldistribution there. That shows that deeper forces are at work than specific discrimination for employment. Obviously there is discrimination within employment but wider issues are also involved, such as who is getting what educational opportunity, who is making use of that opportunity, why some people are not making use of it and what their social backgrounds and conditions are. All those introduce bias into the system.

The table also shows that serious problems would exist even if we had a sort of fair weather system in Northern Ireland. Even if there were not serious mass unemployment and all the other problems that go with violence and sectarianism, we would have an issue to tackle. It would be easier to tackle, and this legislation might be the answer to it.

Northern Ireland's economy has been in sharp decline since 1960. As the 1980s have drawn to a close it has fallen even further behind the rest of the United Kingdom. Between 1981 and 1986 the United Kingdom economy grew by more than 15 per cent., albeit unevenly, but in Northern Ireland it increased by only 6 per cent. Although United Kingdom manufacturing output has increased by 10 per cent. since 1985, it has declined in Northern Ireland since 1986. The Government talk about an economic miracle—it seems rather less than a miracle—but it has not had the same impact on Northern Ireland as on the rest of the United Kingdom.

Poverty is not confined to Catholic ghettos. In the Protestant lower Shankill area of west Belfast almost two thirds of the population depend on social security for three quarters or more of their income. Half the population come within the Government's definition of poverty. The various Government disguises for the unemployment figures cannot hide the fact that the real unemployment figure is about 60 per cent. Even on Government figures, it is about 33 per cent. The area is blighted by high unemployment, poor housing, a poor environment and limited amenities, all of which have driven many people away, leaving a disproportionately old population.

On page 19 of the report an employment table shows the problems by dividing the male population into Catholics and Protestants. There are horrendous figures for unemployment among Catholics, such as 43·3 per cent. in Cookstown, 35·8 per cent. in Derry and 36·7 per cent, in Dungannon, but there are also terrible figures among the Protestant population, such as 22·7 per cent. in Carrickfergus, 21 per cent. in Moyle and 21·9 per cent. in Strabane. That shows that we cannot begin to tackle the problems in Northern Ireland unless there is a massive infusion of money and public funding rather than the nonsense that we are getting, such as the proposal to privatise provisions in Belfast and to create a situation in which the market has to determine things, rather than our being collectively and socially responsible for what is needed.

In the short time that I have been in the House, on listening to people from Northern Ireland I have been impressed by the fact that four or five different parties, including the Ulster Unionists and the SDLP, are often pressing the Government on similar things when they talk about hospital closures and the need for provisions here and there. There is an obvious social need to be met.

Unless the British Government wish to go down in history as just another British Government who failed to act in time to undermine the material roots of sectarianism and to prevent Belfast being turned into a twin city with Beirut, they must realise that now is the time to regenerate the economy of Northern Ireland through a programme of public investment and job creation, because the only way to ensure fair employment is to get full employment, although we might then need fair employment legislation.

Neither military nor market solutions will make much difference to eradicating deep-seated prejudice. We need a concerted programme of economic, social and political reform involving the demilitarisation of society, the acceptance that direct rule must be replaced by democratic and devolved structures and a Bill of Rights to protect all the citizens of the Province. There is now a slim chance for political progress in the Province, but if it is to have any long-term future it must be based on a thriving economy. The Government's announcement that privatisation is to be added to the Province's problems will not help at all. It will just add to the problems of religious bigotry.

The Government's report states in paragraph 1.5:

> "Unemployment and disadvantage affect Protestants as well as Catholics. For example 1 in 5 Protestant families depends on supplementary benefit and over a quarter are in receipt of housing benefit. However, the most severe disadvantage is undoubtedly concentrated among Catholics."

For me, that means that there is the basis for a common struggle by Catholic and Protestant workers for decent living standards, wages and jobs. We should do everything that we can to unite that struggle and see that it is directed

[Mr. Harry Barnes]

at the Government, so that concessions can begin to be made. That can be done effectively only through public investment, but much remains to be done in eradicating inequalities and making it easier for workers, of whatever faith, to find employment.

I do not like the notion of quotas in certain industries, as it would help to reinforce and institutionalise religious and sectarian difference, when, as a Socialist, I believe that class can unite workers in a common fight for a fairer society. None the less, there is much that the Government can and must do to eliminate unlawful discrimination.

I should like to refer to a submission to the Standing Advisory Committee on Human Rights from the Workers' party in Ireland, because that party does not have a voice here, and other voices in Northern Ireland are heard. It shows some of the things that need to be done. I grant that not just the Workers' party makes these suggestions—I have already said that others are pressing the Government to take specific action to provide services.

The Workers' party asks for the provision of adequate transport to and from work and the security of employees to go to and from work. The party suggests that there should be a ban on all religious or political emblems or displays in places of work, to create an environment in which people could not be deemed hostile. It also suggests the sub-contracting of work in industries such as shipbuilding and in areas of high unemployment, which has already been mentioned. The social and economic considerations need to be pushed to the fore in an attempt to create circumstances that will help to solve the problems of Northern Ireland.

If we concentrate on that, people might begin to be drawn together, and the issues that have divided people, and the hard line that has been taken by people on the issue of the border, will begin to be eroded and in time will be seen as nothing. The answers to the problems that exist in Northern Ireland are Socialist answers about working-class unity.

2 pm

Ms. Marjorie Mowlam (Redcar): The Opposition welcome the full and comprehensive debate that we have had on the proposed fair employment legislation. Clearly a multiple audience is listening to the debate. It is clear not only in Westminster, but across the water in Northern Ireland, the Republic of Ireland and the United States. Many speeches, especially that of my hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara), have emphasised that there has been ongoing pressure from the United States, particularly from the Irish lobby, about the MacBride principles that has helped to chivvy the Government into producing the White Paper on fair employment. It is important for us to realise that opinion in the United States as well as in Northern Ireland will form the backdrop against which the success of the proposal will be judged.

In summing up, will the Minister address himself to the degree of scepticism in the United States concerning the White Paper. The doubt and scepticism will not go away. It can be well illustrated by a recent editorial in the *Chicago Sunday Times* which will give the House a taste of the cynicism in the United States. It states

> "How would it go over in America if nearly one out of every two young members of a minority group were unemployed? What programs would be demanded to address a minority unemployment rate 2½ times that of the majority? How great would the outrage be if joblessness in some minority communities ranged up to 90 per cent?"

It continues:

> "The answer is obvious: in the United States, outrage over similarly high unemployment rates among blacks and other minorities has led to the creation of tough affirmative action programs. But in Northern Ireland, where Catholic unemployment is rampant, no affirmative action programs exist or are planned."

It closes with the argument:

> "The British will just have to excuse Americans if they do not share the Government's enthusiasm about the new program's prospects for success."

To succeed, the Secretary of State and his Ministers will have to overcome those views. If they show the necessary commitment, they will have our full support. If they do not, we will find ourselves reviewing the fair employment legislation as often as we presently review the direct rule legislation.

Many detailed questions have been raised this morning. I should like to emphasise some of them which I hope the Minister will answer when he replies to the debate. The hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Grady) and my hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Hillsborough (Mr. Flannery) made detailed and valuable speeches that outlined the extent and amount of discrimination. There were particularly useful references to the PSI surveys that show that work forces on both sides of the sectarian divide will be willing to co-operate in the implementation of the fair employment legislation.

I should like to pick up two points made by the hon. Member for South Down. The first relates to individual complaints and how the proposals will deal with strategic cases and not necessarily with the right of every individual to defend their own cases before the Fair Employment Commission if they so choose. We are concerned about the remarkable silence in the White Paper about remedies for individual grievances. It seems that compensation would normally be made on a monetary basis. Will remedies be made available that will include interim relief to protect the complainant's job pending a hearing? Will the Government consider introducing powers of injunction to order an end to a discriminatory practice and powers for the individual to apply to the High Court for injunctive relief to ensure the implementation of tribunal recommendations? That would resolve some of the matters mentioned by the hon. Member for South Down.

Some hon. Members talked about the need for the Government to set targets to evaluate their success in those areas. We hear much from Conservative Members about value for money, efficiency and the need to evaluate policy, but in this area, where targets could be set to evaluate policy, there is a glaring omission.

The hon. Member for Gillingham (Mr. Couchman) said that we need more cajoling and less bludgeoning by the Government, but that negated the points made by the Secretary of State, who said that for the past 10 years there has been a clear lack of respose to that sort of initiative and that we need more specific proposals. The hon. Gentleman suggested that we need flexibility of timescale. Many Labour Members would consider that to be the equivalent of saying, "Let us do nothing". There is some anxiety that the generalised points made by the hon. Gentleman would not produce the changes that are needed.

Mr. Couchman *rose*——

Ms. Mowlam: I shall not give way to the hon. Gentleman because we have all had to cut our speeches to allow everyone to contribute to the debate.

Mr. Couchman: That was not what I said.

Ms. Mowlam: I remind the hon. Member for Upper Bann (Mr. McCusker) that when discussing how statistics can be used and re-analysed we cannot avoid the fact that the two constituencies in Northern Ireland that have the highest unemployment are Foyle and Belfast, West. Of the 217 new factories that have been created in Northern Ireland since the 1960s, only 17 were created west of the Bann. With those statistics, it is difficult to deny the case of the hon. Member for South Down.

We are worried that the advantages of contract compliance will be denied to Northern Ireland by the conditions that are being placed on the Fair Employment Commission to operate contract compliance constructively. Will the Minister tell us about the scope of contract compliance? We want the procedures to be extended to all central Government contracts and to other public sector contracts—as the Minister knows, they account for almost as much as central Government contracts. It is important, because of the history of contracting and subcontracting in Northern Ireland, that any effort to include contract compliance should relate to subcontractors, too. Will the Minister consider giving the commission powers to enforce the law without having to await the outcome of protracted legal action?

As the White Paper says, consideration should be given to the certification of companies. The present certification process is universally regarded as ineffective. However, many Opposition Members and many people in Northern Ireland are worried because the new proposals rely heavily on almost a mechanical return of an annual monitoring report. We welcome the fact that failure to do so will be a statutory offence, but we are seriously worried that the new commission will have to secure a successful prosecution in the ordinary courts before withdrawing a certificate from an employer. We would like the commission to have the right to withdraw certification.

Much concern has been expressed about the nature of the status of the code of practice, which the hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton) discussed. Even though we differ as to where the code of practice should stand in relation to the rest of the legislation, there is a clear concern that it will merely be used by the FEC to interpret the legislation and that the legislation will not bind the courts to which the FEC will be subject. The courts will be free to depart from the code of practice or decide that something is beyond the powers of the FEC or the Department. We believe that further attention should be paid to the status of the code of practice in relation not only to the rest of the legislation, but to the courts and the powers of the Department.

We agree with much of the underlying analysis provided by the Standing Advisory Commission on Human Rights. It has acknowledged that, in the past 10 years, changes in employment discrimination have not occurred and that there has not been a major statistical change in employment opportunities for Catholics and Protestants. We have already said that unemployment among Catholics is two and a half times higher than that among Protestants. It is also confirmed, as the Minister acknowledged, that employment discrimination exists as a result not only of inadvertent actions but of deliberate actions and adherence to discriminatory practices.

We are concerned that the White Paper proposals are not specific or forceful enough to respond to SACHR's analysis, on which there is general agreement. If we acknowledge the extent of the discrimination but fail to create the structures and processes to deal with it, we are acting irresponsibly. Many people in Northern Ireland hope that the subsequent legislation will change the discriminatory practices. If we acknowledge the problem but fail to create the structures to respond to it, we are not being honest nor responding constructively to the difficulties faced by the people of Northern Ireland.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull, North said, we welcome the White Paper, but with noticeable reservations. When evaluating the fair employment legislation presented today, we must decide what we shall measure it against. If we measure it against present legislation, we accept that it is an improvement, but if we measure it against SACHR's report it is clear that there are major flaws in the proposed legislation. We must consider whether the proposed legislation will effect change and rectify present injustices. Unless there is further consideration of the issues that have been raised this morning—contract compliance, the scope and purpose of the remedies, the definition of permitted affirmative action—we are worried that the fair employment proposals will not do what many people hope they will.

I hope that the Government will not lose their nerve and that they will implement the structures and processes which are needed to achieve what is hoped for by the principles underlying the document.

2.13 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Mr. Peter Viggers): There is not much time to reply to this debate, but I say that without any sense of complaint because I believe that it has been outstandingly helpful that so many hon. Members have been able to contribute. I was pleased that it was possible to call each hon. Member who wished to take part. I mention the time left to me only because, although I may be unable to respond to some of the points made, I shall do my best.

This debate has been outstandingly constructive and useful and a number of significant issues have been raised that merit further consideration by the Government. In any case, there are certain areas in which the detail of policy requires further work and refinement, and that is what White Papers are all about. Today's debate has provided a useful prelude for the range of matters that need to be given further consideration and close study when our proposed legislation on fair employment is presented to Parliament.

In addition to responding to the key issues raised, I should like to emphasise the main points made by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland in initiating the debate. First, the publication of the recent White Paper, the extensive preparatory initiatives that led up to it and are still continuing, the proposed legislation contained in it and the intention to introduce that legislation at the earliest opportunity testify to the

[Mr. Peter Viggers]

Government's firm and determined commitment to fair employment in Northern Ireland. There is no room for doubt on that score.

Secondly, that commitment is based on the needs of Northern Ireland. History has left us with a legacy of unfairness. The Government are committed to stronger legislation on fair employment because that is the right and fair thing to do—morally, socially and economically.

Thirdly—this point was made forcefully by Members representing the Unionist community of Northern Ireland—the proposal is right for all the people of Northern Ireland. Unfortunately, discrimination can be practised within and against both communities. Economic disadvantage, through the denial of equality of employment opportunity, is not confined to one side of the community, so both have a legitimate interest in ensuring that fair employment is actively and energetically practised throughout the public and private sectors; that it is enforced by Government through appropriate legal action, economic sanctions and supportive educational initiatives; and that it operates on the basis of appointment on merit.

Fourthly, the package of new legal and institutional measures proposed by the Government incorporates all these features. The package is tailored to the particular needs and circumstances of the Province and has been put together in close consultation with all the major interests.

This consultation underlines the general recognition that the religious issue in Northern Ireland is unique, that its fair employment dimension has been legislated for on that basis and that its distinctive features are such that it should continue to be so. Those features are not replicated in Great Britain or in relation to other employment equality dimensions, such as gender and disability, in Northern Ireland. Therefore, there are no grounds for extending our proposed legislation to Great Britain or to other employment equality dimensions.

Religious monitoring is the key to fair employment practice. Only monitoring can supply the basic information necessary to determine whether fair employment is practised. Such practice is recognised as an integral part of good personnel management. In contributing to overall business and efficiency, it enhances the economic and social attractions of the Province to outside investors. The decision to impose on most employers a statutory obligation to monitor recognises those points. It also reflects clearly and unambiguously the Government's firm commitment to the effective practice and not merely the principle of fair employment. It is one of the major issues at the top of the Government's political agenda for Northern Ireland, and it will remain there. We are determined to focus sustained efforts on the issue so that a more equitable and proportionate distribution in employment can be achieved as quickly as possible.

Our present initiatives have already begun the process of change and our proposed new legislation will increase the momentum of progress. The hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton) and others made the point that it was surprising that the Government should produce such legislation, but he went on to praise it, and I thank him for that. I approach this subject with proper diffidence as a natural Conservative and opponent of Government interference. But the facts speak for themselves, and I must say in all sincerity that the option of doing nothing is unacceptable for a concerned Government. We cannot stand aside from this important moral, social and economic issue.

The hon. Member for Sheffield, Hillsborough (Mr. Flannery) asked about legislation before 1976 and went on to answer his own question. There was a small amount of legislation before 1976. That 1976 legislation was preceded by the report of the committee chaired by the former Minister of State, Northern Ireland Office and former Member for Wokingham, Sir William van Straubenzee. It is true that most legislation has been since 1976 and since that report.

The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara) asked me a specific question—yes or no, black or white—about the position of Short Brothers over its prospective contract in the United States. Shorts informed me that it will use its best endeavours to meet the commitment necessary to ensure full equality of opportunity for both sections of the population in Northern Ireland and, in doing so, to secure the prospective order now being negotiated with the United States Government.

It would be premature to ask me to spell out exactly what commitments might in due course be made, because the stage of contract has not been reached and I understand that it will not be reached for some time. I have given exactly the extent of the commitment by Short Brothers. It is fully committed to fair employment and its longstanding co-operation with the Fair Employment Agency is continuing.

Mr. McNamara *rose*——

Mr. Viggers: I prefer not to give way on this point because there is nothing further to say about it. I am not responsible for reports that may not be accurate. However, if the hon. Gentleman insists I shall give way.

Mr. McNamara: Normally I would not insist, but legislation containing a specific clause has been passed by the Federal Government. Is the Minister saying that Short Brothers has not given a pre-contract undertaking that it will meet the commitments that I outlined earlier?

Mr. Viggers: I have told the House the exact committment of Short Brothers. As I have said, the firm's long standing co-operation with the Fair Employment Agency will continue to promote better employment practices in Short Brothers.

The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North and the hon. Member for Redcar (Ms. Mowlam), who I am delighted to see on the Opposition Front Bench, spoke about pressure on the Government from the United States and from the MacBride campaign. In 1985 the Government's statistics identified the scale of the difficulty in employment practice. At that time my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary, then Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, took immediate action. He commissioned an urgent report and ordered publication of the subsequent consultative paper and a revision of the guide to effective practice. As a result of wide local consultations, he decided to introduce further measures, and we are now introducing legislation. There is a straight line of causation from the Government's statistics of 1985 to the legislation that we anticipate will be brought forward later this year.

The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North said that we should have taken the MacBride campaigners on board. I think he said that instead of taking those campaigners on board we fought them. We have no quibble at all with the proponents of the MacBride principles in so far as they believe in equality of opportunity and fair employment and more employment in Northern Ireland. The hon. Gentleman knows that some of the proponents of MacBride are perhaps not as well-intentioned towards the present regime in Northern Ireland as we would like.

It would be quite wrong for the Government to abrogate their responsibility to external forces and to throw their weight behind the MacBride campaign. That would be quite unreasonable. It would also be unreasonable to take the campaigners on board because some of the MacBride principles—especially the second principle mentioned by the hon. Gentleman about the protection of employees between their place of work and home—are quite unreasonable and could not be imposed anywhere. It would have been quite wrong for us to yield more than we have to those principles. In so far as we have yielded, I maintain that we have no quibble with them at all about fair employment.

The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North spoke about the principle of merit which underlies the proposed legislation and the White Paper. He thought that the principle of merit might be a weakness in the White Paper and the legislation. I disagree, because anything other than appointment on merit would be a weakness. It would be unfair; it would simply transfer disadvantage and institutionalise the very discrimination that the Government want to eradicate.

Our definition of merit is broad and includes potential as well as experience. It is designed to open up recruitment opportunities and is fully consistent with affirmative action. Those who argue against appointment on merit must have the courage of their convictions and openly advocate discrimination by quotas. Any other approach is disingenuous.

The point was made that we should allow employers to discriminate by providing training for only part of the community. We do not accept that that would be reasonable. The thrust of our policy is to move away from selection, whether for employment or training, on the basis of religion and to widen opportunities for both communities. To introduce religion-specific training would deny access to training purely on the grounds of religion. That would be divisive in both communities and on the shop floor. It is preferable to allow training to be provided primarily, although not exclusively, for any under-represented group. That training would be open to all and employers who provide it would be protected from charges of indirect discrimination. The religious issue in Northern Ireland attracts unique sensitivities that are not replicated elsewhere. Our proposals reflect that fact.

The hon. Member for Kingston-upon-Hull, North said that the appeal mechanism would emasculate enforcement. There are no grounds for that supposition. The work of the commission and of the tribunal is intended to complement each other. In the interests of natural justice, the tribunal must be not only an appellate body but a body with practical experience as well as legal expertise. Issues that arise in directions may not be easily justiciable by an exclusively legal body. It makes sense to have an appellate body that can combine legal expertise and practical experience. Tribunals' work on individual cases will help to inform its appellate role in pattern and practice cases. No employer will lightly contemplate disobedience of an order of the tribunal when it leaves him open to certification to the High court for the exercise of its contempt jurisdiction and possible unlimited fines and/or committal in the event of continued recalcitrance.

I must pass on to points made by other hon. Members as it would not be fair to concentrate entirely on the points made by the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North, important as they were. However, he did make a major point about the influence on our thinking of the standing advisory commission and asked about the extent to which the SACHR report had been taken into account and implemented in the White Paper. We calculate that we have, in whole or in part, accepted two thirds of the 123 recommendations in the report, and a number of others are subject to detailed consideration now. As I said, the White Paper is not in final form for legislation and further thought will be given to the matter.

My hon. Friend the Member for Gillingham (Mr. Couchman) made a most helpful and constructive speech. I am grateful to him for that. He said that there is, as he described it, more stick than carrot in the White Paper. I put it to him that penalties are necessary to show the Government's total determination to act. It is certainly no wish of ours that penalties should be expected. They must be there to show employers and all concerned that we are not prepared to tolerate backsliding or delay. It is no part of Government policy to fine, punish, deny grants or refuse to accept tenders. We hope that none of those things will be necessary. The Government would not be taken seriously without the penalties being in place.

My hon. Friend the Member for Gillingham also asked about the difference between quotas and goals and timetables. There is a clear difference. We reject the idea that there should be quotas for employment, which would be a percentage for each section of the community, laid down at the centre. We believe that goals and timetables have an important part to play because the FEC will seek to agree with individual companies goals and timetables for them to achieve. We would delegate and entrust the FEC with that role.

My hon. Friend also asked about religious affiliation and monitoring. We believe that the question about schooling provides a clearer and less controversial manner of assessing religious background than the so-called direct question. The direct question, "What is your religion?" has been shown to lead to many different sorts of difficulty and uncertainty in the answers. It appears to us at this stage that the indirect question about primary schools is, for reasons given in the White Paper, the most accurate and best way of dealing with the matter.

My hon. Friend asked also about the assessment of catchment areas, which is important in determining the extent to which an employer is providing equality of opportunity. That involves the consideration of many variable factors. The employer has to make an informed judgment, taking full account of local conditions and consulting, where necessary, the Fair Employment Commission. It is possible normally to make a broad but realistic assessment whether employment and recruitment patterns are markedly out of line with the composition of the catchment area.

Mr. McCusker *rose*——

Mr. Viggers: Considerable further thought will need to be given to these matters, which raise complicated issues.

Mr. McCusker: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Viggers: If the hon. Gentleman will allow me——

It being half-past Two o'clock, the motion for the Adjournment of the House lapsed, without Question put.

Trunk Road Construction (Bradford)

Motion made and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Lennox-Boyd.]*

2.30 pm

Mr. Gary Waller (Keighley): Today's complex system of travel and goods distribution means that the road system is vital to all of us. Despite the welcome success of British Rail and the passenger transport executives—in west Yorkshire as elsewhere—in attracting more business, the roads continue to carry some 90 per cent. of inland traffic and must therefore bear the brunt of catering for the country's transport needs.

My experience of firms' investment decisions suggests that good transport links command a high priority—almost certainly higher, for example, than the availability of regional grant aid. Poor road links, on the other hand, can hold back an area's development, and I believe that my constituency has missed out on some economic opportunities which would have produced much-needed employment because of its seriously inadequate road connections with other parts of west Yorkshire and the motorway network. In terms of journey time, south Bradford is often closer to Manchester than it is to Keighley, which is within its own district.

This is an opportune moment to consider the major road system on which the Bradford district as a whole relies. Some vital construction is taking place, and more is due to happen before long, and crucial decisions on which a great deal depends apply to projected schemes for the next decade. My hon. Friend the Minister has responsibility for trunk roads, but I am sure that he will agree that the roads for which his Department has responsibility and those which fall under the aegis of Bradford metropolitan council integrate closely with one another. During the lifetime of the former West Yorkshire metropolitan county council virtually no new roads were built in Bradford, compared with other districts in west Yorkshire, but when that council was abolished it passed on to the Bradford council a number of schemes in an advanced state of preparation. That fact, together with developing work on trunk roads, makes Bradford easily the busiest district in west Yorkshire in terms of its construction programme. I know that both the Department of Transport and the city council have been working closely together on their plans for the future.

The Airedale trunk route has been debated and discussed, and has been the subject of inquiries and reports, for decades rather than mere years. Local residents must have wondered whether it would ever come into being, and I think there was even some scepticism when I had the pleasure of cutting the first turf for stage 1 in August 1986. As the route follows river washlands often liable to flooding, it has been necessary to construct an embankment and the amount of disruption and inconvenience which has come about as a result of the massive movements of stone and material has been considerable. People have had to be patient and grit their teeth as heavy lorries have thundered past on roads which were never designed for them. Nevertheless, the contractors, Budge, should be congratulated on meeting the two-year schedule, and we look forward very much to the visit of my hon. Friend on 2 August when he is to declare open stage 1 from Kildwick to Beechcliffe.

This will be a day of celebration for upper Airedale, which will benefit environmentally, with maximum relief accruing to the residents of Eastburn, Steeton and Utley who have suffered too long from traffic disruption and danger to pedestrians. The Steeton and Eastburn parish council has long campaigned for the new road, which will supplant a busy, twisting and dangerous stretch of the A629. Improved road safety will thus be a major benefit, as will the elimination of delays brought about by the replacement of a level crossing by a bridge at Station road, Steeton.

There is some concern that Hard Ings road, Keighley, between Beechliffe and Victoria park, which is an existing single carriageway road linking the dual carriageway sections of stages 1 and 2 of the new route, may have inadequate capacity for the traffic that the roads may generate. In theory, this bypass will carry a smaller volume of traffic than the routes which also serve the needs of traffic heading to and from the town itself, but I believe the situation will have to be watched closely when stages 1 and 2 are open because Hard Ings road could be a source of future problems

The really significant economic advantages will start to come with the completion of stage 2 from Victoria park Keighley, to Crossflatts. Again, work has been proceeding apace, and stage 2 will open very early in 1989. The completion of this part of the route will provide a new and attractive approach to Keighley while relieving the Riddlesden area of heavy traffic.

Before moving too far away from Keighley, may I urge Bradford council to move fast in the direction of a traffic scheme for the town itself. Its streets are badly congested with vehicles throughout each week day, and I welcome the commitment to try to bring about improvements.

It is to the east of Crossflatts that we run into big trouble on the Airedale route. As it passes through Bingley, the A650 is appallingly congested, with dreadful hold-ups for traffic and an intolerable situation for those living or working nearby. The line of the route has essentially been established but, as my hon. Friend's predecessor, my right hon. Friend the Member for Wallasey (Mrs. Chalker), pointed out in an Adjournment debate on May 6 1983, the construction of the section to the east of Crossflatts is dependent on a decision on the route to the east of Bingley.

When the first two sections come into use, they will attract extra traffic that does not at present use the new road. However, all those cars and lorries will be funnelled back on to the existing road at Crossflatts, close to one of the most dangerous parts of the A650, which has claimed a number of lives in recent months. The really bad news is not just that work has not started to the east of Crossflatts, but that we appear still to be a very long way off reaching that point. An announcement has been delayed by problems in determining what happens at Cottingley Bar, the eastern extremity of stage 3, because until we know where we go from there it is impossible to complete the planning of the route to Cottingley.

The section from Cottingley Bar to the east of Shipley holds the key to the success of the entire route. In May 1983, three years after the first public inquiry, my right hon. Friend the Member for Wallasey said that she was conscious of the need for a decision as quickly as possible, but today—over five years later—we are no further on. I believe that the long delays are largely attributable to the mistaken way in which the Department has brought forward its proposals for public debate and consultation, failing at each stage to provide people with genuine choices between a full range of options.

When the Department's original plan for bypassing Saltaire to the north was rejected by the public inquiry inspector, Mr. Chance, it went out to public consultation with three alternatives, all of them passing closer to the centre of Saltaire but seeking to minimise intrusion in environmental terms for instance by following the line of the railway. A local campaign was mounted against all the routes and a petition with a large number of signatures was submitted. Thus my right hon. Friend the Member for Wallasey said that the completely new route should end at Cottingley Bar, and alternative solutions would be sought for the section through Saltaire and Shipley.

I found the decision perverse at the time, and subsequent events have, I believe, already proved me right. Just doing nothing could never have been an option. For everybody's sake, there cannot be and must not be a "Chalker Gap". What has happened since that anouncement was entirely predictable. The Department went out again to public consultation with alternative plans which involved gyratory traffic systems and some demolition—in effect, forcing a way through the centre of Saltaire along existing routes. What happened? Of course the public found those plans even more undesirable than those they had seen before. Indeed, some of them said that if they had been aware of the alternatives, they might have supported earlier proposals. Nevertheless, analysing past mistakes will get us nowhere. We must now ask where we go from here.

Things have moved on in a way which demands that we reassess the situation. Traffic volumes have increased dramatically. Since 1982 the total of vehicle miles on England's roads has increased by a third. On some busy roads, the increases have been even more considerable; on motorways for instance, total traffic has gone up by about 70 per cent. partly because the mileage of motorways is greater. Moreover, Airedale has reflected the increase in industrial activity that other areas have experienced. Local manufacturing companies have increased their output and new retail activity is apparent for all to see. The local chambers of trade and the Bradford chamber of commerce and industry are demanding more loudly than ever that the route should be completed to cut the delays which are threatening jobs as firms consider locating elsewhere rather than put up with all this extra cost and inconvenience.

As new sections of the Airedale route open before long, extra traffic will be attracted to it, some from the narrow moorland roads which criss-cross the area, as well as some from other A roads. If we were to contemplate a situation where the Airedale route was completed as far as Cottingley Bar, while a further continuous section of modern and uninterrupted dual carriageway led from Shipley to the motorway south of Bradford, we would be condemning historic Saltaire to having deposited upon it in the foreseeable future up to 50,000 vehicles a day if the roads could carry them. The only factors that could limit the number of vehicles would be the available amount of road space and the horrific queues. Such an outcome would be an environmental nightmare and, what is more, it would undermine the whole basis on which millions of pounds of taxpayers' money are already being spent to improve communications in the Aire valley.

[Mr. Gary Waller]

It is also possible that the transport needs of people and companies located outside the immediate area were not previously given adequate attention. In response to my parliamentary question answered on 1 May 1985 concerning submissions considered in reaching a decision, the then Minister forwarded details that omitted a survey, the detailed results of which I had passed to her, which showed that more than 90 per cent. of respondent companies in the Keighley and Upper Airedale area regarded the completion of the road as vital to their future development.

To achieve an acceptable way out of the present impasse, two decisions are necessary. First, it must be agreed that the special historic nature of Saltaire and the protection of the immediate environment require an exceptional financial commitment on the part of the Department of Transport. If it is necessary to construct part of the route in a cut and cover tunnel, that must be done. I believe that a financial analysis would demonstrate that a failure to complete the route would seriously undermine the economic benefits to be gained by constructing the first three stages. If one also takes into account the delays, the environmental intrusion to Saltaire caused by heavy traffic, and, not least, the safety advantages, bearing in mind the announcement this week that the cost of a fatality has been reassessed at £500,000—over twice the previous figure—as a component in the Department's COBA formula, the case for devoting exceptional resources to solving an exceptional problem becomes overwhelming.

Secondly, it is essential that in future public consultation—and I do not think it would be right or productive to proceed without further consultation—the full range of options is put before people at the same time. In no other way is it possible to find out what they really want . It is my belief that, given a realistic choice, most people will opt for a variation on the Department's original proposal that takes proper account of the environmental problems. It would probably incorporate a tunnel and keep well away from the historic heart of Saltaire. Such a proposal was aired by the city council and the former county council during the previous consultative exercise.

This stage represents the keystone to the entire route between upper Airedale and the motorway to the south of Bradford. If this problem can be resolved, the rest falls into place with relative ease. I do not want to speak in detail now about the Shipley eastern bypass nor about the dualling of Canal road for which the city council has responsibility but with the Bradford spine road, of which stage 1 of the inner ring road has already been completed ahead of schedule by the council, with some funding assistance from the European regional development fund, these links constitute a chain which will dramatically improve the way in which people and goods can be transported between different parts of the district, as well as with the national motorway network. Completion of the Bradford spine route will also incidentally enable traffic to be kept out of the centre of Bradford, providing an opportunity to transform it into a far more attractive urban area.

Between the centre of the city and the M606 there are two routes—Manchester road and Wakefield road—the latter of which will be incorporated in the projected Bradford spine route. The M606 is at present a designated district motorway, but I understand that negotiations are in hand for responsibility to be transferred to the Department of Transport. My hon. Friend should be aware that there are already serious delays at the city end of that short stretch of motorway, and I am sure that his Department will be involved with the council in finding ways to overcome the difficulty which has essentially come about through the unexpectedly large increase in traffic to which I have already referred. One solution would be a link between the underpass, which was originally intended to form part of a now abandoned route into the city centre, and a point lower down on Manchester road. The problem here is that, at present, traffic using the outer ring road coincides with traffic entering or exiting the city, and the existing roundabout junctions are inadequate to cope with the massive number of vehicles.

I want to say a word or two about the feasibility study which has been taking place into a possible link between the M62 at Clifton in the vicinity of Brighouse and the M1 near Wakefield. This route lies outside the Bradford district, but its impact would significantly impinge on it. I was pleased when the Department initiated this study because, some six years ago, when I suggested to the Department that it would make good economic sense, I was informed that no case could be made out for its construction. Again, traffic growth has brought about a rethink—and rightly so, because the route could be extremely beneficial economically to the whole of the western part of the county, particularly Huddersfield, Halifax and Bradford. In effect, the journey between those communities and the M1 motorway will be reduced in distance by some six or seven miles. I strongly add my voice to those of hon. Members on both sides of the House representing constituencies in the Kirklees district who have pressed for its adoption into the roads programme, pointing also to its environmental benefits.

My message today is that the new route should not be an all-purpose trunk road, as was suggested by my hon. Friend in a recent answer to a parliamentary question from me, but should rather be built to motorway standards. The case for building it as an all-purpose trunk road rests on the premise that it would essentially serve local needs. However, I believe that it would be totally unrealistic to ignore the fact that, once the road was built, it would effectively be regarded and used as part of the strategic road network by a great deal of the traffic changing between a north-south direction and an east-west direction south of Leeds.

A factor that should be taken into account when considering this point is the inadequate capacity of the present junction at Chain Bar, where the M606 meets the M62 south of Bradford. Despite the addition of an extra slip road lane and other traffic measures, we now have the dangerous situation at times where the traffic tailback can stretch back along the nearside lane of the motorway. The Chain Bar roundabout is also one of the locations of the largest number of accidents in the Kirklees district. If it is recognised that the M1-M62 link is part of the strategic network and is therefore built to motorway standards, the Chain Bar junction will be relieved of much of its existing overloading.

There has in the past been a regrettable tendency to build new roads to an inadequate standard, resulting in the need to expand their capacity at very much greater cost. I would ask my hon. Friend to bear in mind that even today the M1-M62 link has the potential to attract a considerable amount of traffic. We should come to regret any decision which ignored the route's strategic significance.

I finally want to refer to two bypass schemes on the A65 trunk road through the Wharfe valley—those at Addingham and at Burley-in-Wharfedale. The Addingham saga is a long one, and residents of the village have waited for a considerable time for the bypass to be included in the programme. It was a particular blow when the last Labour Government set it back for many years because of the cuts they were obliged to make at the behest of the International Monetary Fund. We welcome the fact that, following an inquiry, the route has been confirmed, and work is due to commence next year. I hope that my hon. Friend will be able to state that a further inquiry into the compulsory purchase and side road orders will not be necessary, because there is a great deal of unanimity in the village about the need for this long-awaited road and the route it should follow. Accidents on the main street through the village occur with almost monotonous regularity, and the elimination of most of these, together with freedom from heavy lorries, will be a blessing for local people.

I know that my hon. Friend the Member for Shipley (Sir M. Fox) has been active on behalf of his constituents in assiduously pressing the case for early construction of the Burley-in-Wharfedale bypass. There have been problems because of the need to divert the course of the river slightly, and fears about the effects that this could have on the downstream print works, which depends on a reliable flow of clear water. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will be able to provide some reassurance today that further delays will be minimised.

We also look forward to seeing the conclusions of the study carried out for the Department into road links between the Wharfe valley and the main north-south corridor to the east. Furthermore, with bypasses at the late planning stage for the communities to both east and west, the needs of Ilkley should not be ignored. I welcome the news that roadside traffic surveys are to be carried out near the town next week to gather information about the volume and movement of vehicles with the objective of identifying traffic problems and remedies.

In conclusion, the Bradford district has an inadequate road system for a city that is changing fast in response to a very different situation from that which existed when it was expanding rapidly in the last century. Despite its problems, the city is looking to the future, not with foreboding but with confidence. By the end of this century we could have a road infrastructure which would be a marvellous asset, or we could still be held back by delay and hesitancy in making essential decisions. I hope we shall go down the first path.

2.49 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport (Mr. Peter Bottomley): I pay tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Keighley (Mr. Waller)—we have known each other during all our time in the House and we have shared many experiences—both as a driver and as a member of this House. He has driven me round his constituency and he has rightly identified the economic advantages, environmental relief and the casualty reduction that comes from having a better road system. I also pay tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Morecambe and Lunesdale (Mr. Lennox-Boyd), who, although unable to take part in this debate, has been forthright in giving me advice about roads in his constituency. The House will understand his position and I am grateful for the fact that I can concentrate on answering only my hon. Friend the Member for Keighley.

The Department hopes to publish the compulsory purchase orders on the A65 Addingham issue in July. The date may slip a little, but we hope to progress as my hon. Friend has asked. There may be individual issues which I shall not have time to cover in detail and I hope that my hon. Friend will accept it if I write to him about them. I shall deal first with the major issues of Bradford and the Airedale route.

My hon. Friend ended by saying that the alternatives for the future were perfection or misery. Bluntly, it is likely to be somewhere between them. We shall continue to make progress, but we cannot solve all the problems, and it is better to admit that. He referred to the Labour Government's difficulties, which they overcame with help from the International Monetary Fund. One of the consequences was that the new roads programme was virtually halved. Our aim has been to go for sustainable increases in the roads programme, not to have cuts in it, and during the past eight years we have achieved that. There was a slight hiccup at the end of 1983 which affected the whole of the Government, but generally we have seen a slow but steady increase in resources for improving road communications. This year we intend to spend the money that has been budgeted, and we are prepared to take the sort of decisions necessary to make sure that that happens.

Bradford is strategically well placed in the national trunk road and motorway system. My hon. Friend paid tribute to the improvements in British Rail, and it is important that British Rail continues to improve its services to freight customers as well as the travelling public. We could not take all the freight or travelling public on the roads, and they need to have a choice. That is part of our political philosophy. The more that we can transfer current subsidies to capital investment in all forms of national life, the better. That is how prosperity comes, as the British people have discovered in the past eight years.

The M62 runs immediately south of Bradford, and links to it are via the M606, soon to be taken over by the Government, and the A650 to the south, which is being improved. The Drighlington bypass construction is due to start next year. The M62 in turn provides nationwide links via the motorway network. It links the east and west coast ports, and it links directly with the M1, A1 and M6 north-south routes—one of the interests of my hon. Friend the Member for Morecambe and Lunesdale.

To the north-west the A629-650 trunk route is being comprehensively improved. My hon. Friend the Member for Keighley rightly referred to two schemes under construction: the Airedale section 1, where he kindly did the turf cutting, and the Airedale section 2. There are three further schemes in the trunk road programme: Airedale section 3, Skipton to Kildwick and the Shipley eastern bypass. Those five schemes will provide 13 miles of new road at a current cost of nearly £80 million.

In Bradford itself, the north-south route is being substantially improved. The major part of the city ring road was recently opened and I had the pleasure of seeing

[Mr. Peter Bottomley]

it last year. They are local authority schemes at present, but it is planned to take them over to become a national road. There has been substantial Government assistance, through transport supplementary grant. It is a wise and necessary part of the Government's dedication to and support of the inner cities, and I wish that there was more recognition of that from those who occasionally get reported, probably inadequately, as saying that the Government should spend all their money sorting out traffic jams in London, so that a bishop does not get held up for 20 minutes.

That is a guarded reference to my noble Friend the Bishop of Durham. My advice to a bishop in the north is that, if he allowed a little more time for his journeys, we should be able to go on spending money in the north rather than using it to solve London commuter problems. If a Government spent all their money in London and the south-east, we should be rightly criticised by northern bishops.

I should now like to refer to the Airedale route. It is a difficult area through which to construct new through traffic routes. There is a narrow valley and much development and there are conflicting pressures. It is already crowded, so there are difficult environmental issues with route planning. As my hon. Friend gently and diplomatically said, the Department has been trying for years to achieve acceptable schemes. There has been limited success. Perhaps it is more accurate to say that there has been only limited success. In some areas there is substantial opposition to almost anything. We intend to press on. Our aim is to provide a new continuous high standard route to link Bradford and Skipton.

I pay tribute to successive generations of staff at the Department of Transport, who put up with occasional personal abuse and professional frustration in trying to get people to understand that a decision needs to be made. Often almost any decision is better than none, given the build-up of traffic and the need to provide for more jobs to meet the needs of people growing up in the area. Too often round the country I have seen communities virtually destroyed by through traffic because they have not been willing to decide to go to the left, or the right, to the north or the south, above or underneath. I often think that local community representatives should do what my hon. Friend does nationally, which is to say, "Let's talk through the issues and, if necessary, put them before a public inquiry. An independent impartial inspector can adjudicate and offer advice to the Secretary of State for the Environment and the Secretary of State for Transport, but for heaven's sake, whatever we do, let's get on and try to make decisions."

The Department intends to press on and provide that new continuous high standard route. Two schemes will open to traffic this year—the Kildwick to Beechcliffe route and the Victoria park to Crossflatts route. Together they will provide six and half miles of new dual carriageway road at a cost of about £36 million. I look forward to being with my hon. Friend on 2 August for the opening of section 1.

The preferred route for one scheme has just been announced, that is, the Skipton to Kildwick section, linking Skipton bypass and Airedale section 1. That was announced in May after public consultation. Announcements are due this summer, concerning the remaining three sections. The Airedale section 3 has been prepared up to draft order publication stage and can be published as soon as the eastern termination point is confirmed. That means that it depends upon the route of the east of Cottingley Bar scheme. That scheme has a difficult route alignment. Is is a built-up area, with crowded development, and it is environmentally sensitive. There was a nine-month public inquiry into the proposals in 1980. The valley bottom part of the route was rejected by the Department of Transport Minister. There was public consultation in 1984 on several possible options. No acceptable new route was identified and the valley bottom route was again rejected. There was fresh public consultation in 1986 on widening the existing roads, and I announced early last year that alternatives suggested by the public were being examined. That scheme is the constraint upon announcements on the adjacent schemes.

The Shipley eastern bypass links in the south with Bradford city council's schemes. There was public consultation in 1986, jointly with east of Cottingley Bar. There has been no announcement yet as the decision is tied to the termination point of the east of Cottingley Bar scheme. An announcement is promised this summer, as I said to my hon. Friend in April. The announcement is still planned. I ask my hon. Friend to be patient for a little longer as difficult issues need careful study. I think that my hon. Friend will understand that there is no point in giving advance information on options under review because of the blighting effect on property.

This has been a useful debate. We must recognise that building roads is necessary. Covering the whole countryside with concrete is not necessary. We have the greatest difficulty where there are valleys, but we still intend to overcome such difficulties. I ask for understanding and help in the local communities so that it will be accepted that, by going through the procedures, we shall pick the best or the least worst option. The only option that we must reject is doing nothing. The area deserves better than that.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at one minute to Three o'clock.

House of Commons

Monday 4 July 1988

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

ENERGY

Hinkley Point C

1. **Mr. Fearn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what information he has on the basis upon which the Central Electricity Generating Board extended the expected life span of the proposed pressurised water reactor at Hinkley Point C by five years; and if he will make a statement.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Energy (Mr. Michael Spicer): Subject to meeting the necessary safety requirements, plant lives are commercial matters for the generators concerned.

Mr. Fearn: Does the Minister agree that extending the life of Hinkley Point by five years and reducing the price of electricity by 15 per cent. is strange? Does he also agree that, in doing so, the CEGB is moving the goal posts once again because of the pressure that is now being brought to bear on nuclear power?

Mr. Spicer: No, I do not agree that it is strange. An initial assumption must be made about the economic life, for planning purposes. There is no reason why that should not be revised in the light of changed commercial considerations, as long as the plant meets all the safety conditions laid down by the Nuclear Installations Inspectorate.

Mr. Ian Bruce: Does my hon. Friend agree that the history of Magnox stations, whose lives have been usefully extended even though the Nuclear Installations Inspectorate has increased safety standards time and again, is indicative of the life that one can get from nuclear power and of the good economic argument for continuing nuclear power in this country?

Mr. Spicer: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. The economic life of Magnox stations has been increased from 20 to 25 and then to 30 years. That was done with increased safety standards. The Government's main concern is to ensure that commercial judgment is allowed to the operator, but, above all, that the plants are safe.

Electricity Industry (Privatisation)

2. **Mr. Hardy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he will next meet the chairman of the Central Electricity Generating Board to discuss the privatisation of the electricity supply industry.

The Secretary of State for Energy (Mr. Cecil Parkinson): I meet the chairman of the CEGB regularly to discuss various matters relating to the privatisation of the electricity supply industry.

Mr. Hardy: Will the Secretary of State discuss pricing with Lord Marshall, and, when he does, correct the misleading impression that he created in the House when he suggested that Labour Members want electricity to be sold off as cheaply as possible? Will he also discuss with him the steps that will be necessary to prevent South African mining interests from having a substantial interest in, and influence over, the private electricity generating industry?

Mr. Parkinson: There is no evidence that South African mining interests wish to have a major investment in the electricity supply industry. In fact, those reports were pure fiction. We shall certainly announce to the House measures that will ensure that no one person or groups of people acting in concert can obtain a major interest in our electricity supply industry.

Sir Trevor Skeet: Does my right hon. Friend agree that if the grid is owned by 12 instead of one there is greater opportunity for muddle in the event of a crisis or of surplus capacity having to be determined?

Mr. Parkinson: No, I do not. Although the grid will be owned by 12 individual shareholders, it will be operated by one strong management, which will have day-to-day control of it. In those circumstances, the ownership is irrelevant.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: Will the obligation on the CEGB to use the cheapest possible source of supply be maintained when it is privatised?

Mr. Parkinson: As the hon. Gentleman knows, we have made it clear that we believe that security of supply of electricity is all-important and that that security is best based on diversity. Therefore, we intend to legislate for a non-fossil fuel obligation, which will include nuclear, wave-power and wind. We believe that that is necessary for reasons which I have explained to the House and which one of these days the hon. Gentleman might understand.

Mr. Charles Wardle: If privatisation creates two separate generating companies which compete with each other in England and Wales, will that not exert a downward pressure on costs, to the advantage of the consumer?

Mr. Parkinson: I believe that it will, but it is only the beginning. We intend to strengthen the interconnecter with Scotland. We believe that Scotland can be an important supplier of electricity to the English market. We know for a fact that the area boards are already discussing with a variety of would-be generators the provision of additional capacity, so many generators will be operating in the market in the years ahead, and that must be good news for the customer.

Mr. Prescott: Is the Secretary of State aware that Inspector Barnes' inquiry into Hinkley Point C has made it clear that he is prepared to accept evidence to compare a coal-fired station with a nuclear-powered station, which is contrary to his own terms of reference? Will the Secretary of State make it clear to the chairman of the CEGB that his decision not to co-operate in the provision of such information is because he is of the view that the Government's 20 per cent. non-fossil fuel requirement means that it must be a nuclear power station?

Mr. Parkinson: I am glad to have the opportunity of clearing up this matter. The inspector must take whatever evidence he finds necessary for him to arrive at a recommendation that he will make to me. There is no restriction at all. The guidelines are not a restriction: they are guidelines. If the inspector feels that he needs further information, he must get it, and he has our encouragement in seeking it.

Mr. Harris: Will my right hon. Friend give the assurance for which I asked him in writing, namely,that the new privatised electricity companies will have parity of charges within their areas, so that, for example, there will be no disadvantage to consumers on the Isles of Scilly in my constituency or, indeed, consumers who live in rural as opposed to urban areas within that company's supply system?

Mr. Parkinson: We are extremely conscious of the anxiety that is felt in areas such as the Scilly Isles and the south-west. We recognise that it is a serious problem. We are sure that, when we make our proposals, my hon. Friend will be happy with them.

3. **Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy, pursuant to his answer of 9 May, *Official Report*, column 3, what information he has as to how many distributor-controlled systems of the type now proposed for the privatisation of elecricity in the United Kingdom have been set up on the advice of his Department's technical advisers, Merz and McLennan, in the other countries in which they have helped to install grid systems; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Merz and McLennan have worked in many countries on grid systems with a wide variety of ownerships and structures.

Mr. Dalyell: I should like to thank the Minister publicly for giving up an hour and a quarter of his time to see my hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott), the hon. Member for Bedfordshire, North (Sir T. Skeet) and myself on the control of the grid. However, have Merz and McLennan ever anywhere in the world put forward a technological experiment as they have in Britain? Is this not an experiment?

Mr. Spicer: I thank the hon. Gentleman for the first part of his question, but the implication behind the rest of it is that we in this country are different. He is right, because Britain is virtually unique today in distinguishing between distribution and generation. Our proposals merely develop that in the interests of the consumer. The hon. Gentleman may be interested to know that many systems and companies in the United States are now pressing hard to be allowed to go the same way as we are going here, which shows that to be unique is not necessarily to be wrong.

Mr. Dykes: One of the weaknesses of the greater competition and lower prices argument for the distributors might be that they retain a powerful geographical monopoly in their areas. Does my hon. Friend agree that one of the ways in which that might be reduced or mitigated is to make sure that the retail operations in the showrooms and so on have full transparency and genuine competition both among themselves on different areas and with the private sector?

Mr. Spicer: It will be the Government's intention to ensure that there is transparency of the accounts of the distribution companies' retail outlets.

Coal-fired Power Stations (Scotland)

4. **Mr. Eadie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what recent discussions he has now had with British Coal regarding coalburn in power stations in Scotland.

Mr. Parkinson: I have regular meetings with the chairman of British Coal to discuss all aspects of the coal industry.

Mr. Eadie: The Secretary of State must be aware that this is the three-month deadline for the South of Scotland Electricity Board and British Coal to reach an agreement on coalburn in power stations and that no agreement has been reached. Does that not show that the armchair speculating policy of his Department during the dispute has failed? Can he confirm the report in *The Scotsman* today that the dispute may have to be resolved in the courts? He must be aware that thousands of jobs in Scotland are at stake. Is it not time that we knew what the hell was going on?

Mr. Parkinson: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will be pleased, as I am, to hear that agreement has been reached about tonnages and prices, and that only one or two secondary issues remain to be settled. They will be settled quickly, provided that both sides show good will and common sense. The uncertainty will be removed shortly and the news will be good.

Mr. Oppenheim: Will my right hon. Friend remind Opposition Members that Scotland has energy consumers, as well as energy producers, who rely on low-cost energy to ensure not only competitiveness but jobs?

Mr. Parkinson: There is a good future for the Scottish coal industry, provided that the men work the modern machinery in a modern way. There are good signs that Scottish miners—I congratulate them on this—wish to co-operate and work together with management to ensure that they can be competitive. They deserve all our support in doing that.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: Will the Secretary of State be more forthcoming and tell us exactly when he expects the dispute to be resolved, because it is vital to the continuing success of the Scottish coal industry?

Mr. Parkinson: I cannot say much more than I already have, but I assure the hon. Lady that I keep in day-to-day touch with this matter and did not make my remarks lightly. The main matter outstanding is secondary, and I have reason to believe that it will be resolved shortly. As soon as it is, I shall ensure that it is reported.

Mr. Bill Walker: Does my right hon. Friend agree that it is in the interests of Ravenscraig in particular—one of the major consumers of electricity in Scotland—that Scottish energy prices should be competitive? Is it not equally important to recognise that much of the coal mined in Scotland is opencast and that there is every reason why the Scots should be able to compete cost-effectively? When that is achieved, there there will be no reason why anyone should fear for jobs in Scotland.

Mr. Parkinson: The most important part of what I have said is that agreement has been reached about tonnages and prices. That means that the SSEB, as the customer, is satisfied that it can buy large quantities of coal at keen prices. That is good news.

Bradwell

5. **Mr. Alan W. Williams:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what information he has received from the Nuclear Installations Inspectorate and the Central Electricity Generating Board as to the expected restart date of Bradwell No. 1 reactor and as to this station's expected lifetime.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I am advised that the Central Electricity Generating Board and the Nuclear Installations Inspectorate are in close consultation about the modification and further studies which would be required for continued operation of the station to 1992.

Mr. Williams: As the Nuclear Installations Inspectorate has expressed serious concern about possible cracks in the pressure vessel and the integrity of wells in the coolant gas circuits, is it not dangerous to continue operating this 26-year-old reactor? Is it not irresponsible of the Government to be thinking of selling clapped-out reactors? The position is rather like that in the Persian Gulf yesterday, in that there is an accident waiting to happen. The Government should be announcing the closure of these old Magnox reactors before privatisation, rather than risking another Chernobyl.

Mr. Spicer: The Government have complete confidence in the Nuclear Installations Inspectorate, which has full responsibility for ensuring that Magnox stations are safe. There will be no question of their either continuing in operation or being passed as fit and safe unless the NII is convinced that they are.

Mr. John Garrett: Is it not clear that the cost of safety measures required by the Nuclear Installations Inspectorate will mean that Bradwell, Berkeley and possibly other Magnox stations will be closed in the next few years? How do the Government propose to dispose of them to private ownership? Who will carry the cost of decommissioning? Or will the Government just bury them in concrete at public expense?

Mr. Spicer: Whether the Magnox stations continue—if they are passed as fit to continue by the NII—will depend on the commercial judgment of the operating companies. They will no doubt take into account, as they normally do, provision for decommissioning. The inheritor companies, when they are sold to the private sector, will also have to make adequate provision for decommissioning.

Mr. Ian Bruce: First, let me declare an interest. My brother works at Bradwell power station.

We understand that the NII would never allow a nuclear power station to continue if it was unsafe, but we may be going down the path of constantly increasing safety standards well beyond any sensible level. Can my hon. Friend assure me that there is some control over what the inspectorate is likely to require in any of the power stations, and also that it has the resources to make proper checks, rather than simply saying, "We have not the resources to make the checks, so we will say no."?

Mr. Spicer: The Government are determined that the British nuclear industry will be as safe in the future as it has been in the past. The resources available to the NII have been increased considerably. There are now 120 inspectors, and the inspectorate is advertising for more. How long the stations will be kept open is a matter for the commercial judgment of the operators, and it is for the inspectorate to ensure that they are safe.

CEGB (Investment)

6. **Mr. Cousins:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what information he has as to the level of investment, in real terms, by the Central Electricity Generating Board in *(a)* the years 1975 to 1980 and *(b)*1987-88; and what discussions he has had with the chairman of the board concerning the case for increased investment.

Mr. Parkinson: Annual capital expenditure by the CEGB between 1975 and 1980 was in the range of £1,000 million to £1,300 million in today's prices, compared with £556 million in 1987-88.

Mr. Cousins: Does the Secretary of State accept that those figures confirm the investment slump in new power generation capacity, that, despite his promises, it is not being corrected, that it is being added to by fears about privatisation, that the CEGB is putting its contracts on a design-first basis without commitment to production, and that, without a firm home base of new orders, the British power generation industry could disappear after 1992?

Mr. Parkinson: Those figures show that in the 1960s and 1970s there was a chronic over-estimate of the need for capacity and that far too many power stations were built. The net result is that the taxpayer—the customer—has been funding that huge over-capacity for a long time. We are now coming to the end of it, and between now and the year 2000 a figure approaching £40,000 million will need to be invested, not only in generating capacity but in modernising the grid. Our plans are firmly based on that.

Last year's expenditure was low because there was only one power station under construction—Sizewell. I hope that when we come forward with our plans the hon. Gentleman will support them, thus ensuring a regular flow of orders for manufacturing industry.

Mr. Marlow: Arising out of the latest very worrying evidence about the damage to the ozone layer and the fact that coal-fired power stations are environmentally much more damaging and dangerous than the nuclear alternative, will my right hon. Friend tell the House what action he proposes to ensure that the bulk of that investment goes towards nuclear generation, which of course is much safer?

Mr. Parkinson: My hon. Friend is correct. Many of the people who complain bitterly about the damage to the ozone layer and environmental pollution strenuously oppose the cleanest, safest source of electricity, which is atomic. We are making arrangements to clean up the emissions from coal-fired stations. That is a very expensive proposition, but it will be done.

Mr. Barron: When the Secretary of State discusses future investment with the chairman of the CEGB, as implied by the question put by my hon. Friend the Menber for Newcastle upon Tyne, Central (Mr. Cousins), which the right hon. Gentleman has not yet answered, what does he intend to do about the CEGB's withdrawal from the fluidised bed combustion project in the south Yorkshire coalfield, which would have provided clean coalburn for the future? Will the Secretary of State tell the CEGB that investment must go ahead to keep that project going, so that we can have clean coalburn without the effects of radioactivity which nuclear power may involve?

Mr. Parkinson: That is just one of the technologies which produce less damaging emissions. The CEGB has decided that it is not prepared, for its purposes, to fund that technology any further. [HON. MEMBERS: "Why not?"] That must be a decision for the CEGB. I do not operate the power stations. The CEGB operates them and is in a better position than me to take decisions on this matter. The CEGB has made its decision and I do not intend to overrule it.

Electricity Industry (Privatisation)

7. **Mr. Colvin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is the Government's latest timetable for the privatisation of the electricity industry.

Mr. Parkinson: I intend to introduce legislation at the earliest opportunity.

Mr. Colvin: My right hon. Friend will be aware of the mounting opposition to the CEGB's proposals for Fawley B power station and the ancillary coal-importing jetty. It will cost the ratepayers of Hampshire up to £1 million to fight the public inquiry that my right hon. Friend has authorised, when at the end of the day Big G, or whoever then owns Fawley, may not want the power station. Would it not make far more sense to postpone any plans for the public inquiry until after the electricity industry is privatised?

Mr. Parkinson: As my hon. Friend knows, I am in a quasi-judicial position, inasmuch as I shall have to take the decision after the public inquiry has taken place and the inspector has made his recommendation, so I cannot say anything in the House either for or against Fawley. All I can say is that my hon. Friend the Member for Romsey and Waterside (Mr. Colvin) has found innumerable ingenious ways to make his views on the subject well known, as have many of his constituents.

Mr. Nicholas Brown: Is the Secretary of State aware that in communities such as the one that I represent there is concern about the adverse effect of privatisation on the procurement programme for coal-fired power stations? The Secretary of State has announced the first order in the CEGB's declared order programme. Can he say anything about the timing of the remaining coal-fired power station orders?

Mr. Parkinson: One of the features in the future will be that the supply industry will no longer depend only on the CEGB and the CEGB's views about when it intends to order its coal-fired power stations. A number of private generators are already planning to burn coal and are discussing the building of generating capacity. I believe that as the new situation is understood there will be more orders for coal-fired power stations more quickly, rather than fewer more slowly.

Mr. Gow: When my right hon. Friend is considering the very important subject of privatisation of the electricity industry, will he apply his formidable mind to the timetable for the privatisation of the coal industry?

Mr. Parkinson: I have made it clear that we have ambitions to privatise the coal industry, but we shall not be doing that in this Parliament. There is no reason at all why coal should remain a state-owned monopoly.

Mr. Prescott: In view of the right hon. Gentleman's failure to answer the question about Lord Marshall's commitment to a nuclear power station at Hinkley Point, may I ask whether he has read the National Consumer Council report, published last week, about his privatisation plans? It concludes that the plans

> "give little scope for competition and that the consumer is ripe for exploitation with forced exploitation of the moe expensive nuclear energy."

Is that not further evidence that privatisation, while good for the right hon. Gentleman's promotion, is a lousy deal for the consumer, and will he reconsider his position?

Mr. Parkinson: As the hon. Gentleman has complimented me on my non-promotion, may I compliment him on being Mr. Scargill's nominee for the deputy leadership of the Labour party. I made clear my position on Hinkley Point C. The inspector is entitled to take whatever evidence he feels is necessary to arrive at his conclusion, and he will seek that evidence.

Mr. Prescott: Answer the question.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Let us all calm down.

Paper Manufacturing (Energy Costs)

8. **Mr. Sumberg:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy by what percentage energy costs for the paper manufacturing industry have risen over the past five years; and what has been the comparable increase in energy costs for manufacturing industry as a whole.

The Minister of State, Department of Energy (Mr. Peter Morrison): In the past five years energy costs per unit of output have fallen by almost 40 per cent. in real terms both in the paper manufacturing industry and across manufacturing as a whole.

Mr. Sumberg: My right hon. Friend will be aware of the importance of the paper industry to Radcliffe in my constituency. Will he bear in mind the need for the industry to have cheaper energy supplies, because it faces fierce competition from abroad? Will my right hon. Friend do all that he can to ensure that the industry is aware of that need, so that it can compete successfully and provide much-needed jobs for all my constituents?

Mr. Morrison: I am aware of my hon. Friend's interest, not only in paper manufacturing, but in his constituency. As I said in my original response, relatively speaking, costs have decreased. That must be good for the industry.

Mr. Barron: Last year, on the BBC television programme "Taming the Dragon", the chairman of the CEGB said that nuclear energy was more expensive than energy from coal and that it was a matter of jam tomorrow. In view of that comment and the costs of the nuclear industry, does the right hon. Gentleman not think that it would be far better to secure electricity prices for all industries and that the CEGB should sign contracts with British Coal so that British Coal supplies our energy producers?

Mr. Morrison: I am interested in what the hon. Gentleman has to say. I suspect that some of his hon. Friends on the Labour Back Benches would not agree with him in terms of the contracts that they hope will be placed in their constituencies. Yet again, there seems to be a division in the Labour party.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: Does levying VAT on energy help to contain costs? Has my right hon. Friend had any representations from industry and commerce, especially from insurance and small firms that will not be able to pay those costs? Is there nothing that Parliament can do about the instruction from the European Court to levy VAT?

Mr. Morrison: My hon. Friend is anticipating question No. 14, which he has tabled. I have had no representations, but I keep closely in touch with the gas and electricity industries.

Air Pollution

9. **Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he has made any response to the first report of the Environment Select Committee, HC270-1 regarding air pollution; and if he will make a statement on his policy towards the sections relating to the electricity supply industry.

Mr. Parkinson: The Government received this report in the middle of last month and are considering it very carefully. A response will be made as soon as possible. However, the House will already be aware that the Government have recently agreed—subject to parliamentary reserve—to the European Communities' directive on the control of emissions from large combustion plant.

Mr. Hughes: Does the Secretary of State accept the Committee's recommendations that one of the most important matters is energy conservation, especially in the context of sulphur emissions? In the light of the Government's recent decision to reduce the funding of the Energy Efficiency Office—from £24 million to £15 million —and last week's call from the Toronto climatological conference, which recommended a global cut in our energy consumption by one fifth in 17 years, can the right hon. Gentleman give an undertaking that the issue will be treated with the seriousness that it deserves? Does he agree that strong action needs to be taken by the Government before it is too late?

Mr. Parkinson: We accept the need to clean up the environment, and particularly to stop continued pollution. That is why we accepted a programme that will involve substantial expenditure on fitting FGD and other equipment to reduce SO_2 emissions substantially—by 60 per cent. by the year 2003. Since 1970, we have reduced those emissions by 40 per cent. There is a big drive to achieve the result that the hon. Gentleman wants. As to energy efficiency, we recognise that there is still a huge waste, put at about £7 billion a year, of energy paid for and not properly used, and we are carefully targeting our work on that sector. We accept, as the hon. Gentleman does, the importance of the subject.

Mr. Rost: If, in due course, the scientists agree that the world's nations have to act to reduce the emissions of carbon dioxide to prevent the global catastrophe of the greenhouse effect, do we not already have proven technology, adopted by many countries in Europe, to burn half the amount of fossil fuel to produce the same amount of useful energy, by using the heat from our electricity production instead of throwing it away?

Mr. Parkinson: I know of my hon. Friend's enthusiasm for CHP, and I support him. I was in Leicester on Thursday, discussing the CHP proposals there. There are more efficient ways to generate electricity and heat, of which CHP is an important one.

Mr. Eadie: As the question asks about the politicies of the electrcity supply industry, will the right hon. Gentleman answer the question posed by my hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott), arising out of the National Consumer Council's report, which, I repeat, warns that the Government's proposals to force local distribution companies to buy a minimum percentage of electricity from non-fossil fuel generating stations—in practice, from nuclear power stations—will make electricity more expensive for the consumer? Will the right hon. Gentleman answer that question?

Mr. Parkinson: That has nothing to do with the original question . If the hon. Member for Midlothian (Mr. Eadie) wants an answer, let me point out that the National Consumer Council's principal criticism of our proposals was that we did not break up the generating industry sufficiently and we did not therefore—*[Interruption.]* I am answering the question, which the hon. Gentleman did not understand. I am saying how the National Consumer Council criticised us. It said that we need more competition, not less, so there is no consolation for the hon. Gentleman in that. Secondly, I have explained to the House——

Mr. Frank Cook: The right hon. Gentleman does not know the answer, so he he is changing the question.

Mr. Parkinson: If the hon. Member for Stockton, North (Mr. Cook) would maintain the Whips' tradition and shut up, we would get on more quickly. We believe that diversity of supply is a vital part of security of supply. We have put these proposals to the House, and the House has approved them. Very often the hon. Member for Midlothian gives the impression that he does not understand his questions, let alone the answers.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: I return my right hon. Friend to the greenhouse effect. Is his Department conducting studies into the build-up of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere, which may well be leading to a general heating-up of the world's atmosphere, with consequential changes to the weather pattern, and possibly a rise in the sea level? As carbon dioxide is chiefly produced by the burning of fossil fuels, does this have implications for the way in which we generate our electrity in the future, and could my right hon. Friend conduct a study into the specific problem?

Mr. Parkinson: We are conducting studies into the cost of electricity from fossil fuels. It has become clear that huge costs arise from the production and burning of coal, costs which Labour Members consistently ignore when they argue the case against nuclear energy. The sooner they open their eyes and recognise those costs, the better.

Alternative Energy Sources

11. **Mr. Knox:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what assessment he has made of the level of spending in the United Kingdom on research into alternative sources of energy in the current financial year.

Mr. Michael Spicer: About £16 million has been allocated from my Department's research and development budget in the current financial year for alternative sources of energy. An estimated £4 million from external sources is also expected. In addition, it is estimated that between £10 million and £15 million will be spent by private industry on its own research and development programmes.

Mr. Knox: What plans do the Government have for the future development of renewable energy sources? Can my hon. Friend say which are the front runners?

Mr. Spicer: The energy paper I announced in the House on 20 June gives our strategy for the future of renewable energy. In that paper we say that fuel from waste and energy from wind and tidal sources are the most promising. Each of those could provide up to 3 per cent. of our total energy requirement by the year 2025.

Coal Industry (Scotland)

12. **Mr. Strang:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what has been the level of investment by British Coal in Scotland's mining industry in each of the last five years for which figures are available.

Mr. Parkinson: A total of £129 million over the five years 1982-83 to 1986-87. I shall arrange for the individual figures to be circulated in the *Official Report*.

Mr. Strang: Can the Secretary of State confirm reports that his right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland is to meet the chairman of British Coal later this week? Is he aware of the great concern in Scotland that his right hon. and learned Friend is prepared to write off that investment, damage our balance of payments and destroy thousands of jobs, which are dependent on the Scottish coal industry, as part of the price he believes has to be paid for the privatisation of the SSEB? Will the right hon. Gentleman make it clear to his right hon. and learned Friend that it will contravene the spirit, if not the letter, of Lord Prosser's judgment in the Court of Session if British Coal is required to burn imported coal at Cockenzie and Longannet?

Mr. Parkinson: I answered the heart of the hon. Gentleman's point in an earlier reply. There are good reasons to believe that the SSEB and British Coal are on the point of reaching an agreement about tonnage and prices, and that is the best evidence that the fear that the hon. Gentleman is implying exists is ill-founded. It is true that my right hon. and learned Friend will talk to the chairman of British Coal. He and I have an identical position in that we both wish to see agreement reached between the two industries.

Following are the figures:

Investment by British Coal in Scotland's mining industry over the period 1982-83 to 1986-87

Year	*Level of investment £ million*
1982-83	34
1983-84	32
1984-85	25
1985-86	23
1986-87	15
Total	129

THE ARTS

Soviet Union (Ministerial Visit)

34. **Mr. Knapman:** To ask the Minister for the Arts what cultural activities he attended during his recent visit to the Soviet Union; and if he will make a statement.

36. **Mr. Kirkhope:** To ask the Minister for the Arts if he will make a statement on his recent visit to the Soviet Union.

The Minister for the Arts (Mr. Richard Luce): I paid the first official visit by a British Minister for the Arts to the Soviet Union on 6-12 June. I was warmly welcomed and had the opportunity for a wide-ranging exchange of views with the Soviet Minister of Culture, Mr. Zakharov. I was also able to visit a variety of museums and cultural events in Moscow, Tbilisi and Leningrad.

Mr. Knapman: I thank my right hon. Friend for his reply and for his initiative, because cultural exchanges between the Soviet Union and the United Kingdom are a good way of reducing tension. However, is my right hon. Friend confident that there is a satisfactory balance in exchanges between the Soviet Union and Britain?

Mr. Luce: I agree with my hon. Friend that cultural exchanges of one sort or another can do a great deal to improve understanding between countries. I am satisfied that the memorandum of understanding gives wide scope for exchanges between the two sides. On my hon. Friend's second point, it would be true to say that there are far more Soviet artistic events coming to Britain than is the case the other way. I should like to see that balance made more even in future. I am glad that Mr. Zakharov, the Minister of Culture, will come to Britain, and at that stage we shall review ways in which we can make things easier.

Mr. Kirkhope: I, too, am happy with my right hon. Friend's reply. However, does he agree that the recent well-publicised difficulties encountered by the English

National Theatre on its visit to the Soviet Union will put off many other English or British touring companies that might wish to go to that place?

Mr. Luce: My hon. Friend has put his finger on the problem. Many administrative difficulties are faced by English and British arts organisations when they go to the Soviet Union. I made it plain to Mr. Zakharov that until there is an improvement in the administration of the inflow of the visits it will be difficult to encourage more people to go. The National Theatre experience is just one example of that. I was struck by Mr. Zakharov's reaction to that and his desire to try to put it right in the best way possible.

Mr. Menzies Campbell: Does the Minister agree that one way of redressing the balance to which he has referred is to ensure an increase in the funding available to the British Council for its work in the Eastern bloc and for the establishment of a British Council office in Moscow, separate and distinct from the British embassy there?

Mr. Luce: I had a chance to visit the British Council's office in Moscow and was struck by the work that it does. My right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary has responsibility for the British Council, but I agree with the hon. and learned Gentleman that the work that it does is outstandingly good.

Mr. Boyes: When the Minister was in the Soviet Union, did he mention his continuing and growing enthusiasm for photography and for people to have the opportunity to visit galleries free? Did he tell them about the brilliant Members' exhibition of photographs and our willingness to exchange photographs with Soviet parliamentarians?

Mr. Luce: I never cease to be amazed by the hon. Gentleman's ingenuity in bringing photography to the forefront of artistic activity and exchanges in the House. I admire very much the exhibition, which I have seen, and the artistic quality and ability of hon. Members.

Mr. Harry Greenway: Did my right hon. Friend investigate the funding of the arts in the Soviet Union? Am I right in thinking that while it has high subsidies for the arts, there are comparatively low wages, whereas the position here is the reverse? Which does my right hon. Friend prefer?

Mr. Luce: The interesting point that my hon. Friend would wish to know is that one of the Soviet Union's objectives in arts, commerce and industry under the new policies of perestroika is to make its arts activities self-financing and self-governing. I wish it every success in that effort. These changes are a matter of great interest to us all.

Mr. Tony Banks: With the Minister going to the Soviet Union, and my hon. Friend the Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central (Mr. Fisher) going to China, I am beginning to suspect that there is a Communist plot. Will the Minister say whether we can expect some cultural perestroika in this country, given the damage that has been done to the arts by the Government's policies? Will he say whether his visit to the Soviet Union was coincidental with the fact that the noble Lord Gowrie is trying to earn some Moscow gold this Thursday by selling off Soviet pictures for Sothebys?

Mr. Luce: I congratulate the hon. Gentleman on his temporary assignment to the Front Bench. He is always entertaining, whether it be from the Front or Back Benches. China and the Soviet Union are interested in what we are doing to fund the arts. The fact that we are undergoing structural changes, in which we are looking to the private sector to play an increasingly important role, was of great interest to the Chinese Minister of Culture when he came here two weeks ago.

British Library

35. **Mr. Andrew Mitchell:** To ask the Minister for the Arts how much Government funding has so far been given to the British Library project.

Mr. Luce: Total expenditure, excluding site purchase, is £59 million up to the end of May 1988.

Mr. Mitchell: I thank my right hon. Friend for that encouraging answer. Is he aware that this exciting new project is welcomed not only by scholars and academics but by the general public, who will be able to use the magnificent new facilities?

Mr. Luce: My hon. Friend is right. When the new British Library is open in the 1990s there will be vastly improved facilities for readers, improved storage facilities —at present books are stored in no fewer than 20 buildings in and around London—and much improved conservation and environmental conditions, which are important to conserve books. In addition, there will be improved facilities, not only for scholars, but for the public as a whole, especially with the exhibition areas and the vast auditorium of 2,600 seats.

Mr. Buchan: How does the Minister square this welcome for developing library facilities with the horrendous Green Paper? Has he come to any conclusions about the Green Paper? The suggestions for privatisation, charging for research, new books and biographies run counter to the aims of the British Library and, I should have thought, his own.

Mr. Luce: The hon. Gentleman will know that the consultation period for the Green Paper on British public libraries was completed at the end of last week. I am therefore now embarking on a study of all the representations that have been made, the majority of which are extremely constructive and show an understanding of the objectives of the Green Paper, which are to help libraries improve services and enable them to get better value for money. That surely is in the public interest.

Mr. Bowis: Has my right hon. Friend been able to make an assessment of what the cost would be to the British Library and other libraries if VAT were to be imposed on books, resulting in additional costs to the taxpayer and ratepayer through further subsidies? If he has assessed the figure, will he draw it to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer and Lord Cockfield?

Mr. Luce: I note what my hon. Friend says. I shall certainly draw that point to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Chancellor.

Library Services

37. **Mr. Andrew Smith:** To ask the Minister for the Arts whether he will visit Oxford to see the range of library services offered by the county council there.

Mr. Luce: I have no immediate plans to do so.

Mr. Smith: Although the Minister may have no immediate plans to visit Oxford, will he join me in congratulating the Oxfordshire library staff on the marvellous job that they do? What steps does he intend to take to ensure that there is more investment in library facilities? Will he assure us that the disastrous thoughts that the Government have had about charging for library services will not be proceeded with, and will he make a clear declaration to the House to reassure people that the abysmal record of library closures under his stewardship will not be continued?

Mr. Luce: Without any shadow of doubt, the Oxfordshire library service is of a very high standard. I am pleased that its submission to me on the Green Paper was very constructive. It showed an understanding of what the Green Paper was about, which is that there should be improved value for money and improved services. We are looking for ways to achieve that. The hon. Gentleman seems to misunderstand what already happens in libraries. Libraries already have discretion and authority to charge for certain types of service and £22 million is already raised in that way. Furthermore, services are being improved by a number of library authorities. The hon. Gentleman shows ignorance about that side of the service. I seek to bring the service up to date, bearing in mind the dramatic changes that have taken place in it over the past 10 or 15 years. That will lead to an improved service.

38. **Mr. Haynes:** To ask the Minister for the Arts when it is his intention to introduce legislation to implement the proposals in the Green Paper on financing public library services.

Mr. Luce: Some of the proposals in the Green Paper would require legislation, although others would not. For those that do, the first step will be to put an enabling power in place. The introduction of new powers by order will follow once the responses to the Green Paper have been fully assessed.

Mr. Haynes: Is the Minister aware that the Green Paper is a disgrace? Does he not realise that the library authorities up and down the country are doing a first-class job? All that the Government are trying to do is to pour money into the pockets of the people who buy in. Nottinghamshire county council has always done a first-class job.

Mr. Luce: The hon. Gentleman should not get quite so excited——

Mr. Haynes: I do get excited about things like this.

Mr. Luce: The hon. Gentleman does get rather excited from time to time, but he may like to know that the representations from a large range of local authorities have been extremely constructive and have shown a complete understanding of what the Green Paper is all about. The hon. Gentleman does not—*[Interruption.]* It would help if the hon. Gentleman would listen for a moment, but perhaps he does not want to hear. The hon. Gentleman does not seem to realise that a clear reassurance has been given that the basic services will remain free. However, there are a number of services for which there is some charging already. That is one way of increasing revenue and improving specialist services. Is the hon. Gentleman interested in improving services, or not?

CIVIL SERVICE

Secondments

55. **Mr. Chapman:** To ask the Minister for the Civil Service if he has any plans to expand the numbers of secondments from industry to the Civil Service and vice versa.

The Minister of State, Privy Council Office (Mr. Richard Luce): The Government are anxious to improve contacts between industry and the Civil Service, and a range of measures, including secondments, are being undertaken to achieve that.

Mr. Chapman: I welcome the fact that there has been an increase in secondments between industry and the Civil Service in recent years. However, does my right hon. Friend agree that the numbers are still small and that secondments ought to be encouraged further? I recognise the difficulties of full-time secondments, even for short periods. Will my right hon. Friend therefore consider encouraging part-time secondments—for example, by encouraging civil servants to take non-executive directorships in companies, provided that taking such a position in no way conflicts with their departmental interests and responsibilities?

Mr. Luce: I appreciate the continuing interest that my hon. Friend shows in the subject. It is important to have an even stronger interchange between the Civil Service and industry and commerce, and with other activities, too. My hon. Friend is right to focus attention on secondments, but also to consider other ways in which such an interchange can be achieved. The Government are reviewing all the arrangements that can be set up to achieve greater interchange between the Civil Service and the commercial sector, and we are considering a number of options, such as more flexible secondment, the Whitehall and industry scheme, non-executive directorships, better training, late entry schemes and so on. These must be considered as a package rather than as single measures.

Mr. Tony Banks: Is the right hon. Gentleman aware of the scandals about defence contracts currently developing in the United States? Does he think that there are dangers for Britain in having too close a link between contractors and business men who provide goods and services to the Government and civil servants? Is there not too much possibility of corruption? Surely the Minister should ensure that there are enough safeguards so that we do not go the same way as the United States.

Mr. Luce: I do not know whether I should commiserate with the hon. Gentleman, who, just a few seconds ago, was on the Front Bench, but has now gone to the Back Bench. He suggests that there is sometimes a conflict of interests between the duties of civil servants who take outside jobs and their duties as former civil servants. There is a clear procedure for this, which is supervised by the Diamond committee. The most important thing is to ensure that there is no conflict of interests. I am satisfied that the procedures which are working now are satisfactory. Provided that there is no conflict of interests, it is healthy that civil servants should have experience of commerce and industry.

Mr. Key: Does my right hon. Friend agree that, political rhetoric apart, we should be aiming for closer partnership between industry and the Civil Service? Does he agree also that the Civil Service can provide enormous opportunities in, for example, the provision of apprenticeships in Boscombe Down, which is in my constituency, and that the commercial sector can develop a new relationship with the Civil Service, as at the public health laboratory service at Porton Down?

Mr. Luce: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. I know that he has a large number of civil servants in his constituency, many of them specialists, and that quite a number of them have experience of such interchanges. The way in which my hon. Friend asks his question shows that there are many ways in which an interchange can be achieved. My hon. Friend has given a couple of examples.

CHIEF Computer System

56. **Mr. Allen:** To ask the Minister for the Civil Service if he will make a statement regarding the CHIEF computer system as it affects his ministerial responsibilities.

Mr. Luce: The CHIEF computer system does not affect my ministerial responsibilities.

Mr. Allen: As this computer system is to be used in the Civil Service, will the Minister support my referral to the Public Accounts Committee of the scandal of £4 million extra having to be paid for the contract to go out-house rather than in-house? Will the right hon. Gentleman use his great authority with the Chancellor of the Exchequer to get the business case for the CHIEF computer system published? Will he also support my giving this document to the press so that the public can know that the scandal exists?

Mr. Luce: It should be made plain that the so-called CHIEF computer system is to do with Customs' handling of import and export freight from 1992. It is not a matter for me, but one for my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer. The hon. Gentleman must direct his questions in that direction.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: Is my right hon. Friend aware from his recent and welcome visit to Southend that, in that part of the world, there is the greatest difficulty in operating any kind of computer system because of the problems of recruiting and retaining suitably qualified staff? Does he agree that, to be successful, as he knows it should be, the Civil Service must have conditions for specialists that are comparable with the private sector?

Mr. Luce: I enjoyed my visit to Southend and to my hon. Friend's constituency. I admire the work being done by civil servants there. My hon. Friend knows that a flexible pay scheme is now evolving. It allows us to take much more into account the recruitment, retention and motivation requirements in different parts of the country. It is in that direction that we must move if we are to take account of the problems that my hon. Friend mentioned.

Equal Opportunities

57. **Mr. Janner:** To ask the Minister for the Civil Service which Departments of the Civil Service have not completed ethnic monitoring exercises in accordance with the codes of the Commission for Racial Equality and the Equal Opportunities Commission.

Mr. Luce: Almost all Government Departments completed surveys of the ethnic origin of their staff by the end of June 1988. The remaining few hope to have completed the data collection in the next two months.

Mr. Janner: Has the Minister read the enormous array of replies from the various Civil Service Departments to questions that I raised regarding ethnic monitoring and the totally unsatisfactory results that they have shown? Knowing of his personal commitment that people should be treated fairly, and that he wants people to be treated neither better nor worse because of their ethnic origin, and as he knows the extent of discrimination that remains within all areas of the Civil Service, will he please consult his fellow Ministers and inform the House what he proposes to do to achieve the fairness that we know he wants?

Mr. Luce: We are studying evidence from the monitoring exercise. One or two more Departments need to complete their monitoring within the next two months, after which we shall reach a view on how best to proceed. It is right to state clearly that the purpose of the exercise is to give us sufficient information to ensure, as best as we can, that there is genuine equality of opportunity. That is what we are aiming for; that is the objective of the exercise. The information will enable us to do our job properly.

Mr. Forth: Will my right hon. Friend assure the House that despite that rather offensive, patronising, wasteful and unnecessary exercise, recruitment and promotion in the Civil Service will continue to be purely on the basis of merit?

Mr. Luce: I readily give my hon. Friend that assurance. I must stress again that the purpose of the ethnic monitoring is to enable us to ensure that there is equality of opportunity. That is all we are aiming for, and that is the Government's policy in every area of our activity.

Dr. Marek: Will the Minister condemn what his hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Worcestershire (Mr. Forth) said about there being no purpose to ethnic monitoring?

Mr. Luce: My hon. Friend was right to say that recruitment and promotion in the Civil Service must be on the basis of merit. I pointed out that the evidence from ethnic monitoring would help us to ensure an effective policy on equality of opportunity. I understood my hon. Friend to agree that our policy should be one of equality of opportunity.

Security and Ethical Standards

58. **Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Minister for the Civil Service whether, in the light of recent leaks of correspondence between, and internal briefings for, Ministers, he proposes to issue any further guidance to the Civil Service about security and ethical standards; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Luce: No. The note on the duties and responsibilities of civil servants to Ministers, issued in December 1987 by the head of the home Civil Service, gives clear guidance to officials on their obligation to keep the confidences arising in the course of their work. It also sets out the procedures to be followed should officials find themselves in ethical dilemmas.

Mr. Dalyell: Can the House and the Civil Service be told whether the right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine) was correct, or incorrect, to tell the pupils of St. Edward's school, Oxford, the source of the letter intended to discredit him in the Westland affair, which was then published in the school magazine? The source was the Prime Minister. Was the right hon. Gentleman right, or wrong?

Mr. Luce: I have to admit that I do not have time to read every school magazine. If I did, I would not be doing my job properly. We have been over this ground with the hon. Gentleman time and again during the past two and a half years. Answers have been given and there is nothing further or useful that I can say, and certainly not about that school magazine.

Points of Order

Mr. Brian Wilson (Cunninghame, North): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. In view of the Prime Minister's extraordinary comments last night about the shooting down of the Iranian air liner, in advance of detailed evidence or inquiry, would it be in order to ask that the right hon. Lady makes a statement to the House on the implications of her words for Britain? Once again, in the court of international opinion, Britain is seen as an uncritical admirer of every American action——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Whether the Prime Minister makes a statement to the House is not a matter for me.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. It may have been brought to your attention, as Mr. Deputy Speaker promised, that there was some question about the length of certain speeches during the foreign affairs debate on Thursday. It is fair to say that there was a feeling on both sides of the House that the fact that, in one of those rare debates, four Front-Bench speeches took 125 minutes should merit the consideration of the Chair and the Leader of the House. Have you had time to reflect on what happened? Many hon. Members were unable to speak in that debate.

Mr. Speaker: I have the greatest sympathy, because I know that many Back Benchers wanted to take part in that debate. I well remember, in days not very long ago, when very effective speeches were made from the Front Bench in less than 20 minutes. I think that it would be a good idea if we could return to those days. Speeches should certainly not last more than 30 minutes.

The Clerk will now proceed to read the Orders of the Day.

Mr. Allan Roberts (Bootle): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Did you not receive my request, in writing, to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 20, which was submitted to your office this morning?

Mr. Speaker: I regret that I have not seen any request.

Mr. Roberts: It was certainly submitted to your office this morning.

Mr. Speaker: By the hon. Gentleman?

Mr. Roberts: Yes.

Mr. Speaker: I shall look into the matter, but I regret I cannot do anything about it now.

Orders of the Day

Civil Evidence (Scotland) Bill *[Lords]*

As amended (in the Standing Committee), considered.

3.34 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read the Third time.

In fairness to the House, I should mention that the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) pointed out that I spoke for a substantial time on Second Reading. We also had full debate on four mornings in Committee. I shall speak more briefly today.

Hon. Members have given a general welcome to the Bill and I am glad that they have done so. As the hon. Member for Garscadden said on Second Reading, the Bill is

"a significant law reform measure"—*[Official Report,* 16 May 1988; Vol. 133, c. 743.]

It implements, with certain changes, the Scottish Law Commission's report entitled "Corroboration, Hearsay and Related Matters in Civil Proceedings." I give the full title of the report as it makes clear that the Bill has no relevance to criminal proceedings.

A particular aim of the Bill is to ensure that a court should, generally speaking, have available to it all the relevant evidence from whatever source. The Bill seeks to achieve that by the two provisions which appear at the beginning of the Bill. The requirement for corroboration in civil proceedings is abolished in clause 1, while clause 2 provides that evidence is not to be excluded solely on the ground that it is hearsay. I am sure that the Bill will be regarded as a welcome simplification of the law. It will have the result that cases which previously would not have been heard in court will now be heard as a result of the admissibility of hearsay evidence and the removal of the often technical barrier of the requirement of corroboration.

My noble and learned Friend the Lord Advocate remarked in the other place that the Bill contains what some may regard as radical changes to the law of civil evidence. It seems, however, that we in Scotland have set a precedent for our colleagues south of the border. As hon. Members may have noticed, the recent report of the Lord Chancellor's review body on civil justice referred to the present Bill and concluded that it appeared that an inquiry was needed to consider whether the hearsay rule should be abolished in England and Wales also.

On Second Reading the hon. Member for Paisley, South (Mr. Buchan) told us of his nostalgic memories of the Law Reform (Miscellaneous Provisions) (Scotland) Bill 1968. The subsequent 1968 Act led to the removal of the requirement for corroboration in actions for damages for personal injuries. The hon. Gentleman recorded his pleasure in listening to the rustle of dead leaves. From the official records we have evidence of more than the rustle of dead leaves. The 1968 Act has burgeoned. The Bill under consideration achieves the abolition of the requirement of corroboration in civil proceedings.

We considered fully the Bill's provisions on Second Reading and in Committee. The wide-ranging debate has led us into some matters at the edges of the Bill's

[Lord James Douglas-Hamilton]

provisions or even perhaps beyond them. However, the result has been a full consideration of the Bill's provisions and I am grateful to all hon. Members who have contributed to our debates. On Second Reading my hon. Friend the Member for Dumfries (Sir, H. Monro) congratulated the commission on bringing forward the report on which this Bill is based. He was right to do so. I am sure that the Bill will be regarded as a further important contribution to the reform of the law of Scotland.

3.38 pm

Mr. Donald Dewar (Glasgow, Garscadden): This will be a brief speech because, although we did not have a long Committee stage, it was an adequate one in which most of the points were given a reasonable airing. That in itself is interesting because only a few years ago this would have been a contentious Bill. The fact that it is no longer so shows our more pragmatic approach to the problems of law reform.

I had a little innocent entertainment on Second Reading and in Committee by referring to the debates on the Law Reform (Miscellaneous Provisions) (Scotland) Act 1968. I would never talk about the rustling of dead leaves, but on that occasion the Conservative Opposition spokesman—now Lord Wylie—expressed horror at that modest loosening of the requirements of corroboration, which he described as offensive. His reaction was entirely genuine and no one could accuse him of taking a reactionary view, but it shows how far we have moved. On this occasion, no one had a serious objection to the concept that hearsay and corroboration should be relaxed more generally—not just for some actions for personal damages, but across the scope of civil actions in Scotland.

As the House will remember, although the Scottish Law Commission, whose report was the basis of the Bill, paused and considered a different approach in consistorial actions, it came to the conclusion—rightly—that that distinction could not properly be maintained. Although at least one submission suggested that there was a risk of civil proofs being decided on one piece of uncorroborated hearsay evidence, few people doubted that, at least in broad terms, the Bill was a move in the right direction and that we should welcome it.

In Committee our arguments were limited. I expressed some doubts—the Minister worked long and hard to assure me that they were unfounded—about cases in which people were ambushed by hearsay evidence in the middle of a proof. One party's evidence may throw up a hearsay statement that is not likely to be the subject of further evidence from the person who is alleged to have made it, and I was anxious about the right to challenge and cross-examine, which is fundamental to the search for truth in the courts. The Minister relied heavily on clause 4, which he thought was sufficient to provide an unfettered right for the party at the wrong end of the hearsay evidence to produce a relevant witness to speak to that statement. I am reasonably satisfied with that.

I make no complaint about it, because we have moved quickly with the Bill, but I note that in Committee the Minister said:

> "There is no question that, in principle, additional witnesses can be called right up to the commencement of closing submissions. Regarding the citation of witnesses, if a party is taken by surprise by hearsay evidence, he could say that he wanted to call the witness involved. It is more likely that the witness is available, but not called. In those circumstances, the other party could make it clear to the court that the best available evidence had not been relied upon in that the witness involved had not been called.
>
> The hon. Member for Garscadden asked what procedural steps would be taken. I shall make inquiries about what the relevant motion and form should be and I shall send him a letter about that."—[*Official Report, First Scottish Standing Committee;* 21 June 1988, c. 56.]

The letter has not yet reached me, and I am still not clear. There seemed to be a slight difference in the advice being offered by the Minister. First, he said that there was no problem because under the normal rules of procedure in clause 4 the party with an interest in rebutting or minimising the impact of the hearsay statement would have no difficulty producing the necessary witness or witnesses. But then he said that the party can make hay by commenting that it was hearsay, that the witness could have been produced and that the best evidence had not been put before the court. I recognise that the Minister has hardly had time to catch up with what has happened, so it may be a matter for further correspondence.

In Committee, amendment No. 6 was an attempt to deal with a case in which someone has gone back on a precognition in the box, but because a precognition is not included in the definition of a statement in the interpretation clause, in effect one cannot put to him the facts contained in the precognition. The Minister seems to be saying that the precognition clerk can always be called, but I am not sure how that would work, so perhaps he will say something about it.

I have no wish to delay the House with a highly technical matter, so I conclude with a few words about something that we touched on but did not discuss, largely because the Minister said that he wanted to think about it. It is a matter of some moment. In the interpretation clause, clause 9, there is a definition of civil proceedings, which deals with

> "any hearing by the sheriff under section 42 of the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968."

The definition makes it clear that these are civil proceedings, so corroboration and hearsay would not apply, but it excludes a referral under section 32(2)(g) of the 1968 Act.

Those who follow these matters will know that this is a circumstance in which the ground for referral is based upon an alleged criminal offence. I tabled a probing amendment to include one other ground—section 32(2)(d), which refers to offences for which the grounds for referral are offences under schedule 1 of the Criminal Procedure (Scotland) Act 1978, which are a series of offences involving physical and sexual abuse of children. If that had been proceeded with, the relaxation of hearsay and corroboration rules would not apply in this case either. That narrow category would have been removed from the definition of civil proceedings.

I recognised that this was likely to be controversial; for unfortunate reasons, this whole subject is particularly sensitive at the moment, but that is genuinely coincidental. I tabled the amendment because I thought there was a case for debating the subject. I know that my hon. Friend the Member for Aberdeen, South (Mr. Doran) made a well informed and combative contribution on it in Committee in which, to put it in legal language, he made it clear that he would not have touched the amendment with a barge pole, and I can understand that. I am aware that there are tremendous sensitivities about this issue. I know of a number of experiences from my constituency, and I am sure that my hon. Friends have heard of similar ones. There is no doubt that any allegation of sexual abuse of children must be taken with enormous seriousness by the authorities. There was unanimity in Committee about the fact that the interests of the child are and must be paramount in such circumstances.

I mention another aspect in passing. If such an allegation is made, and even if no formal proceedings in the courts or by a children's panel are taken, the stigma that results often continues for a considerable time. If there is a finding on the ground of referral after a section 42 proof, that stigma will be a serious matter for the entire family. It was to discuss this difficult area that I tabled the amendment. I accepted that it would be controversial, but I felt that it should be examined. It arose directly in the definition clause of the Bill.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Aberdeen, South and the Minister have said, this is a matter of some significance. The view of the Association of Reporters to Children's Panels is that in some cases a finding of a referral being established would succeed with the relaxation of the corroboration and hearsay evidence, but would not if the normal rules, as we have known them until this Bill, continued. Perhaps it is a small number of anxious cases, but the balance is important, and clearly it will be affected by the Bill.

The Minister truncated out debate—I make no complaint about that—by saying that he wanted to think about the amendment, consult and then come back to us. He has come back with astonishing speed, because we debated the matter only 10 days ago, towards the end of June. The Minister wrote to me on 30 June saying that he had no intention of changing the Bill as it stands, which will come as no surprise. However, as he has been courteous enough to write to me, and as I know that the matter has attracted some interest and is so sensitive, it would be no bad thing if, during this debate, his defence and the fact that he has decided to rely on the contents of the Bill and the definition of "civil proceedings" in clause 9 were recorded.

The Minister argues in his letter to me that a change would be "neither necessary nor desirable". I understand the force of what he says. I gather that he has had the opportunity to discuss the matter with the Association of Reporters to Children's Panels. He also relies on the original consultation, the Scottish Law Commission report, in which there was consideration of that point. Having spoken to the reporters, the Minister is satisfied that there is no need for change. I would not necessarily quarrel with that.

I notice that, in his letter, the Minister argues that if the change went through

> "relatively fewer of the cases under ground (d), as compared with cases under the other grounds (other than ground (g)) would be the subject of a referral."

In other words, the Minister's fear is that, if the amendment had been incorporated, reporters would recognise that if one was dealing with a schedule 1 offence or the allegation of a schedule 1 offence, one would not have been able to go to proof in the knowledge that corroboration and hearsay had been relaxed and that there might therefore be a tendency to look for other grounds of referral. I can see that, although I should be a little surprised if it was a major consideration.

It was worth discussing this matter. The Minister is saying that allegation of those offences will now be taken on the new standard of evidence, although at a later date criminal prosecutions might not or could not be mounted in the same set of circumstances. There is a gap and a difference of perception, which could lead to some difficulties.

However, I am content to let the matter rest. I accept that there is an obvious distinction between the offence grounds—that is, section 32(2)*(g)*—and all the other grounds under section 32 of the 1968 Act, which is that the standard of proof is different. In other words, under section 32(2)*(g)* one has to prove beyond reasonable doubt, while in all the other matters, including ground *(d)* based on schedule 1 offences, it is on the balance of probabilities. If one had been going to alter the present Bill to retain hearsay and corroboration in that wider group of offences when they constitute a ground of referral, almost inevitably one would have had to look at the standard of proof as well, or one would have had a strange stepped and staired situation. I accept that there is probably no case for doing that.

On balance, I must accept the advice from the professionals that the best way to maintain a flexible legal capacity to take powers to protect a child who is at risk is to leave the Bill as it stands. I am prepared to do so—indeed, I must, as the Bill is at the end of its road. In any event, I should not wish to pursue that point, although it was worth raising; it was important. It was right that the Committee should consider it, however briefly. It tempted the Minister to write in a considered way, after some thought, on the lines that I described to the House.

3.54 pm

Mr. Menzies Campbell (Fife, North-East): The Bill enjoys all-party support which in no small measure is due to the rigorous analysis and presentation of the Scottish Law Commission, whose recommendations form the basis of the Bill. Some hon. Members may be aware that the present chairman of the Scottish Law Commission, Lord Maxwell, is shortly to retire. Those of us who have had any dealings with him or who are aware of the quality of the work under his chairmanship of the commission will wish to congratulate him on that work and to extend good wishes to his equally illustrious successor, Lord Davidson, who will take up his responsibilities at the beginning of October.

This Bill is a necessary and desirable reform of rules of evidence which were once seen as the bulwark of our civil law, but which are now seen as obstacles standing in the way of justice. I retain the same views as I expressed on Second Reading about the extent to which civil proceedings are defined in the Bill. I have a suspicion that they are insufficiently defined and that some controversy may yet arise in practice about whether the definition is apt to embrace all the circumstances which may arise.

I take this opportunity yet again to draw to the Minister's attention a point which I made previously. The effect of relaxing the rules of corroboration and hearsay means that a person may now sue for £10 million, for example, in the sheriff court without any corroboration, while before a tribunal of another kind concerned, for example, with whether a patient obtained faulty treatment from a dentist—that example has recently come within my knowledge in respect of a constituent—such a party

[Mr. Menzies Campbell]

seeking to establish faulty treatment will still be met by the need for corroboration and by the exclusion of hearsay evidence.

When that matter was raised on Second Reading the Minister responded favourably to my request to consider it, and since then the Minister with responsibility for health in Scotland has made clear in correspondence a similar willingness to consider the point. I hope that the Minister will stress that these assurances are genuine and that the approach taken will reflect in degree the substantial alteration in the rules of evidence which we are about to enforce today.

I cannot conclude without reminding the Minister that the welcome given to the relaxation of the rules on corroboration and hearsay is expressly and advisedly confined to civil proceedings. The need for corroboration in criminal proceedings remains paramount. I invite the Minister in his reply to respond in a way which will alleviate any doubts that some of us may have that these proposals are the forerunner for similar proposals in criminal law. If the rule requiring corroboration and against hearsay were ever removed, either expressly or by implication, from the criminal procedure in Scotland, it would create a wholly unacceptable disturbance of the balance of that legal system, which is separate and distinct from the criminal law which pertains in England and Wales.

With those reservations, I welcome the Bill. I do not believe that there will be a Division on it. The Bill will bring necessary progress in an area of our law where existing rules have become obstacles. For those reasons, I commend the Bill to the House.

3.59 pm

Mr. Andrew Welsh (Angus, East): In some ways this has been a very strange Bill. The lawyers to whom I spoke gave it a general welcome, although they always added "but" and never quite finished the sentence. There were some individual doubts and reservations, but none of great substance, and that is probably as much success as any legislation will ever receive. It is perhaps a compliment to the Scottish Law Commission, which has produced a report and recommendations that the Government could follow without too much major variation.

There are, however, some lingering doubts, especially on the question of the new rules of evidence applying to civil as opposed to criminal law. Although the changes in the Bill with regard to civil procedure are acceptable and welcome, hearsay evidence would not be welcomed if transferred to criminal procedure. Although the Minister has given some assurances, he still has not categorically denied that any such switch in procedure will be made. He should be well warned that there would be opposition on both sides of the House to any such move.

Another major problem—perhaps slightly outside the scope of the Bill—was reflected in relation to the difficulties involving the Scottish Legal Aid Board. The Bill has allowed the problem to be aired. I hope that the difficulties alluded to have been taken on board by the Government, and will be dealt with in detail when changes are made in the near future.

May I thank the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) for the series of excellent legal seminars with which he graced the Committee? No doubt legal students in Scotland were following his words. It is a rare joy to watch a politician who is happy in his work, and the hon. Gentleman was certainly happy in his Committee work.

I also thank the Minister for his customary courtesy in dealing with a Bill which I hope will bring to reality the promised reforms that it seeks to promote.

Mr. Alistair Darling (Edinburgh, Central): As has been said, the Bill is largely non-controversial and has been welcomed by hon. Members on both sides of the House.

I should like to raise three points. The first, which was mentioned in Committee, is the question of procedure before tribunals. As was said by the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell), it would be quite wrong if a claim could be pursued through the Court of Session or the sheriff courts in Scotland without being bound by the rules of corroboration and with the admission of hearsay evidence. On the other hand, if someone appearing before a social security tribunal, for instance, did not have that advantage, his case could be seriously prejudiced.

The Minister will realise that the vast majority of those who appear before tribunals are not legally represented, and often have to fund the expense of appearing themselves. It would be grossly unfair to penalise them simply because the Bill as now drafted means that they might have to obtain corroboration, and might not be allowed hearsay evidence. The Minister said in Committee that he did not believe that that would be a problem, and that being bound by corroboration would be the exception rather than the rule. Nevertheless, I would like to press him on the point. A great deal of hardship may be caused, along with natural and justfiable resentment on the part of those who are often least able to protect themselves. I should not be surprised, given the Government's present attitude towards social security claimants in general, if they sought to use a sledgehammer to have a go at those who might dare to claim against the social security fund.

My second point is worth emphasising, because we live in times in which many things previously thought impossible have become possible under the present Government. I should like the Minister to reiterate that there is no question of corroboration being relaxed in criminal proceedings. He gave a sort of undertaking at the beginning of the Committee stage, and we were all surprised to find when we read the proceedings that they were headed not Civil Evidence (Scotland) Bill but Criminal Evidence (Scotland) Bill. We were naturally concerned in view of the Minister's fervent denials only 48 hours before. It is important that the Minister states categorically on behalf of the Government that there will be no question of corroboration being dispensed with in criminal cases. It is a cardinal rule on both sides of the border, and should never be thrown away.

On the first day of the Committee proceedings, I mentioned no-fault liability and the Minister undertook to look into it. I was not able to take part in the second half of the Committee's deliberations, for reasons of which I think that the Minister is aware. I read in the proceedings, however, that he had said that the Lord Chancellor was considering a scheme of no-fault liability in regard to motor accidents.

I am not sure how much of an extension that is of the existing knock-for-knock scheme operated by insurance companies, but I welcome the fact that at long last the door has been opened. While such a scheme is not without difficulties, it would relieve considerable suffering and hardship if it could be established to allow someone to receive compensation, and then allow an organisation funded by the state to act against the wrongdoer. Years of hardship and uncertainty could be relieved, and I am glad that, although the Minister has not opened the door as wide as I should like, he has at least opened it a little. In years to come, we may look back on these proceedings as a time when the Government showed themselves willing to consider the possibility.

The Bill goes a long way towards alleviating some of the difficulties that have been experienced in Scotland, but such schemes as no-fault liability ought to be considered. This is the first opportunity that I have had to thank the Minister for considering the matter in Committee. I look forward particularly, however, to his undertakings on tribunals.

4.6 pm

Mr. Frank Doran (Aberdeen, South): I apologise to the Minister, who clearly thought that his ordeal was over!

I want to concentrate on one simple point: the effect of the Bill on the children's hearings system. Given the comments made by my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar), it is important to consider the position in Scotland. Later this week, the House will consider the results of the Cleveland inquiry. Many of the faults that that report will throw up were considered a long time ago in Scotland, and, although the children's hearings system there is not perfect, I think that on examination it will be shown to be dealing very satisfactorily with all the problems referred to in the Cleveland report.

For example, we have the unique post of the reporter of the children's panel, who is independent of the courts, the police and the social services. That system operates far more speedily than the English system, and there is a right of appeal from the earliest stages. The courts are statutorily obliged to hear appeals as quickly as possible, and the "place of safety" procedures allow the parents to become involved very early. I hope that those who speak for the Government will be present when we discuss the Cleveland report so that the benefits of the Scottish system can be made plain to them.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): I have listened carefully to what my hon. Friend has said about the children's hearings system. There is also the important concept of the role of the safeguarder, who is concerned directly with the interests of the child. That concept ought to be developed further in the Scottish system.

Mr. Doran: I agree entirely. In fact, I was one of the first safeguarders appointed in the Tayside region, and I operated for a couple of years in that capacity, so I have some experience. My hon. Friend is right to point out that where there is a conflict between the interests of the parent and those of the child we have that special officer, who is appointed by either the court or the children's hearings system.

We debated on Second Reading and in Committee how much easier it would be for the reporter to obtain evidence and establish grounds—particularly those of child sexual abuse—as a result of the inclusion of the grounds under the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968 and the application of this Bill. Let me say how grateful I am for this opportunity, as are all those who have been involved with the child care system in Scotland, for this opportunity. In Committee, I gave a graphic example of how this could operate in practice. Any measure which adds to our ability to protect extremely vulnerable children while safeguarding the rights of the parents must be applauded. I am therefore grateful that the Minister has not sought to bring back the amendment to which my hon. Friend the Member for Garscadden referred and that the way has been opened for more successful prosecution of offenders and protection of children who are abused.

4.10 pm

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I thank hon. Members for their general welcome for the Bill. I congratulate the hon. Member for Edinburgh, Central (Mr. Darling) on becoming a father, which was why he could not be present when I made my statement on no-fault liability.

Strong views have been expressed in the House about the need for corroboration in criminal law. Those views will be imparted to the Scottish Law Commission, which is carrying out a study of the subject, and I am sure that they will be taken into account. I do not wish to say anything that would limit the remit of that study.

With regard to tribunal proceedings, the final paragraph of the notes on clauses in relation to clause 9 states:

> "In its application to arbitrations, tribunals, inquiries and other proceedings conducted under a procedure agreed between the parties an exception is made for proceedings in relation to which specific provision has been made as regards the rules of evidence which are to apply."

But generally the relaxation brought about by the Bill would apply.

I thank the hon. Member for Angus, East (Mr. Welsh) for his general welcome for the Bill. I answered his points on the last day of the Committee when he was not present.

The hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell) raised a number of other points. I can only say that they will be taken into account in the Scottish Law Commission report.

The hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) raised a couple of very serious matters. He said, first, that we should have a search for the truth and, secondly, that allegations which lead to a stigma should be very carefully considered. The hon. Gentleman's comments on the first point are covered by clause 4. The Committee agreed that a precognition may not report precisely the words of the person precognosced. As such, that would be an unreliable basis on which to attack credibility. The hon. Member for Garscadden asked how credibility could be attacked in those circumstances. Clause 4 provides that, with the leave of the court, the person may be called or recalled as a witness at any time before the presentation of evidence is concluded. The fact that a person has previously been in court is no bar to such calling or recalling. Therefore, if it is desired to challenge a witness's credibility by reference to what that person is reported in the precognition as having said, it can be done by calling as a witness the precognoscer—that is, the person who interviewed the witness and wrote the precognition.

[Lord James Douglas-Hamilton]

I promised to write to the hon. Member for Garscadden about the procedural points, but I have made inquiries and can give him a reply now. There are no court procedural rules about this. As I said, it is a matter for the discretion of the judge. If the hon. Gentleman wishes to pursue the matter further in correspondence, he can do so. Strictly speaking, responsibility for making rules both for the Court of Session and for the sheriff court is that of the Court of Session. The rules are made by the Court of Session as recommended by the Court of Session and sheriff court rules councils, which are independent bodies.

We are bound to take very seriously the extremely important issue of child abuse, especially as the numbers of cases have been increasing. The hon. Member for Garscadden stressed his concern about the stigma that might be placed on other members of the family when a child is referred following a children's hearing but without there being adequate evidence for criminal prosecution of another member of the family. As the law stands, there are already different standards of proof for children's hearings and criminal proceedings. With one exception, all the grounds for referral of a child as in need of compulsory measures of care are on a "balance of probabilities" rather than "beyond reasonable doubt". The exception relates to the case of an offence by a child, where the test of "beyond reasonable doubt" would apply. In all other cases, the test would be that of the "balance of probabilities". That distinction is not introduced by the Bill—it has existed for almost 20 years. Under the 1968 Act, the standard of proof remains the "balance of probabilities" and in criminal proceedings it remains "beyond reasonable doubt". The Bill will make it easier for a child to be referred as referral will be possible on hearsay or uncorroborated evidence. That is clearly in the best interests of the child. If a reporter has been over-zealous in referring a child to a children's hearing, application can be made to the sheriff for the evidence to be considered afresh.

Dr. Godman: With regard to the prosecution of child abuse cases, will not a wide gap open up between the English and Scottish procedures? Clause 31 of the English Criminal Justice Bill introduces closed-circuit television recording of evidence given by child witnesses in such cases. Is that gap to remain, or does the Minister intend to plug it in the near future?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I shall look into that and write to the hon. Gentleman. If there is the possibility of a criminal case, discretion would be in the hands of the procurator fiscal, depending on the evidence. If it is thought that there has been criminal action but there is inadequate evidence to bring the matter to court, it would go to a children's referral. This is an extremely sensitive area. I will look into the point raised by the hon. Gentleman and write to him about it.

If there are different standards of proof, there will inevitably be circumstances in which events within a family will merit the referral of a child but will not justify criminal prosecution of another member of the family. The child may require measures of care and protection even though the evidence available does not justify a criminal trial. Regrettably, there are cases in which there is insufficient evidence for a criminal prosecution but sufficient evidence for steps to be taken to protect the child.

The reference to stigma implies that a neighbour will readily know what has been said at a children's hearing relating to another family, but that is not so. The Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968 expressly prohibits publication of a report of proceedings at a children's hearing or before the sheriff. That Act prohibits revelation of the name, address or school of the child or the inclusion of any particulars calculated to lead to identification of the child. That is an important safeguard. Proceedings before a hearing are strictly confidential and members of hearings may not keep any report supplied to a hearing. Thus, if neighbours find out about unfortunate events within a family, it will not be from a report of what has happened at a children's hearing.

The hon. Member for Garscadden asked whether the subsequent consultation had been a little hasty. We consulted earlier with the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities, the regional and islands reporters groups and the Association of Reporters to Children's Panels. After further discussions, the reporters to children's panels made it clear that they were content with the Bill as it now stands and did not wish further amendment.

The hon. Member for Aberdeen, South (Mr. Doran) fairly and correctly pointed out that the ultimate aim should be the protection of the child. He made it absolutely clear that he believed that the majority of professionals working in this area—reporters, social workers and police—greatly welcomed the fact that the Bill would do away with a major difficulty in the proof of child abuse. He stated his opposition to the amendment mentioned earlier and was concerned that I was considering the matter further. Having considered the matter further, I should state that the weight of evidence is clearly in one direction, and I hope that the House will accept the position on that very important point.

I recommend that the Bill be given a Third Reading.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read the Third time, and passed, with amendments.

Electricity (Financial Provisions) (Scotland) Bill

Considered in Committee

[SIR PAUL DEAN *in the Chair*]

Clause 1

LIMIT ON BORROWING ETC. OF SCOTTISH ELECTRICITY BOARDS

Question proposed, That the clause stand part of the Bill.

4.20 pm

The Minister of State, Scottish Office (Mr. Ian Lang): The Bill has one clause of substance and a single purpose which it is hard to think could reasonably be considered controversial. The purpose is to increase the borrowing limit of the two Scottish electricity boards so that they can continue to go about their normal business within the law. It has nothing to do with privatisation, although understandably the subject loomed large in our earlier debates. It might be helpful to the Committee if I were to say something about that.

Mr. John Maxton (Glasgow, Cathcart): Just to clarify matters, this is a two-clause Bill. I accept that clause 1 has nothing to do with privatisation, but has clause 2 anything to do with privatisation?

Mr. Lang: We shall debate clause 2 in due course. I contend that it has nothing to do with privatisation. If the hon. Gentleman thinks otherwise, we can engage in a lively debate on that issue shortly.

The purpose of the Bill is narrow and specific—to raise the financial limit on the borrowings of the Scottish electricity boards from £2·7 billion to £3 billion. Because the boards plan and operate the generating system jointly, the limit applies to the total outstanding borrowings of the two boards taken together.

The new limit will enable the boards to obtain the finances necessary to continue their capital investment programme and fulfil their statutory obligation to supply electricity. The boards' borrowing requirements are determined mainly by the level of their capital expenditure and the extent to which that can be financed from internal resources. Many of the boards' investments are large and the assets constructed will have very long lives. It is therefore unreasonable to assume that the boards could find the necessary internal resources without recourse to borrowing, although at March 1987 about two thirds of the boards' current cost net assets were financed from their internal resources. Obviously, Torness has dominated the boards' investment programmes in recent years. The station is nearing completion and reactor 1 began to supply electricity to the grid last month. Full commissioning of both reactors should be achieved by the first half of 1989.

New power stations are not the only capital projects undertaken by the boards. They have a continuing need to spend on updating their existing power stations and on maintaining and upgrading their extensive transmission and distribution lines. For example, the South of Scotland Electricity Board spends more than £33 million a year on extending its distribution network. The North of Scotland Hydro-Electric Board will be investing about £32 million in connecting the Western Isles to the mainland system by submarine cable and is spending a further £23 million a year on refurbishing aging distribution and hydro assets.

A further factor of importance when considering borrowings is the level of the boards' costs and prices. The boards have a good track record in holding down their costs while delivering a high level of service to their customers. The recent Monopolies and Mergers Commission investigations into the efficiency of the two boards concluded that they were skilled in managing their core functions of generating, transmitting and distributing electricity and deserved their good reputations for conducting their business efficiently and well. However, the commission also suggested that there was scope in a number of aspects for further improvement.

This efficient performance has been reflected in prices. Over the past six years average tariffs in Scotland have fallen by 9 per cent. in real terms. Domestic prices in Scotland are lower than those in England and Wales. The latest CBI survey of electricity prices shows that electricity prices for general industrial consumers were among the lowest in Europe. I am sure that the Committee will find that evidence of efficiency reassuring.

It is clear from our earlier debate that there is no dispute about the need for the increased borrowing facility. The proposed new limit of £3 billion is expected to be sufficient to meet the boards' projected needs, with a modest contingency margin of 10 per cent. We are therefore taking the opportunity to repeal the power to amend the limit by order, because it is most unlikely that there will be any need to increase the borrowing limit further between now and the time that the boards are privatised.

Privatisation has been a focus of much of the discussion on the Bill, as was to be expected in any legislation affecting the industry at this stage with privatisation on the horizon. This is not the time for a detailed statement of our intentions, but I make no apology for reaffirming the Government's strong commitment to the implementation of their proposals to privatise the industry. One reason of direct relevance to the Bill is that the industry's investment needs will no longer be decided by Government but will be determined by the industry on the basis of its commercial assessment of its needs.

That is only one of the many benefits that privatisation will bring. The Government are in no doubt that the requirement to operate in the commercial and more competitive environment that privatisation will create will provide added incentives to and sustained pressure on the boards further to improve performance and minimise costs to the benefit of customers and shareholders. We are confident that our proposals for privatisation will create a more competitive private sector electricity industry to meet the challenge of the 1990s and beyond.

Following the White Paper, the shape of the two companies is being discussed with the boards. There is much detailed ground to be covered and the boards are being closely involved at all stages. The discussions are progressing well and we shall announce our decision in good time.

The key principles underlying our proposals are that they will facilitate and encourage competition to provide the best guarantee of the customer's long-term interests. They will provide safeguards and new rights for the customer, including a new system of guaranteed standards of service and performance indicators. They will establish

[Mr. Lang]

regulatory arrangements to promote competition, to provide incentives for efficiency, and to oversee electricity prices for the consumer. They will ensure the maintenance of the present standards of safety throughout the industry, particularly at nuclear sites.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): The Minister mentioned maintenance of present standards. Am I right in thinking that, as with the Central Electricity Generating Board, the SSEB has been advised by Merz and McLennan? May I repeat question No. 3, which I put this afternoon to the Under-Secretary of State for Energy? Where else in the world has Merz and McLennan, which operates in some 70 countries, ever recommended a system of distribution controlled grid operation? Where has it recommended the experiment that it is recommending here?

Mr. Lang: I have to give the hon. Gentleman the same reply that I gave him when he asked the same question on Second Reading. Merz and McLennan is a firm of distinguished technical advisers. It was part of the team advising the Government on the structure of privatisation, although the main role was carried out by merchant bankers. The hon. Gentleman's question relates to the English structure of the electricity system under privatisation. Since he asked his question on Second Reading, he has written to me about the matter. I shall let him have a reply in writing in due course. With the greatest respect, this is not a relevant topic in the context of this debate.

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): The Minister referred to the competition that could flow from privatisation. Will there be any restrictions on a company such as British Gas investing in the newly privatised boards? If British Gas invests substantially, will that promote or lessen competition?

Mr. Lang: That may be a suitable topic for discussion as we approach the formulation of our privatisation proposals. I shall bear the hon. Gentleman's point in mind. Because so many of these decisions have not yet been taken, I must confine myself to the general principles underlying our approach. The Government's proposals will benefit employees in the industry by providing wider career opportunities. They will give special rights to employees to acquire shares and give preference to customers in the allocation of shares. They will ensure security and diversity of supply and consolidate and update the legislation governing the supply of electricity.

Concern was expressed in earlier exchanges that security of supply might in some way be jeopardised by privatisation. I can categorically assure the Committee that such concerns are entirely without foundation. Following privatisation, the Scottish electricity industry will comprise two dynamic businesses which will be responsive to their customers' requirements. They will be under commercial and competitive pressure from other fuels and other electricity suppliers to deliver what the customer wants. Large industrial customers and domestic customers want the same guarantee of a secure supply of electricity at the lowest possible cost, and the system will deliver that.

The commercial pressures will be supported by a regulatory framework which will ensure that the statutory obligation to supply which will fall on the licensed companies will be capable of being met. The companies will be under specific obligations as regards the security and quality of supply, and the overall price regulation will ensure that electricity is produced and priced at the lowest possible cost.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): Will these consumers' rights extend to those people, often on low incomes, who fall into arrears with their payments? As the Minister knows, some of them have their payments made by the DHSS. Will these rights continue, or, better still, will they be strengthened under the proposals to privatise?

4.30 pm

Mr. Lang: Again, the hon. Gentleman is anticipating the detail of the legislation. There is already a fairly elaborate structure to try to help those in difficulties with their payments, governed by a code of practice on which the consultative councils have been consulted. We see no reason why there should be any substantial departure from those arrangements. Recently, the figures for disconnections have been more encouraging, and have been reducing. It is the boards' intention not to adopt a draconian attitude in this respect.

The matter of immediate concern is to ensure that the boards are able to finance their day-to-day business and their investment programmes. Clause 1 is an essential mechanism for enabling this, and I commend it to the Committee.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

The First Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means (Sir Paul Dean): Before I call the next hon. Member, I remind the Committee that a debate on the merits or demerits of privatisation would not be in order. On clause stand part, it is acceptable to speak, as the Minister has done, about the connection between that and clause 1, but we cannot have a general debate on privatisation.

Mr. Donald Dewar (Glasgow, Garscadden): I am grateful for your warning, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I shall try to go no wider than the Minister did. I was interested to hear his ringing statement of commitment to the privatised future of the industry. I must confess that it came as no surprise. It was a statement of faith, a sort of ex cathedra Dover house. It sounded as though the word processor had been hard at work putting together a particularly appropriate piece of special pleading for the Minister. I doubt whether it will impress anyone else, and it did not impress any of my colleagues. I particularly stress that because, apart from two Whips, the Minister is entirely alone on the Conservative Benches. That is a matter of some interest.

No one objects to the clause as it stands. There is no question of our dividing the Committee against it, unless the Minister manages to irritate us beyond the norm. As the Committee will remember, this measure was debated in the Scottish Grand Committee, which was a constructive gesture on our part. That does not mean, as I am sure the Minister will appreciate, that we are in any way endorsing his vision of the future or have any time for the legislation that we are promised will come soon.

We are aware that the Committee has to grant additional finance to help the Scottish electricity boards through the immediate period that lies ahead. We are being asked to sanction an increase in the borrowing requirement to £3 billion, and it is only right that before the Committee does that we try to extract some information from the Minister. We have been plugging away for some time trying to extract information from the Minister, and I am afraid that we have learnt to appreciate that he is the master of the stonewall tactic. I admire the persistent shameless level of non-information that has become the Minister's mark, and extracting information from him is gey dreich work.

If the Minister maintains, as I suspect he will, his record of pushing off any reasonable inquiries about the reason why this additional cash is needed, or about the immediate plans for the industry that are to be financed out of this additional borrowing, he will underline the need, when we come to look at the detailed proposals from the Government, to do so within separate Scottish legislation. This matter was raised during the last two Scottish Question Times and I was alarmed at the casual way in which both the Secretary of State and the Minister of State tended to brush this issue aside as some sort of idiosyncratic and parochial point raised by the Opposition.

For example, at the last Question Time, the Minister said:

> "We are not ducking or dodging anything."

That will come as a surprise to everyone. He continued:

> "There is an appropriate time to answer these matters."

I should have thought that this was an appropriate time, when we are voting to increase the borrowing powers of the boards.

He went on:

> "Legislation has not yet been prepared or presented to the House. When it has been, that will be the appropriate time to answer these questions . . . I hear what the hon. Gentleman says about the Opposition's desire for separate legislation."

He then said something that I find rather disheartening:

> "That will be decided at the appropriate time. The hon. Gentleman is as aware as I am that there are many matters which affect the industry both north and south of the border."—[*Official Report*, 29 June 1988; Vol. 136, c. 351.]

The recurrent theme is that there is much that is common, with the implication that a United Kingdom Bill is being contemplated. We do not consider that to be satisfactory. It makes parliamentary scrutiny extremely difficult. I give the Minister notice that if he goes down that road it will be unpopular, and that it will be as unfair on English Members, who will have to sit through lengthy considerations of matters Scottish, as it will be on Scottish Members at the other end of that equation.

During the earlier Question Time, when dealing with that point, the Secretary of State said:

> "So far, neither of the chairmen"—

that is, of the two electricity boards—

> "has expressed any preference for a particular form of legislation."—[*Official Report*, 25 May 1988; Vol. 134, c. 309.]

It would be helpful if we could go into greater detail about that. It might be interesting to know whether they have now expressed any preference, or whether they are being specifically consulted on this matter.

The financial limit is being raised to £3 billion, and—this is something that the Committee can properly consider—that will increase the level of debt that will have to be settled or apportioned in some way soon. This is a matter of considerable interest. The Minister may be able to escape many questions, but he cannot claim that it is irrelevant to ask how the debts of the Scottish electricity boards are to be dealt with, probably within a few months, and certainly within a year of the arrival of privatisation.

That is important, because it is a sensitive matter. For example, the apportionment of the debt between the North of Scotland Hydro-Electric Board and the South of Scotland Electricity Board will have a considerable influence on the viability of the smaller company. We know that, in some rather slow, befuddled and confused way, the Minister is planning that these two free-standing enterprises, as he is proud to call them, will be enmeshed securely into the joint operating company that will run the nuclear facility. A great deal of the debt—the Minister referred specifically to Torness and the £1·7 billion that it has cost—will be geared to the nuclear capacity. Therefore, the apportionment, or division, of it, and how much will be written off and what kind of Treasury subsidy will be involved, become matters of pressing interest. We should know something about the matter, at least in outline, before we nod through this increase in the boards' financial limits.

I do not wish to transgress and try your patience, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but this is important and sensitive because we are awaiting a great deal of information about such matters as control of these companies and how control will be maintained, both in Scotland and in the wider forum of the United Kingdom.

I nctice that on 29 June, when referring to foreign holdings, the Minister said:

> "I understand the right hon. Gentleman's anxiety—

that is, my right hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Millan)—

> "about this matter. It is an important issue and we are considering it carefully. There will be nothing wrong with a measure of foreign investment in the industry when it is in private hands, but I accept the right hon. Gentleman's anxiety about control or ownership being in foreign hands. That is something we shall consider closely, and we shall announce our decision at the appropriate time."—[*Official Report*, 29 June 1988; Vol. 136, c. 350.]

We are going to get tired of hearing people say that something will be announced at the appropriate time. It is becoming something of a litany of despair for anyone attempting to take an intelligent interest in the Government's plans for the industry.

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): The hon. Gentleman was probably not present during Energy Questions earlier today when the issue of the ownership of the privatised electricity industry was raised. Had he been here, he would have heard the Secretary of State say clearly that the Government intend to ensure that no single individual or groups of individuals, including foreign individuals, could obtain the kind of control about which he and I are worried.

Mr. Dewar: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman. He has made an important point. I plead guilty. I was not present for Energy Questions today, for a variety of reasons. I have to say—I am sure that the hon. Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) will sympathise with this—that the Secretary of State for Energy has made similar statements, while the silence from the Scottish Office has been deafening. It is a silence in the face of persistent pressure from us. I should be delighted if the Minister, either now or when he winds up the debate, will repeat that pledge for Scottish undertakings. That would be a considerable help to us. The Minister has refused to do so.

[Mr. Dewar]

I have quoted his words from as recently as 29 June, less than a week ago. He has consistently failed to give that guarantee. That difference of approach is now beginning to worry some of us. I am grateful to the hon. Member for Tayside, North for saying that it is worrying hon. Members on both sides of the House.

We should know whether there will be a golden share, however cynical we may be about the Britoil-British Petroleum experience, or whether there might be a 15 per cent. limitation on foreign holdings, as was built into the articles of association for the Rolls-Royce privatisation. There are a number of models. I recognise that the details may not have been worked out, but I agree with the hon. Member for Tayside, North that the Minister should make an unequivocal statement, which was apparently made for the position south of the border, that there will be some such machinery for the Scottish electricity industry.

I do not want to rely on some of the rather pat words of Ministers. When talking about privatisation, the Secretary of State has said that the

> "unique and exciting opportunities to widen share ownership in Scotland must not be missed."

Perhaps they should not be missed, but the trouble is that those who do not miss them sometimes take up the opportunity because they know that they will be able to sell when the price is right. I am not sure that that is a satisfactory level of guarantee. Let us have a guarantee. Let us hear from the Minister today. Perhaps the hon. Member for Tayside, North and I can combine during the debate to extract what should be an easily given promise from the Minister. We want a statement of principle that is relevant to the clause, because we are allowing a substantial debt to be built up. The security of that debt may bear some relationship to the stability of the companies and the issues I have been discussing.

The Minister was good enough to talk in general terms about the efficiency of electricity supply. My hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Cathcart (Mr. Maxton) said that it seems extraordinary that the Minister should be at the Dispatch Box praising the efficiency of the electricity boards and saying how splendidly they are performing, while promising periods of uncertaintly and upheaval with the privatisation programme.

The Minister talked about investment. He said that a large percentage of the debt was invested in the nuclear installation. Perhaps he could tell us how much of the £3 billion programme will be directly related to the nuclear programme. If we increase the borrowing requirement, I assume that some of that money will be used to improve the supply side of the industry. I do not know whether the Minister can say anything about this, but there are frightening rumours about escalating costs of decommissioning old Magnox stations. That is relevant to the borrowing requirements of the boards. Perhaps I could tempt the Minister to say a word or two about that.

If we are talking about plant and equipment, perhaps the Minister should say, in general terms, something about the joint ownership of the nuclear installation and how it will work. He should say something about what, in political terms, we would see as boundary changes, plant swapping or perhaps just heat exchange contracts, which adjust the requirements of the privatised north and south boards. The Committee will know that there have been many speculative stories about population switches, about Cruachan going to the South of Scotland Electricity Board, about Kincardine going to the north board and about what will happen to Peterhead, which is a key installation. As we are being invited to pass the new clause on the basis that the money is required for the improvement of plant, it is important that the Minister clarifies the position.

4.45 pm

I am sure that my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) will raise this matter, but one of the most important parts of the static equipment and plant is the grid system. If the Minister is saying that the additional borrowing space is required to improve that machinery, it may be that some of the money will be spent on the grid system. If it is, we are entitled to know what will happen to it. I have been working on the assumption that there will be some sort of joint operating company and a separate Scottish grid. I suppose it is possible that the two Scottish boards will become partners in a national grid, although they would be dwarfed by the distribution companies south of the border. Whether it is separate or otherwise, I assume that there will be some sort of free-standing, giant holding operation. I use that contradictory bundle of terms because it is the sort of language that the Minister, puzzlingly, has been using about other parts of the new arrangement. The Minister owes us at least some explanation of how that will operate.

The Minister said a few minutes ago that consumer protection would be an important part of the new set up and that he finds the present position on disconnections encouraging. We will want to look at that closely, preferably in separate Scottish legislation. The Minister knows the example that I am going to quote, which is a startling, relevant and recent example. In the first nine months of 1987, under the brave new world of privatisation in the gas industry, the number of domestic disconnections in the United Kingdom rose by over 35 per cent. That is a frightening statistic. No doubt it is defensible in terms of tight commercial control of one's cash flow and in trying to maximise a return on capital for the shareholders, but it has substantial social implications. We should have a long hard look at that.

The Minister should answer some of the questions, at least in principle. I referred earlier to the future of the Peterhead plant. That is important, because it is said that by the early 1990s the Peterhead plant will be producing, by the use of sour gas, about 4 million tonnes of coal equivalent. The consequences of that for the energy industry, particularly the coal industry, are important. Before the end of the debate it is essential that the Minister should say a word about the coal burn and the implications of the clause for the coal burn. Clearly there is a real link between the financial limits of the boards, their buying policy and the mix of fuels used to provide electricity for the consumer in the north and south.

Many of my colleagues will remember that on 7 March we had a lively Supply day debate on this subject and that on 9 June on, Second Reading of the Bill, we tried hard to persuade the Minister to take an interest in the vexed and difficult question of the negotiations between the SSEB and British Coal over coal burn. The attitude was summed up in a now notorious quotation from *Hansard*. The Minister said:

> "I am not uninterested in the negotiations but I do not believe that it is right and proper that we should interfere in them."—[*Official Report*, 25 May 1988; Vol. 134, c. 317.]

That shows a level of casualness amounting to irresponsibility.

I corresponded with the Prime Minister on 8 March. She said:

"Provided they"—

the boards—

"can adopt a flexible and constructive approach, there is no reason to believe such an agreement will not eventually be achieved."

I do not believe that the Government can adopt such a stand-off stance. That was the beginning of March, it is now the beginning of July, and we are still faced with uncertainties.

Undoubtedly there is a link between the financial position of the board and the pressure that the Government place on its financial limits and its attitude to the purchase of coal. I ask the Minister to make an up-to-date statement of the position as the Government understand it. I am told—it is speculative as, unlike Ministers, I do not have direct access—that British Coal made an offer on Thursday and that the parties are in accord about the tonnage to be purchased until the end of March 1989 and the price to be paid for it. There is still a vital impasse over the way in which imported coal is to be used, especially at Cockenzie and Longannet. I am told that British Coal is anxious to limit the use of imported coal to Kincardine, which is a barrier to agreement. Even more important to the coal industry, the SSEB has made no concession that it will attempt to agree a long-term contract, without which the future of the coal industry will be bleak.

It is difficult to gather from the press exactly what is happening. At the end of last week a remarkably optimistic gloss was put on public reports, suggesting that an agreement was within grasp. I am told that that was optimistic and probably inaccurate. I do not know whether that is true. I offer it only as a suggestion that has been put to me.

Mr. Bill Walker: I do not like to repeat myself, but again this matter arose at Energy Question Time. My understanding of the Secretary of State's remarks was that, other than on one narrow detail, agreement had been reached.

Mr. Dewar: The hon. Gentleman is extremely helpful. He acts as an admirably efficient messenger boy for the Department of Energy. I wish that we received a similar service from the Scottish Office.

The hon. Member for Tayside, North made an interesting point, and I am sure that he reported it accurately. I am told—I concede that it is a caried story and that the Opposition are unlikely to be involved directly in these negotiations—that the narrow point is the commitment to a long-term contract and how much and where imported coal can be burnt. That leads to the vexed question of the existing contracts at Cockenzie and Longannet. It is important that the Minister clarifies the position.

I declare a constituency interest, because I understand that a United States boat, the General Estrella, came from Baltimore yesterday and entered Rothesay dock with 27,000 tonnes of imported coal on board. It is being unloaded and the coal is being carried on a reinstated spur of a railway line. It is important that at this stage we have some understanding of what is happening. If that coal is taken by rail to Longannet and burnt, I suspect that we may be in a difficult legal and practical position in which the House would have a legitimate interest.

I am entitled to draw attention to the fact that the Scottish Office—I welcome this—clearly believes that it has an interest in this matter. Today, a headline in *The Scotsman*, under the byline of Keith Aitken—its industrial editor, who I know is a responsible journalist—says:

"Rifkind may intervene in SSEB coal row."

The report rehearses the evident difficult state in which we find ourselves. It says:

"Mr. Rifkind is understood to have asked for a meeting in the early part of this week with senior BC executives in London, and may go on to see the SSEB, although the SSEB is responsible to the Scottish Office and is in regular contact with Ministers and officials."

If it is still in regular contact, I should like to know what that contact has brought. I unreservedly welcome this sign of life and activity in the Scottish Office, but if there are to be meetings this week with British Coal in which the Secretary of State will be involved, it is important that we know about them so that the phenomenon represented by the General Estrella at Rothesay dock does not become a crisis of confidence for the future of the industry.

I have raised a number of questions about the future of the industry. I hope that I have related them to the important extension of borrowing powers that the clause gives the electricity boards. The debate is opportune because we are facing a sharp crisis in the energy industry in Scotland. I hope that the Minister will answer some of those questions.

I was not in the least impressed with the Minister's opening statement about the merits of privatisation—the wonderful advantages to industry, the consumer, the nation, the environment, anything else that he might be able to think of or anything that his advisers can put in a long list. It is a peculiarly unsuitable industry for privatisation, even if it is assumed that privatisation is a sound principle—which is what the Government clearly assume. A monopolies industry is being converted from a public utility to what looks dangerously like a private monopoly. The fact that there are two monopolies operating in tandem does not remove the essential dangers. We are left with a sick joke of competition by comparison, which has rightly been derided throughout debates in the House and which will continue to haunt the Secretary of State for some time.

There are major arguments about the security of supply, the mix of fuel and energy that we use and the proper and basic concern, which should be the mark of government, for the energy industry and the individuals and communities at risk. While this is a dry little Bill dealing with the arithmetic of the borrowing requirement, behind that limited facade it raises important questions. At a time of such crisis and conflict over the role and operation of the electricity boards, the Minister should come out of his shell and try to live down his reputation as the greyest and most persistent stonewaller, and give us some insight into what is happening.

Mr. Dalyell: When I interrupted the Minister's opening speech, he said that the situation in Scotland was entirely different. He might not have been present at Energy Question Time today, but those of us who were heard the Secretary of State for Energy—or should we now call him

[Mr. Dalyell]

the chairman of the Star Chamber court—go out of his way to emphasise the part that he hopes Scotland will play in the overall privatisation of the industry.

That was the view of the Secretary of State for Energy. I do not have the exact words, but we thought that the Government had in mind the integration of the Scottish and English systems.

5 pm

That leads us to another matter. I do not know whether the Minister has been to the control room at Southwark, but some of us have taken the trouble to go there. We vividly remember the grid controller, Edgar McCarthy, and his colleagues showing us the big board on which were displayed, at the flick of a switch, the whole United Kingdom power supply and the number of units that were coming in from Scotland at a given moment. We were there during the middle of the day, and the number of units varied from 480 to 520, as is usual at that time. The Scottish contribution to control of the grid is absolutely vital.

We may not be talking directly about privatisation but rather about borrowing powers in the Bill, but that gives an opportunity to talk about the technical future of the industry. Does anyone really deny that, at best, the Government are embarking on an experiment that no one in the world has ever tried—the distributor-controlled grid system? I make no excuse for referring to my question 3 on today's Order Paper:

> "To ask the Secretary of State for Energy, pursuant to his answer of 9 May, *Official Report*, column 3, what information he has as to how many distributor-controlled systems of the type now proposed for the privatisation of electricity in the United Kingdom, have been set up on the advice of his Department's technical advisers, Merz and McLennan, in the other countries in which they have helped to install grid systems; and if he will make a statement."

The Under-Secretary of State for Energy courteously saw my hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) and myself, with his hon. Friend the Member for Bedfordshire, North (Sir T. Skeet), for an hour and a quarter last month. The adviser Russell Kennedy from Merz and McLennan and others were also there. I speak against a background of some rather detailed knowledge and excellent briefing on the issue. The truth is that Merz and McLennan has never, anywhere else, recommended the distributor-controlled grid system. Merz and McLennan is a distinguished firm of consultant engineers with a good reputation—that is not in doubt. However, Merz and McLennan has never put forward these particular propositions anywhere else in the world. The question arises why the Government think that they know better than all the technical advisers of the CEGB. I repeat my supplementary question: why do they think that they know better than Lord Marshall and, as I understand it, the unanimous technical advice from the CEGB and the SSEB?

My right hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Millan), who was a Minister, knows that the SSEB is in an extremely difficult position. It has obligations to the Government of the day not to speak out, yet it is not denied that all the technical advice is against the Government's proposals on grid control. I have become increasingly concerned about that issue. I therefore thought it proper to seek opinions from the Generation Development and Construction Division of the CEGB, which also serves the SSEB. Those of us who have crawled over Torness and have been to Hunterston know well the contribution made by the office at Gloucester and the central research for the United Kingdom which is carried out at Barnwood. The points I raised with the Secretary of State come from the considered opinion of Dr. Bond and others, who are prepared to speak out and who have devoted their lives to the industry. They were distinguished engineers at Barnwood in the design, development and construction of generating plant. They say:

> "There are two primary areas of concern. The first and the one that has dominated consideration so far is the viability of the minute to minute operating system now provided under completely integrated management and control by the CEGB, namely optimum efficient and secure generation and high voltage transmission under all conditions of weather emergency and load demand variation."

I am advised that the whole issue of load demand variation has not been thought through. My hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) referred to the answers that we have been given. When we raised the matter in Committee, no convincing answer was given for a very obvious reason: the matter had not been thought through.

Mr. Lang: The reason why the hon. Gentleman did not get an answer that convinced him was that that point had nothing to do with the Scottish electricity system in our privatisation proposals, and still less with the Bill that we are debating today.

Mr. Dalyell: If the Minister thinks that load demand variation has nothing to do with the Scottish electricity system, he had better become a Minister in another Department and have no responsibility for power. That proposition is crass.

I wish to deal now with the issue of weather emergency conditions. Again, that is a matter that has not been thought through. After the gale that ravaged the south of England, engineers from my constituency and other Scottish constituencies, at the drop of the proverbial hat, without demur, rushed to Surrey, Sussex and Kent. I see that my hon. Friend the Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) is nodding. Many of them got letters of thanks from people in the south of England who thought that the Scottish linemen and engineers were superb in the emergency. If there is to be haggling about contracts and prices, will not there be delay? Will the engineers do such a job? Are we to be told that that, too, is irrelevant? It is, quite clearly, relevant.

The Barnwood engineers say that the second point is

> "the need for the continuation of, and adequate resourcing of, the formations that provide essential and, from the aspect of efficiency and cost effectiveness, irreplaceable support for the main line generation and high voltage transmission system. These functions in all their considerable diversity are embodied in, for example, the CEGB Research Division, Generation Development and Construction Division and Transmission Division."

The SSEB is intimately linked to the current operations of the CEGB transmission division.

The Barnwood engineers continue:

> "There appears to be some acknowledgement of the RD function and the function of the Transmission Division links in a simply understood way with the high voltage transmission system. However, the necessary role of GDCD in the ordered development of power station technology and in continuing responsibility of the long term reliability of

> existing plant—a service which no consultant engineers provide or are resourced to provide—appears to have received no acknowledgement or consideration whatsoever."

I asked if there had been consideration of the views of the Barnwood engineers. If so, I should like to know what that consideration was.

The Barnwood engineers say that they are worried about the viability of the grid. They refer to an article by Frank Ledger called,

> "The power to command and control Privatisation and the CEGB".

My colleagues may ask, "Who is Frank Ledger?" He is the board member responsible for engineering in the CEGB, so he might be thought to know something about it. He says:

> "The fundamental principle of the electricity supply system in the UK and indeed worldwide is the responsibility to provide a secure and reliable service. The key to fulfilling that responsibility is central control of the planning, co-ordination and operation of an integrated system which has evolved over many years and whose excellence is internationally acknowledged and sought.
>
> Throughout the world, the dominant trend is towards fewer utilities and greater integration of generation and transmission, rather than towards fragmentation."

It is fragmentation that we are now discussing. The Government are going against what everyone else in the world is doing. People who do that may be right, but they had better be very clear of the technical basis on which they do it. Ledger goes on:

> "It is the power vested in the central control of the system in England and Wales which ensures that national optimisation of the system takes precedence over area and all other interests, and that the responsibility to supply is executed effectively."

How do we know that, in future, arrangements that have worked very well between Scotland and England will work in anything like that way when there is not overall control in favour of national optimisation? Ledger continues:

> "Getting a power station from the drawing board and into operation is a lengthy process, as much as 10 to 12 years, and the current life expectancy is 30 to 40 years: so arguably one is looking as much as 50 years ahead. In that timescale there can be many changes which impact on a modern electricity supply system: sources of demand, sources and prices of fuel and raw materials, strategic need for fuel diversity daily and annual demand patterns, public opinion, and social and environmental pressures."

Then the crunch:

> "To manage these resources, the CEGB has developed a national planning and optimisation process to ensure that the electricity requirements for England and Wales are provided to a high standard of security at low cost. This process has been based on 30 years' experience of managing and operating one of the world's largest integrated power systems and relies on the central power to command in the interest of national optimisation."

Wherein lies now the central power to command which the engineers say is so important? Every one of us who went to Southwark could not say other than that the central power to command is absolutely crucial. Ledger continues:

> "For example, when a utility of the New York Power Pool did not respond to instructions from the central controller, New York was blacked out for up to 25 hours: there was mass looting, arson and even the closure of Wall Street."

There was a similar incident on 20 May 1986 when lightning struck the Sundon substation in Hertfordshire. Had there not been the central power to command, the whole of the home counties and most of London would have been blacked out by the voltage collapse, and enormous damage to the whole supply system would have been done.

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That could happen anywhere. It could happen in Scotland. It could happen to us. When there is power to command, however, at least something can be remedied. The grid controllers told us that they had two minutes and 40 seconds to do something. They were able to save the system because they had complete authority. The Americans did not and could not, yet the Secretary of State for Energy told us earlier this afternoon that we should understand that we are going on the American system. Things might look greener on the other side of the Atlantic, but they have not been so stable when it comes to the matter of the secure provision of electricity.

I do not want to take up time, but the technical case is devastating. The Barnwood engineers say:

> "Both these factors can make very sudden destabilising impacts on what is in any case an inherently unstable system handling very large power flows. The actual power being handled in this system can be as high as 48GW which, in old fashioned terms, is equivalent to 64,000,000 horse power.
>
> I make this illustration to show how utterly ludicrous are the comparisons which politicians, consumer bodies and the media perpetually make with British Gas and British Telecom, the first being pretty well a simple distributive system somewhat akin to the electrical area distribution boards, and the second being somewhat similar in terms of network and also lacking the overpowering dynamic interaction between electricity generation and high voltage transmission which requires constant control and the optimum utilisation of very large power inputs obtained by conversion of fuel.
>
> The CEGB Generation Development and Construction Division as formulated at present provides a comprehensive centre of architect-engineering excellence of world repute containing the whole range of disciplines required for the planning, development and construction of modern high efficiency power stations, both large and small. All the basic skills exist for the diagnosis and solution of any specialist problems that may arise in operation."

Are these facilities to be available under the new system without haggling? Time is of the essence. We have not been persuaded because we have not been told. The engineers continue:

> "This Division has evolved very successfully and has established an excellent record in the construction of major plant within estimated timescale and budget."

The division is to be broken up.

> "If this Division were to be broken up no small privatised body could support its equivalent."

Do Energy Ministers disagree with the engineers about that? If so, they had better say so.

> "An inefficient regime in which consulting engineers taking large fees and having no follow-up responsibility for the success and efficiency of plant, or for its engineering support in operation, would ensue. This is not speculation—it is the reason for the evolution of this Division."

Nor is it speculation. We are talking about the break-up of unique facilities which have been available to the SSEB, as to the Highland board and the CEGB.

> "Salient points to pick out from a very large mass of comment and detail are:
>
> The Secretary of State's inference".

The right hon. Member for Hertsmere (Mr. Parkinson) made the inference in answer to a question asked on 28 March by my hon. Friend the Member for Motherwell, North (Dr. Reid). We were told in *The Times*:

> "Dr. Reid would find that Mr. Hadley no longer maintained that it would cost £1 billion. The figure, which was impossible to understand, had been based on the assumption that the Government would propose the creation of five vertically integrated power boards. They had not.
>
> It was now agreed between the CEGB and his department's technical experts that, though there might be a

[Mr. Dalyell]

cost from the proposals, that cost could be substantially more than matched by the savings which would result. Dr. Reid's information was grossly out of date."

[Interruption.] The engineers side with my hon. Friend, not with the Minister.

The engineers say that the Secretary of State's inference

"is effectively denied in correspondence between the CEGB and Mr. John Lyons (General Secretary of the Electrical Power Engineers Association)."

They also believe that:

"it is essential to restore the basic command structure linking generation and high voltage transmission to preserve the core of the present system. This means retaining the present generation side intact and allotting a management role in the transmission company to this major generating company. Competition from additional private sources would not be precluded but could be permitted by suitable regulation of the grid management to allow completely open competitive opportunity. To be viable these additional sources would, of course, have to be genuinely competitive with the present system."

The rub is, what about the additional sources? We have not been told much about them.

The Barnwood engineers believe that

"it is psychologically highly damaging to remove the obligation to supply from the generating side and that this must be reversed."

They point out in previous letters that

"the governing ethos of the CEGB is public service and that a vital element of motivation will be lost if obligation to supply is removed."

The Government say that there will be an obligation to supply, but how will that be carried out? We have not been told how such an obligation will operate. It is one thing to say that there must be an obligation, but it is another to say how it will be operated.

The engineers say:

"Merit order and commitment is to be replaced by a soulless regime of contracts and market forces—this is a prime blunder having regard to the traditions of this industry and must be unsound."

That is the view not of the politicians, but of the engineers who have to operate the system. They say:

"A question relating to the proposed separately privatised transmission grid yet to be answered is how this will command the generators to generate and at what rate so as to protect the integrity of the power system under fault conditions? There is a clash of interest under circumstances when it may not be profitable or prudent for a generator to respond. For example to cut short a financially optimised programme of maintenance and to restrict the rate of loading of plant so as not to shorten the technical/financial life of the plant. Since the quantification of such matters cannot be predetermined, how would this be covered in a financially watertight contract between distributors and generators? And where does competition enter into this equation?"

We have seen no specimen contracts between distributors and generators. I questioned the engineers and others in the industry about that, and I doubt whether any watertight contract could be drawn up to take care of emergency faults because time would not allow for the making of arrangements. For proof of that we have only to ask the Americans about the mess up under their system.

The Barnwood engineers say:

"Government proposals contain nothing to replace the present CEGB statutory obligations on care of the environment. Also if privatisation goes ahead on the present basis there would no longer be an organisation with an overall view of needs or any requirement to consider the national good."

My friends in the SSEB make exactly the same point—not simply to protect their jobs or positions, but because they are serious engineers who have to undertake the job.

The engineers state:

"The Government's vision appears to be tied to the assumption that the balance of usage of primary energy sources will remain much as it is now. By its proposals it is damaging greatly the ability of the generating industry to respond to future changes in this balance—splitting generation will weaken development resource and dividends will cream off development cash."

Given that we are discussing borrowing, what is the Government's view on the creaming off of development cash? Where will development cash come from? What will that do to electricity prices? The industry can borrow from the merchant bankers, but at some price and at some interest rates. We are entitled to ask what effect there will be on electricity prices.

Finally, the Barnwood engineers say that they

"believe that the only economically and technically sound privatisation option is to privatise the CEGB basically intact with generating units operated in genuine cost merit order and a direct and immediate command, and existing economy of scale and resource for development retained. There are not enough corners to be cut off by competition as the Government visualise it to feed shareholders dividends and at the same time provide adequate development resource, without raising prices. The victim of this and of the technically unnatural and clumsy operational system proposed will be the consumer—twice over. In other words, the unnatural and costly distortions to be imposed on the present highly efficient and effective system are altogether too great to be acceptable. This is a matter of immense national importance which should come before silly party politics or the short term preservation of ministerial reputations."

I believe that that is what this is all about. The SSEB and the CEGB face break-up simply because of political dogma, and not because of any sensible, technical consideration.

My colleagues have been patient with me this afternoon. I know better than to hope for a considered and detailed reply from the Minister. However, I shall plague him, the Scottish Office and the Department of Energy with letters requesting answers, one by one, to the engineers' points. If the Government cannot persuade the engineers, there is a danger of embarking on a considerable folly to the detriment of Scottish consumers, the SSEB and the CESB. I thank the House for its patience.

Mr. Brian Wilson (Cunninghame, North): My hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) made an interesting and erudite speech. It is a pity that there has been such a small turn-out of the Scottish political minorities to learn from it. The entire spectrum of these minorities—apart from the Minister—is represented by the hon. Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker). If ever erudition was wasted, it must be when addressing the hon. Gentleman.

The parliamentary ranks of the Scottish National party have found something better to do today than to discuss the Scottish electricity industry. In future they could be known as the three lost live wires——

Mr. Maxton: Three burnt-out fuses.

Mr. Wilson: That is not a bad description, either. They are probably in Kensington campaigning for Madame Cyn.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow said, the Bill allows us to discuss the privatisation of the industry.

I have a particular interest in this matter, as my constituency includes Hunterston nuclear power station, which is the largest employer in it. In the months past—and no doubt it will happen in the months ahead—a lot of play has been made of what was in the Conservative party manifesto and therefore what people allegedly voted for last June. Let me make it absolutely clear that there was nothing in that manifesto that told the people who work at Hunterston or any other nuclear power station, or those who live near those power stations and who, therefore, have a legitimate interest in these matters, that they were to be privatised.

5.30 pm

On 8 May 1987, in the *Largs and Millport Weekly News,* the Conservative candidate, hitherto the Conservative Member of Parliament for Cunninghame, North, Mr. John Corrie, announced:

> "I am not happy about the privatisation of nuclear power stations. There has been a lot of talk in London over the past few weeks as to the sort of industry a new Conservative Government might privatise, but looking at the American examples, I really feel that safety aspects have to be kept up with nuclear power.
>
> I am not convinced that it would be a wise move to privatise."

Mr. Corrie informed the readership of the paper that he had made his views quite clear to his bosses and he assured readers—hence my constituents—that no commitment had been made or given on the privatisation of nuclear power stations.

The evidence proves that there was no such commitment in the Conservative party manifesto and that it was something subsequently invented and done by stealth for the reasons that my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow discussed in some detail, namely, political dogma and—I was about to say the virility of Ministers, but, given the Minister concerned, it would be better not to go down that avenue.

Mr. Bill Walker: The hon. Gentleman made some reference to me in his introductory remarks. If he expects debate in this Chamber, he must expect people to listen to what he has to say. I have been attempting to listen to him, as I listened to the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell), and that is what the Chamber is all about.

Will the hon. Gentleman accept from me that those of us who were elected in Scotland on the Conservative manifesto left no one in any doubt that we would privatise the electricity generating industry? Those of us who were elected made that quite clear, but I cannot speak for those who were not elected.

Mr. Wilson: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for being here and listening. He has set a splendid example for his colleagues and it is a pity that so few have followed it. One wonders where the other eight are. I find it a remarkable concept that those who told the people of Scotland that the Government were going to privatise nuclear power were elected, and that those who took the precaution of telling the electorate that the Government were not going to privatise nuclear power were defeated. I believe that any rational observer will form his own judgment about that.

Mr. Walker: The hon. Gentleman has made my point for me.

Mr. Wilson: I sense that there are disputes within the ranks of the Scottish Conservative party, but we will not go into that.

Nobody who works at Hunterston or lives in that area was told that the nuclear power stations were to be privatised. On the contrary, the Conservative candidate for the area went out of his way to give the impression that privatisation had not been decided upon and that it was still a matter for debate. On this occasion I agree with my predecessor's strictures.

In support of that argument, the 1986 report of the European Parliament Committee on Energy Research and Technology stated:

> "alongside safety in design there must be operational safety. The public inspection authorities monitor operators' compliance with the laws and regulations. However, experience has shown . . . that while the conduct of operators may be formally correct, it may still show considerable deficiencies. There is always the risk that the pursuit of 'cost efficiency' and the need to 'balance the books', so typical of the private sector, may lead to deficiencies in safety or the consequences of accidents being underestimated or even 'covered up' . . . The attitude of management in nuclear installations must be completely different. In this area nothing must be left to improvisation, approximation or profit considerations. The government, which is responsible for ensuring public safety, can only fulfil this responsibility properly if in addition to exercising its 'supervisory' role in the operation of installations, it is also able, via the agency of firms appointed for the purpose, to play a direct part in the running of the installations themselves".

It is worth placing that on the record, because it is the case against the Government's proposals. If the assets of the telecommunications industry, shipbuilding or other industrial sectors are given away the result might be a deterioration in services and perhaps a loss of jobs, but the result would be as nothing compared with the consequences if something went wrong with nuclear power stations. They will be handed away by this Government to people whose prime motivation is profit. That is the strongest argument against the privatisation of nuclear power stations.

Anyone who has visited Hunterston or any other nuclear power station cannot fail to have been impressed by the commitment and investment to safety. I have visited Hunsterston and seen the simulator in the control room, which cost millions of pounds to install. Can anyone imagine that P and O Nuclear Power Station Ltd. would make a similar investment and effort?

Mr. Bill Walker *rose*——

Mr. Wilson: I see that the hon. Member for Tayside, North is seeking to make up for those who are missing, so I shall give way to him.

Mr. Walker: Is the hon. Gentleman suggesting that the aviation industry does not invest in simulators and that the private sector of the aviation industry is unsafe? If so, does he feel unsafe flying up to and down from Scotland every week? What nonsense.

Mr. Wilson: There are some hair-raising stories about aspects of the transport industry. Frankly, if something goes wrong in that industry, where generally standards are extremely high—I cast no aspersions—we are talking about the loss of perhaps a few hundred lives. If something goes wrong in a nuclear power station, a much higher price has to be paid. Why should we take such a risk? Are Scottish people marching in the streets and saying that they are unhappy about the way in which the SSEB runs

[Mr. Wilson]

its affairs? Are they saying that they want private enterprise to take over the nuclear power stations? That is an absurdity. There are a handful of zealots in the House, representing a minority of zealots in Scotland, who want to give away nuclear power stations to the private sector. In the case of the SSEB it would mean literally giving away those power stations, because that is the only way in which the Government will get anyone to take them off their hands, giving the high capital investment programme in which that board has engaged.

Where does the demand come from? Who does the Minister represent when he puts forward such a proposition? He does not represent the people who work at Hunterston and have given excellent service to that industry and to the wider community. He certainly does not represent the Scottish people, whose acquiescence to nuclear power stations is guaranteed only by the utmost confidence that they enjoy in the operation of the installations. There is no demand except from the political motivators of the scheme and the greedy people who will yet again get their hands on another piece of public property.

Where will the buyers come from? They will not come in significant numbers from Scotland. They will not come from the financial institutions with anything like the relish that those buyers will feel for the lucrative industry of the south-east. Undoubtedly some buyers will come from overseas and within a few years the Scottish power industry, presently a credit to our country, will be turned into a conglomerate owned by a wide range of people whose last commitment will be the good of the Scottish community, whose guiding motive will be profit and who are likely to cut corners in pursuit of that.

Mr. Dalyell: The guiding motive may be profit, but it is the considered opinion of the board member for engineering that disintegration would add £1,000 million a year to the cost to the consumer. If the Government disagree with that, they had better tell the board members that they are wrong.

Mr. Wilson: My hon. Friend is right. There is no doubt that the price that the people of Scotland will pay for this nonsense is higher tariffs. I am sure that some of my colleagues will pursue that argument. My plea is for the people who work at Hunterston and for those who live in the area who want continuity and security, but who are having this nonsense foisted on them. For once in their misbegotten existence, why cannot the Government leave well alone?

Mrs. Maria Fyfe (Glasgow, Maryhill): The debate has been proceeding for about one and a half hours and still we await the arrival of the three Scottish live wires. Other notable absentees from the Chamber are the English Tories, who profess such great interest in Scottish affairs and who turn up assiduously for Scottish Question Time. I note that the Scottish Liberals are absent, too, but my remarks are addessed to the English Tories, who attend Scottish Question Time deliberately to waste time, and who criticise Scottish Members for not speaking with a "bool in their mooths" so that they can understand them. Perhaps they have given up trying to understand expressions such as those used earlier by my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar), who talked about something being "gey dreich". Perhaps they have all gone to Kensington to warn the dry-as-dust Tory candidate that he is in danger of Left-wing extremism and had better cool it a bit.

What I know about the technicalities of the electricity industry could be written on the back of a three-pin plug, so I shall not attempt to come anywhere near the speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell), but I shall mention some anxieties that are shared by the women of Scotland, who generally take the responsibility for paying the household electricity bills.

The Minister has made no effort today or previously to reassure householders. When British Telecom was privatised, prices increased, the service became worse and there were longer waits for installation. The Minister was good enough to admit that people are generally satisfied with the SSEB and that they take for granted the fact that its service is excellent. The regular supply of electricity is so taken for granted that people do not even think about it, but a transfer to private hands may create circumstances in which we could not expect such a regular supply. All sorts of things break down in this life, but not normally our electricity supply, and, as some hon. Members have said, it has caused great anxiety in New York and other parts of the world when that has happened.

The Minister has not explained how privatisation will improve the lot of the consumer. We asked how it would affect prices. This afternoon the Minister said that there had been a 9 per cent. reduction in prices and that prices in Scotland were lower than those in England and Wales, but he made no commitment to ensure that prices will remain reasonable under privatisation. He said nothing about a better service, nor did he guarantee even the same level of service.

The Minister was asked about safeguarding the position of those who are unable to pay their bills. As we all know from our surgeries, many people are worried about their electricity being cut off and fear having to go through the winter unable to cook for their families. The boards work to guidelines, and as elected Members we can write to the boards and usually work out a satisfactory method of payment. All that the Minister has said in response to those anxieties is that he sees no reason why they should depart from the present code. We have heard those weasel words before. Those answers are no guarantee that there will be no departure from the present standards. The Government have seen fit to let old people die in the winter because of an inability to pay their bills, so what reason do we have to suppose that anything will be better under privatisation?

5.45 pm

The Minister talked about giving preference in share buying to customers. That had me puzzled, because everyone who lives in the SSEB area is a customer—unless they live in some remote village that still uses oil lamps. What the Minister meant was that the shares would be offered across the entire country. Even if ordinary people start out as share owners, we know from previous privatisations that they would not retain those shares for long. As the pressures of normal family commitments arise —to feed and clothe the children and pay the bills—they will have to sell their few shares. In whose hands will those shares end up? The answer is with the greedy pigs who simply want to gain more and more from the Government's privatisation drive. It has nothing to do with service to the public.

Mr. Dewar: My hon. Friend may also wish to consider the fact that any concessions will be granted to the householder, which will mean that shares will be available, not to everyone in the family, but to the male figure of the family and no one else. On that basis, there may be an unbalanced shareholders' list.

Mrs. Fyfe: That point is very relevant, especially to the women of Scotland, because often the husband's name is on the electricity bill as the householder, but it is the practice for the women to ensure that the bills are paid. The Government should recognise that women may miss the opportunity. I am in a quandary here because I do not want the Government to offer shares to anyone, but if they are to privatise electricity, the shares should be available to all.

However the sale is conducted, and however many ordinary householders apply for shares, the shares will not remain long in their hands. They will end up in the hands of those who are already rich—the yuppies who are striving for more wealth for themselves. The last thing on their minds will be service to the public and the maintenance of the high standards of which the electricity boards can, rightly, be proud.

Mr. Alistair Darling (Edinburgh, Central): This may be the last occasion on which Scottish Members of Parliament have a chance to discuss the privatisation of the Scottish electricity industry in isolation, because I suspect that when the paving Bill is introduced later this year it will cover the entire United Kingdom. That is a matter of regret, but it is typical of the second-rate way in which the Government treat Scotland. When the Minister replies to the many points that have been made in the debate, including the detailed points made by my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell)——

Mr. Bill Walker *rose*——

Mr. Darling: —we will hear a second rate answer, because that is all that the Government can come up with. Just look at the empty green expanses on the other side of the Chamber. Only one Conservative Back-Bench Member is here, and I shall now have to give way to him.

Mr. Walker: The hon. Gentleman should realise that one reason why we are not speaking is to give Opposition Members the chance to speak. That was done by agreement through the usual channels.

When the Labour party was last in office, with what Bill did it nationalise the shipbuilding industry—a United Kingdom Bill or a Bill that dealt with the interests of the Scottish dimension? Was it a first or a second-class Bill?

The Second Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means (Miss Betty Boothroyd): Order. I am sure that the hon. Member for Edinburgh, Central (Mr. Darling) will not stray down that road.

Mr. Darling: Indeed I shall not. It has nothing to do with what we are discussing. I shall say only that the hon. Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) could have strung all his contributions together and called them a speech, as he seems to have made one in the course of the afternoon by intervening so often.

I turn now to the important issue of debt. It is proposed that the electricity industry should be allowed to borrow up to £3 billion. Last year's accounts for the South of Scotland Electricity Board show its indebtedness to be £1·9 billion. I make that point because I want the Minister to tell us what will happen to that debt in the event of privatisation. Will it be written off, as will happen with the Rover Group? It would be monstrous and scandalous if the people of Scotland were to have their industry taken away from them and were then told that the money that they had lent it was also going to be written off. It is incumbent on the Minister to tell us what will happen to the debt. Will it be written off, or is it to be privatised along with the industry, if that is what ultimately happens?

I recognise the Minister's problem: if he passes on all the debt with the electricity industry, he will find it difficult to sell off. He realises that the electricity industry is an unattractive proposition to investors. One of the things that the Government must realise is that Scotland cannot afford to buy the electricity industry. There is not enough money in Scotland to buy it, with or without its debt, so the Minister knows that if he does not do something about writing off that debt he will find it impossible to sell the industry. That is why I predict that he will write off some of the debt and we, the taxpayers, will have to foot the bill to make the industry a more attractive proposition. The Minister should come clean about this.

When the Minister spoke at the beginning of the debate he was happy to outline some of the benefits, as he saw them, of privatisation. Then, when he was challenged by my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar), he said that the Government had not yet discussed the details and it was too early to say. The Minister cannot invite the House to endorse an increase in debt and then say that he does not have a clue about what will happen to that debt. Raising money is a serious matter, and people in the United Kingdom and Scotland are entitled to know whether the debt will be written off or whether there is to be some mechanism to ensure that we shall be repaid before those who buy the industry move in.

The more debt that the industry has, the more likely it is to be bought by institutional investors. The chances are that the control of the SSEB and the north board, far from resting in Scotland, will move to London, if not abroad. Only foreign institutions and multinational companies can afford to buy the electricity industry in Scotland. So, not only will we lose our electricity industry, but we will find control moving to London or abroad. The industry will follow the example of Britoil and BP—the chain is endless. Scottish industry and resources will be stripped out merely because Scotland does not have the resources to buy the industry itself: nor should it be asked to do so, given that it already belongs to the people of Scotland. Why should we have to buy back our own industry? Why should the Government have the cheek to offer us the opportunity to buy shares in what we already own? That is nonsense and the Minister knows it.

What happens to the debt is important. If the Minister cannot answer my questions about it, perhaps he will turn his mind to one or two other matters. Why do the SSEB and the north board need to raise even more money? Where will it go? Perhaps it will have to be set aside for decommissioning nuclear power stations, about which the Government have been very quiet. The Minister must know that a large number of nuclear power stations throughout the country—some in Scotland—will have to

[Mr. Darling]

be mothballed soon. They will have to be cloaked in concrete for hundreds of years, and monitored and watched for as long. That will cost a great deal, and would-be investors will want to know what the Government's intentions are.

I want to know whether the money that we are being invited to approve this evening will go towards decommissioning, and what is to happen to nuclear power stations in the future. Again, the Government are quiet about that. They are keen to say that we need the benefits of nuclear power, but not so keen to discuss what will happen at the dirty end of the industry—at the end of its life. Will this increased borrowing be used to convert Inverkip power station to coal-fired burning? A little bird in the industry told me that that might happen. Inverkip is handily placed for receiving imported coal. It is oil-fired now and little used, although it was warmed up during the miners' strike. I am sure that the board might want to convert it to burning foreign coal. I repeat: we have the right to be told what the money will be used for.

The other thing that happens when one borrows a lot of money is that one incurs interest charges. Will not increased indebtedness lead to increased electricity charges? We were told when Torness was built that it would mean cheaper electricity for us all, but we have yet to see that. Electricity prices have yet to fall in absolute or real terms. If one invests heavily in the nuclear industry, capital costs are greater and so are borrowing charges—one of the reasons why the SSEB is so heavily in debt. What will be the repercussions of this increased borrowing? Will electricity prices have to rise even more? They are already going up by 4 to 5 per cent. to fatten up the industry for selling off.

The Secretary of State for Energy made it clear that the English and Welsh electricity boards would be unattractive propositions because of their low rate of return. Prices have risen in Scotland purely because of privatisation. We have 50 per cent. over-capacity in electricity, yet we have to pay increased charges. The irony is that Scotland, which produces a surplus of electricity, still contains people who cannot afford to heat their homes. The spectacle of representatives of the industry arriving at old ladies' doors with sledgehammers to break down the doors and remove electricity meters persists. That is intolerable.

It worries me that the industry is to pass to the private sector, to people who put a low price on safety because it undermines their profits, to people who want to squeeze every penny that they can get out of their customers because they have a stranglehold over them and the customers have no alternative but to get their electricity from them. It worries me, too, that all these questions remain unanswered because the Minister does not know the answers to them—or does not want to tell. The House is entitled to deride what he said when he introduced the measure and I suspect that it will deride what he has to say on winding up. He does not have answers. One of the difficulties is that he is not master in his own house. What he thinks or does matters not, because the whole operation is being controlled by the Department of Energy. When the announcement is ultimately made, it will be made by the Secretary of State for Energy and there will be a supplementary press briefing by the Secretary of State for Scotland to say that he goes along with it. That is sad and it is why we have every right to be annoyed.

Towards the end of his speech the Minister started to laud the aims of privatisation—it was the usual speech churned out by the word processors in St. Andrew's house and Chester street. All the usual platitudes were uttered. The Minister said that many benefits would flow. As we always ask him this, and he never answers it, perhaps he will tell us now what competition by comparison means. When privatisation was announced it was made clear that, unlike now, when a matter can be raised with a Member of Parliament and thus in the House, there will be competition by comparison. If an Edinburgh electricity user does not like what the SSEB is doing, he can write a stiff letter to the chairman and compare the SSEB's actions with what is happening in Watford or Wick. Is that what competition by comparison means? The ordinary domestic customer, in other words, will be able to do nothing but grin and bear it. He knows that the board has a stranglehold over him. It is not realistic for him to ring up one of the other distribution boards and ask it to put a new electricity line into his house.

That contrasts with commercial users, who can opt out if they wish. If they do, that can only mean that the domestic consumer will have to pay more, as the board has an obligation to maintain supply. If its commercial users desert it because they do not like what is being offered, the domestic user will have to pay more.

6 pm

We are faced with a measure which, on the face of it, in uncontentious, but I suspect that it will present far more difficulty than the Minister might have expected. Of course, it is the precursor, the forerunner of privatisation, as is everything in the electricity industry that we discuss, but there are questions that the Minister should answer now, because the people of Scotland and of the United Kingdom have an integrated electricity supply and generation system that is the envy of the world. They have their complaints—who does not?—but now the Government are taking our electricity industry away from us and the well-off will be invited to buy it back if they can afford it, which is a novel concept of justice if ever there was one. The vast majority will find that they are the victims of people whose No. 1 aim is to extract profit. They will have no choice. One cannot choose whether to light one's house, as the Minister well knows.

Let us consider other privatisations. BT ruthlessly exploits its monopoly. It has behaved shamefully over Talkabout, where people have got into major debt. If that is anything to go by, we have reason to be concerned. Another example is P and O, where safety is not the No. 1 priority that it deserves to be. Therefore, all of us have cause to be concerned—both electricity consumers and those who live in the vicinity of nuclear power stations.

There is every reason to be worried about the Bill. As Opposition Members have said on many occasions, nobody wants it. Nobody asked for it. There are no obvious benefits. Even the Minister knows that he has run into great difficulties. It is no wonder that the Secretary of State for Energy is already looking towards the greener pastures of No. 11 or elsewhere, so that he can get out of it before the troubles cave in around him.

I hope that the Minister will tell us what is to happen to the debt. Who will control the electricity industry in the event of privatisation? What can he say to the people of Scotland, who suspect that there will be higher electricity prices and nobody to complain to because the person who will impose those higher prices and run the nuclear power stations will live, not in Edinburgh, but probably in America or the Gulf? We do not know. We know that we are about to lose our electricity industry and we shall suffer because of it. It is all the more worrying that the Minister will probably be unable to say anything about it because either he does not know or he does not care to say.

Mr. Alexander Eadie (Midlothian): I apologise to the Minister for not being present to hear the beginning of his speech, but I am involved in the debate on the next Bill and had some work to do before I could join in this debate.

The Minister will have a good idea of why I feel compelled to intervene in the debate. My hon. Friends have been advancing the argument that, as the Bill involves the expenditure of a great deal of money, we are entitled and have the responsibility to raise issues concerning not only privatisation but the future operations of the SSEB.

My hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) referred to the SSEB and British Coal dispute. It is no secret that the crisis between British Coal and the SSEB arose because of the Government's proposition to privatise the electricity supply industry. I remember the present chairman of the SSEB saying to me personally that there will always be a take from the SSEB with regard to Scottish coal. I do not think that the chairman will resent me reporting my personal conversations with him. He argued that Scottish coal was a national asset and it was everybody's responsibility to ensure that Scottish deep-mined coal was burned. Indeed, he argued that it was a strategic reserve for the people of Scotland. Therefore, the crisis between the SSEB and British Coal is born out of the proposition to privatise the electricity industry.

My hon. Friend referred to the attempt to obtain an agreement between the SSEB and British Coal to burn Scottish coal in its power stations. The Minister must be aware that today is a significant date, so his reply to the debate will be significant, because today marks the end of the three-month pause or standstill during the endeavours of the electricity board and British Coal to reach an agreement. The conduct of the Government in trying to obtain an agreement has hardly been starry. When we have asked questions, we have always been told that it is a matter for the commercial judgment of the SSEB and British Coal.

Mr. Allan Stewart (Eastwood): Hear, hear.

Mr. Eadie: I hear what the hon. Gentleman says, but on the eve of the previous debate on the privatisation of electricity, for the first time in history the Scottish Office opened on a Sunday and we were told that the Secretary of State for Scotland would make a specific announcement to the House to resolve the problem, but there was no statement but pandemonium in the House because the only thing that was said was that it was a matter for the commercial judgment of the SSEB and British Coal. We challenged that.

Some of us went to the Library to look at the terms of reference passed by Parliament for the SSEB appointments. We knew that the Secretary of State was the one who appointed those people to the board. In short, he was the master. If he wanted—he did not—he could tell the SSEB to reach agreement with British Coal. It was one of the most despicable episodes that we have seen when the Secretary of State and his Ministers denied to some extent the Act passed by Parliament, which contained the safeguards.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Millan) intervened in that debate. He said that a similar situation arose when he was Secretary of State for Scotland when there was a problem between British Coal and the SSEB and he had to intervene. He had the powers to do so, which are the same as those of the present Secretary of State. But he forgot to say that I was present at the meeting as a Minister in that Government, when we managed to resolve the problem. Some of my hon Friends have said in this debate that the Government's attitude is born of the dogma of privatisation. They do not want to help because that dogma has penetrated their brain. Whether it is beneficial to the nation is beside the point.

I said earlier that we are discussing money and that the time to reach an agreement expired today. Today I had the fourth question to the Secretary of State for Energy and I asked him what the hell was going on in Scotland because thousands of jobs were at stake, not just in coal mining but in engineering and the railways. We can calculate the knock-on effect, which would be the slaughter of the deep-mined coal industry in Scotland. What reply did I receive? In effect, the Secretary of State said that my anxieties were unfounded and that he would shortly announce that an agreement had been reached between British Coal and the SSEB. I pointed out to him the report in *The Scotsman* today that no agreement had been reached, but there was a dispute about the importation of foreign coal. It states that, because of the bad relations between the two sides, the issue may have to be decided in the courts, where previously Lord Prosser gave a decision.

Since the Secretary of State gave me that specific undertaking, I have received information that the House and I were misled. The SSEB and British Coal are not on the verge of reaching agreement and that is why I am intervening. The Minister has a responsibility, when he replies, either to say that his right hon. Friend misled the House or that his right hon. Friend is correct and he, as the Scottish Minister, expects to announce an arrangement or an agreement between the two. There should be no shilly-shallying. In some people's eyes this debate may be minor, but it is not in the eyes of the Scottish people. They are already worried about privatisation as well as the thousands of jobs which will go down the drain if an agreement is not reached. The Minister must reply specifically.

There has been some discussion about the role that nuclear power will play in a privatised electricity industry. We hear all sorts of arguments and there may even be differences of opinion. Some say that it is unwise to depend on nuclear power, whether or not that industry is privatised. Some argue that it is an unforgiving technology, and I agree. That is a fair argument in view of what happened at Chernobyl and Three Mile Island.

The other argument is whether the economics of nuclear power are what we have been led to believe. Lord Marshall is on the record as saying that they are suspect, and he is pro-nuclear and in favour of pressurised water reactors. He used to be my scientific adviser and I know that he holds a different opinion from the SSEB. There were volumes of evidence on this at the Sizewell inquiry.

[Mr. Eadie]

I do not rest my case for an examination by the House into the economics of nuclear power only on the opinion of Lord Marshall. I do not know whether the Minister has been advised of an international report on energy published by the *Financial Times*. It made some outstanding statements and disturbing declarations about competition, and the Government want competition. They think that, with competition, energy will be cheaper for consumers, although we have repeatedly shown that privatisation will mean increased electricity prices.

6.15 pm

The report states that nuclear power may well become uneconomic in the 1990s. There may be other reasons for nuclear power, but as we are discussing money the Minister must come clean about the financial aspect.

If the Minister is saying that it is in our strategic interests to develop a nuclear power programme, he must also argue that for coal, which is an indigenous resource. For many years I discussed coalburn with the chairman of the SSEB and he argued that it was in our strategic interests to have coalburn and coal mining in Scotland. What has changed? Is it the Government's dogma of privatisation? My hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) elaborated successfully on the nonsense of that unproven system. During Energy questions my hon. Friend described how the same adviser was advising foreigners on the grids as the Secretary of State, and his advice to foreigners contradicts the structural position that we shall have.

I hope that the Minister will tell the House specifically whether an agreement has been reached or is about to be reached between the SSEB and British Coal.

Mr. John Home Robertson (East Lothian): I apologise to the Minister and the Committee for not being present for his opening speech, and I assure him that no discourtesy was intended.

It would be a particular pleasure to hear from the Minister about electricity generation because he has the unique distinction of being a Scottish Conservative Member with an electricity generating facility in his constituency. He could argue that he has a mandate to privatise the Tongland hydro-electric scheme—a mandate which is singularly lacking in other localities with electricity generating facilities in Scotland. As we imagine the depleted ranks of 10 Scottish Conservative Members —that is all we can do—only the Minister has the authority to speak on behalf of electricity generating facilities operated by either of the electricity generating boards in Scotland.

My hon. Friend the Member for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Wilson) has already mentioned that the biggest single employer in his constituency is a power station— Hunterston. The same goes for my constituency of East Lothian. My hon. Friend the Member for Dunfermline, West (Mr. Douglas) and I share the distinction of representing two power stations—in my case, Torness nuclear power station and Cockenzie coal-burning power station. There is no evidence of any support in my constituency for the privatisation of either power station. On the contrary, there is much concern about Cockenzie's future under the privatised regime, given the background of generating capacity imbalance in the United Kingdom. There is also considerable concern in the neighbourhood of Torness about the undermining of safety standards, which would inevitably flow from the commercial pressures that would develop following privatisation. It is imperative that proper controls and safeguards are retained in the operation of all kinds of nuclear facilities in Scotland, but, given the problems of commercial management, there is genuine doubt about whether that will be possible.

My hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) spoke at length about considerations affecting the CEGB. The Minister will not be surprised to hear me make a passing reference to the glaring disparity between the commitment to the principle of good neighbourliness where the CEGB is constructing nuclear power stations, and what applies under the responsibility of the SSEB. I refer, of course, to the substantial budget available to the CEGB for a "good neighbours" programme in, for example, the Sizewell area, where it is spending hundreds of thousands of pounds on community facilities— supporting village halls and community centres, and even refurbishing a cinema. Nothing has been done directly by the SSEB to help to deal with the disruption caused to the local economy in the Dunbar area as a consequence of the construction of Torness.

The Minister knows all about this, because I have been in correspondence with him. I understand that meetings are taking place between East Lothian district council and the SSEB, and I hope that there may yet be some prospect of the imbalance being put right. It is intolerable that communities in England should have the benefit of support when they are disrupted by major construction projects, while their counterparts north of the border have no access to similar funding.

A number of my hon. Friends have spoken about the prospects for coal burning in Scottish power stations. This is of immense importance to my constituents who are directly employed at Cockenzie power station, and to my constituents and those of my hon. Friends who work in the pits that supply the coal to the power station. We have waited for a long time for some indication of genuine commitment on the part of the Government, who are supposed to be responsible for energy in Scotland, to intervene to ensure that Scottish coal will continue to be burnt in Scottish power stations. At last, after all these months, we see some stirrings in new St. Andrew's house. The report in *The Scotsman* today that was quoted by my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) suggested that the Frankenstein's monster of the Secretary of State for Scotland was moving at last, and might say or do something to ensure that the industry that is supposed to be his responsibility would continue to burn Scottish coal.

My hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow referred to the possibility of a catastrophe in the event of a shortfall in electricity generation capacity at times of peak need. I suppose that there is not much risk of that happening in Scotland, technically at least, because the Government have managed to manoeuvre themselves into a position in which there is about double the generating capacity of the maximum likely demand for electricity in Scotland at any one time. We have all that spare generating capacity, with, sadly, no prospect in our depressed economy of encouraging more consumption. The only market is south of the border.

It seems to be possible to construct all these power stations, with the ability to generate electricity, but we are still waiting for the interconnect facility that will make it possible to transmit the electricity down the wire to the potential market south of the border. We have had some fairly positive responses from the Secretary of State for Energy, but we are still waiting for some similar indications from the Scottish Office. Of course, a major expansion of the interconnect between Scotland and England would take a long time. We all know from bitter experience the difficulties that can arise—for instance, planning consent—over the construction of new overhead pylon routes. What line are the Government taking?

Mr. Dalyell: May I intervene, for the sake of accuracy? After all, we have to be extremely accurate about these matters. I was referring to a potential voltage collapse specifically on 20 May 1986, when lightning struck the sub-station at Sundon and resulted in what could have been chaos had the CEGB not had complete control of the grid.

Mr. Home Robertson: I understand very well what my hon. Friend was talking about. The point that I am trying to highlight is the lack of an adequate interconnect between the two systems. If advantage is to be taken of generating capacity in Scotland by our neighbours south of the border, it can be done only if there is sufficient capacity in the transmission grid to enable the electricity to be used.

We are dealing with a small Bill that provides for an increase in the borrowing of the SSEB and the hydro board. I fear that unless we are told that it is the Government's policy to continue to burn Scottish coal in the existing Scottish coal-burning power stations, this could represent a double cost. Borrowing money to pay for imported coal, or facilities for handling it, will then have to be paid for by Scottish electricity consumers. It will have to be paid for all over again as a consequence of losses in employment and the depression of the economy, because we shall not be burning our own coal. It is imperative that the Government assure us about their willingness to intervene directly to ensure that Scottish coal-burning power stations will continue to do the job for which they were originally constructed—to burn Scottish coal and to provide electricity for Scottish consumers.

Finally, I want to make a detailed point about the privatisation proposals that the Government keep going on about, which, as they know, are universally opposed in Scotland. I keep reading about rumours of changes in the boundary between the hydro board and the SSEB to make it easier to privatise two separate entities. It has even been mooted that the Cockenzie power station might be transferred to the hydro board, which serves the north of Scotland. That is causing some surprise and uncertainty among my constituents who work at Cockenzie. We have nothing against the hyro board, but this is the first time that I have heard it suggested that East Lothian could have anything to do with the highlands and islands.

As the Bill must clearly be seen in the context of the Government's privatisation proposals, perhaps the Minister could take this opportunity to clarify the present doubt about the way in which the division between the hydro board and the SSEB may be adjusted in accordance with the Government's plans.

Mr. Gavin Strang (Edinburgh, East): Like my hon. Friend the Member for Midlothian (Mr. Eadie), I had an oral question answered by the Secretary of State for Energy on the urgent and vital subject of the future of the Scottish coalfield. That is what is at stake in the current negotiations between the South of Scotland Electricity Board and British Coal.

The Secretary of State made a statement today which was not discouraging as regards the long-term future of the Scottish coal industry, and when my hon. Friend the shadow Secretary of State for Scotland led a deputation to meet him some months ago he was by no means dismissive of the case for a deep-mining industry in Scotland. When the Secretary of State referred to an imminent agreement, my hon. Friend said that his information was that no such agreement was imminent. That apparent contradiction can be resolved in the following way.

6.30 pm

The coal industry in Scotland needs a long-term agreement. Decisions about investment in the industry are taken not one year or even two or three years ahead, but in some instances five to 10 years ahead. Pits cannot be sunk overnight and major decisions cannot be based on short-term considerations. It is clear that the agreement to be announced between British Coal and the SSEB will not be a 12-year agreement, although that is what is needed. It will not even be a four-year agreement. I suspect that it will be a deal taking us no further than the end of the current year and that the Secretary of State's reference to volume and price related merely to the current year. That is not an agreement. It is simply an interim arrangement to postpone the ultimate decision.

Incidentally, the Secretary of State's reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Midlothian was uncalled for and in no way justified by what my hon. Friend had said. The Secretary of State did not actually refer to flexible working, but that is what he meant when he said that Scottish miners needed to concede even more than they had in relation to the operation of machinery at maximum capacity. My hon. Friend the Member for Kirkcaldy (Dr. Moonie) will confirm that that is certainly a factor in the discussions about the future of the Francis colliery. The arguments about flexible working are not nearly so glib or straightforward as is suggested in the quality press, let alone the tabloids. Whatever the arguments for and against, anyone who knows the situation is aware that the Scottish area and its NUM leadership are ahead of most other areas, if "ahead" is the correct expression, in terms of developments in that direction. It was therefore unfortunate that the Secretary of State sought to raise that issue today, albeit only in passing.

Mr. Eadie: My hon. Friend mentioned the tabloids. The astonishing fact is that in Scotland not only the quality papers but the tabloids support the need for a deep-mined coal industry in Scotland. That is highly significant in the context of these discussions.

Mr. Strang: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. I do not wish to make too much of this, but I was surprised at that throw-away reference in the Secretary of State's reply to my hon. Friend today.

The real issue is what happens in the coming days, because that is when the decision will be taken in relation to the future of the industry. It may well be unprecedented for the Secretary of State for Scotland to be meeting the

[Mr. Strang]

chairman of British Coal, as the Secretary of State for Energy confirmed today. We understand that the meeting is about privatisation, although the press briefing suggested that it was a routine meeting. The crunch issue is what is to happen to Scotland's coal industry.

Following the exchanges today, I wrote to the Prime Minister reminding her of her letter to me in relation to a question that I put to her about Lord Prosser's judgment. We felt that the Prime Minister had made a statement when the whole issue was sub judice.

Lord Prosser made it absolutely clear that it would be a catastrophe for the Scottish coal industry if imported coal were burnt at Longannet and Cockenzie and that

> "it would be premature at least to embark now on a course with such a potential for disaster for the Scottish coal industry."

That is why it is monstrous for the SSEB—without, one hopes, the support of the Secretary of State for Scotland—to be trying to force British Coal to burn imported coal at Cockenzie and Longannet this year. That is the main reason why an agreement has not been reached. I was glad to hear the Secretary of State for Energy say today that the Secretary of State for Scotland would be putting the Government's position—in other words, that he would not just be putting his own position or that of the Scottish Tories, which is to write off the whole industry so as to help sell off the SSEB.

I hope that that means that the Secretary of State for Scotland will not have a mandate to browbeat British Coal tomorrow into conceding on that fundamental issue—the burning of imported coal at Cockenzie and Longannet—which would make a complete mockery of the proceedings of the Court of Session. I must tell the Minister that we are frankly suspicious of his right hon. and learned Friend's intentions. In discussions with Scottish Office Ministers and Ministers from the Department of Energy, Labour Members gained the impression that the latter were more committed to the Scottish coal industry than was the Secretary of State for Scotland. It is easy to understand why that is so. The Secretary of State for Scotland seems to have got it into his head that the SSEB must be given a completely free hand to facilitate the sale of the electricity industry to the private sector.

That, however, is a minor issue in the context of the real problem of privatisation of the SSEB. As the Minister knows, the real problem is the huge proportion of electricity to be generated, especially in the future, by nuclear power. Private investors do not like nuclear power. They are unhappy about the risk of what could befall them if something went wrong and about the unquantified costs of decommissioning and getting rid of installations when they reach the end of their useful life. Set against that, the idea that the electricity industry needs to have the whole future of the coal industry in its hands is entirely misjudged.

The fundamental issue is whether the Government accept any responsibility for the Scottish economy. Successive Governments have invested hundreds of millions of pounds in the Scottish coal industry. I was told in a parliamentary answer today that the present Government have invested £125 million in the past five years. It would be utter nonsense for all that investment to be written off, but that is what is at stake in the medium to long term. It is not just the reopening of the Francis, which we all hope will take place, but the possible elimination of the entire Scottish mining industry.

It is nonsense to consider jeopardising our balance of payments for a temporary short-term price gain. We cannot run an ever greater deficit without some recognition of the importance of investing in our own industries. We are concerned, above all, not just about miners' jobs but about the many thousands of jobs in Scotland which depend on the coal industry. That is why I hope that the Minister of State and Secretary of State will not be persuaded, in the attempt to facilitate privatisation of the SSEB, to allow short-term considerations to justify browbeating British Coal into accepting a deal which can only mean the beginning of the end for deep mining in Scotland.

Mr. Maxton: This has been an interesting debate, ranging across the issues of privatisation of the coal and electricity supply industries in Scotland. I congratulate the hon. Members for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart) and for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) who, separately or together, have attended all the debates. I am not sure whether they have been deliberately spelling each other so that they can go for cups of coffee or tea, but I give them their due.

Mr. Dewar: They have not spoken.

Mr. Maxton: In part, that is true. They are loyal to their Front Bench. One has been a Minister and has no intention of ever being a Minister again and the other will never be a Minister, so their loyalty is strong. Their interest in the electricity supply industry is much stronger than that of the Social and Liberal Democrats or the Scottish National party, whose representatives have failed to be here throughout the debate.

It is astonishing that the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. Salmond) has not bothered to come here. He makes many noises around Scotland about what the SNP will do, is a member of the Select Committee on Energy and just this morning had a report in *The Scotsman* about nuclear waste dumping in Scotland—a vital matter in relation to the supply industry. Recently I read that he was the man that we most loved to hate, but I can have no relationship with him at all. He is not here often enough for me to have a relationship with him, whether one of love or of hate. He is never in the House to contribute.

The Minister said that the Bill had nothing to do with privatisation. Although he made some general remarks about the future of privatisation in Scotland, he was not prepared to give any details because he believed that to be irrelevant. It is worth looking at the financial and manpower effects of the Bill as described in the explanatory and financial memorandum. The Bill increases the borrowing powers of the Scottish electricity boards by some £300 million—not £3 billion, because most of the money has already been borrowed. The explanatory and financial memorandum says:

> "The Boards may borrow either from the Secretary of State (who in turn borrows from the National Loans Fund) or from other sources. If they borrow from other sources, the Treasury may guarantee the borrowing."

I notice that the word is "may" and not "must". The explanatory memorandum continues:

> "Should the Boards use their increased borrowing power to borrow from the Secretary of State, advances from the National Loans Fund would be increased accordingly. Should they borrow elsewhere with a Treasury guarantee, there would be a corresponding increase in the contingent

> **liabilities on the Consolidated Fund . . . Any payments under the Treasury guarantees from the Consolidated Fund must be repaid by the Boards to the Fund."**

What will happen after the Bill is passed and if the boards seek that extra money? As there will be no financial implications for the Government, the boards will be encouraged to borrow from other sources rather than from the Secretary of State.

If I were the general manager of the Royal Bank of Scotland, Clydesdale bank or some other financial institution and were approached by the SSEB for a loan, I should want to know the board's future structure. I should want to know first whether the Treasury's guarantees under the Bill would continue once the company were privatised. Before I lent one penny to the new board, I should want to know whether the money that the SSEB was borrowing for its capital structure would remain in that board's hands or whether it would go to the North of Scotland Hydro-Electric Board.

What will happen if there is a split and a redrawing of the boundaries between the two boards? We have been given no details. We do not know which power station will go where—which will go to the NSHEB and which will remain with the SSEB. If I were lending money to either board, I should want to know the future boundaries. The boundaries would make a difference to whether the boards had the ability to repay a loan and pay the interest on it.

6.45 pm

Will the outstanding debt of both boards be written off by the Government when they are privatised? If that happens, the Bill is of direct relevance to the structure of the privatised industry. If I were lending money, I should want to know what would happen to any money used on nuclear power developments. We have no details of the new structure and do not know what control the new boards will have. We know that the new structure is to be different and that the nuclear power stations will be owned jointly. If I were lending money, I should want to know what will happen to the debt.

The Bill is of direct relevance to the concept of privatisation. Members of Parliament may be responsible for lending money to the boards, so we have a right to know the future structure of the privatised industry before the Bill becomes law. We do not want glib references by the Minister. We want to know now.

We must return to the issue of foreign control. My hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) said that the hon. Members for Tayside, North and for Eastwood had not spoken but, to be fair to the hon. Member for Tayside, North, he intervened two, three or four times—I am not sure how often because the hon. Gentleman seems to intervene more often than he does in reality—and some of his comments were important and relevant to the debate. He said that this afternoon the Secretary of State for Energy gave guarantees on foreign control of the electricity boards. The Secretary of State for Energy can given no such guarantees because he is not responsible for the two Scottish boards. They are the responsibility of the Secretary of State for Scotland and the Minister of State. I hope that the Minister will give us that same guarantee—that there will be no foreign control of the two Scottish electricity boards. Many Opposition Members would wish to interpret the right hon. Gentleman's comments slightly differently from the way in which Conservative Members would interpret them——

Mr. Bill Walker: The hon. Gentleman is going to be racist.

Mr. Maxton: I am not. Most Opposition Members and the people of Scotland believe that foreign control would include England as well as Scotland—*[Interruption.]* Conservative Members may mock, but we do no want the electricity supply industry in Scotland eventually to be owned by the CEGB. That is not beyond the realms of possibility. It would make nonsense of the Government's plan. I hope that the Minister will give us guarantees about foreign control and about the in-built independence of the Scottish boards from control by any of the English boards. That is vital.

Mr. Eadie: We have had numerous debates on Bills that deal with ports, such as the one we are to start at 7 o'clock. Speeches have been made during those debates about the South African stake in the electricity supply industry. There is nothing in the replies that we have had to persuade us that a delegation or a deputation from South Africa did not come to this country, and was encouraged to think about——

The Second Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means: Order. That has no relevance to the clause under debate.

Mr. Maxton: I accept what you say, Miss Boothroyd, although my hon. Friend the Member for Midlothian (Mr. Eadie) is making an important point. The clause is about borrowing £300 million. If I wanted to lend the boards money, I would want to know whether, built into this future structure, there was the ability to ensure that foreign control could not be brought in. Alternatively, I might want to know that it was to be brought in. I would simply want to know one way or the other whether a privatised company could be foreign controlled. If I did not know that and there was, for example, a large South African shareholding in the boards and, at a future date, the South African Government changed——

The Second Deputy Chairman: Order. I have already given a ruling on this. I ask the hon. Gentleman to refer to the clause under debate.

Mr. Maxton: I take your point, Miss Boothroyd.

The Second Deputy Chairman: I hope so, and I hope that the hon. Gentleman will proceed with debating the clause.

Mr. Maxton: I will do that, although I hope that the Minister will take the opportunity, when talking about the lending of money, to give us some idea whether foreign control would be allowed, and, if so, how.

I hope also that the Minister will explain how there will be competition in the provision of domestic electricity in Scotland. How am I, as a user of electricity in Hamilton, to be able to say to my electricity board, "Supply me with cheaper electricity or I will go to another board"? That will not happen. There cannot be competition in those circumstances.

I hope that the Minister will use his best offices as a Minister of State, along with the Secretary of State whom we keep hearing is a powerful member of the Cabinet who presses the interests of Scotland, to ensure that we have a separate Bill. The Minister must answer the questions about the coal industry that have been asked by my hon. Friends. He is responsible for the SSEB. It is not

[Mr. Maxton]

privatised, and the House has not passed a Bill giving it any legal status. Therefore, the Minister is also responsible for the industry in Scotland, and in particular the coal industry, in its broadest sense. He has a responsibility to see that the electricity boards and British Coal are brought together to ensure the future of the British coal industry. If he does not, it will be a major indictment of him, as the Minister in charge of industry, and of the Government, who have already been rejected by the people of Scotland. The few remaining Tory Members who represent Scottish constituencies will lose in the next general election if the Government are the architects of the destruction of the coal industry in Scotland.

Mr. Lang: The hon. Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson), in his contribution to this interesting rolling debate, referred to the fact that I have in my constituency an electricity generating scheme in the form of a hydro-electric scheme. A number of miners also live in my constituency and there is an active opencast mine as well. In responding to the debate, I must view the matter from a wider base, and in the context of the national interest. We have covered a number of topics in the debate and I shall try to reply to as many points as I can.

The hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) asked me about the purpose of the extra borrowing powers sought under the Bill, and mentioned in particular the development of nuclear power. Torness features largely in the borrowings of the SSEB, with an overall estimated cost of £1·8 billion. That venture was embarked on by the previous Labour Government and it is approaching fruition after a decade of successful construction. There are also other updating and improving activities, examples of which I gave the Committee in my opening remarks, to improve the transmission and distribution system within Scotland. The boards also have temporary borrowing needs, at the moment in the region of £140 million.

As to future needs, while we anticpate that borrowings will peak at around £2,760 million later this year, and thereafter will start to decline, future investments of substance may be contemplated. The hon. Member for East Lothian mentioned the interconnector, which at the moment has a capacity of 850 MW, equivalent to over 3 million tonnes of coalburn. There is considerable scope for improving the export of electricity south of the border if we can generate it competitively and strenghten the interconnector. We are keen to make progress in this sector, and it is an example of borrowings that may be required by the boards.

We have already debated the question of separate legislation. I repeat that there is much north and south of the border that is common, such as safety regulations, conditions of service, consent procedure and so on. When electricity was nationalised in 1947, the Labour Government thought that one Bill was sufficient to nationalise the electricity board for the whole country. We shall take a view on this matter and announce our proposals in due course.

The hon. Member for Garscadden asked me whether the views of the chairmen had been sought. We are interested in the views of the chairmen of both boards on the structure of the industry and the contents of the Bill, but the question whether there will be one or two Bills is primarily a matter for the Government.

The hon. Members for Garscadden, for Edinburgh, Central (Mr. Darling), who told me that he would not be able to stay for the remainder of the debate, and for Glasgow, Cathcart (Mr. Maxton) asked about how the debt will be dealt with. The hon. Member for Garscadden further asked about the apportionment of debt between the south and north boards, but that is not a relevant consideration because each board has its own package of debt. The different sets of accounts for each board shows the debts clearly.

Mr. Maxton: There are to be some changes in the boundaries between the two boards which might mean a difference in assets on which there are debts outstanding. Does that not mean that there will be some changes in the present apportionment of debt? For example, if there is something outstanding on a power station, will the other board have to take it on?

Mr. Lang: That is a fair point. We made it clear in the White Paper that we would consider the possibility of the reallocation of assets and consumers. In that context, the structure of the companies, post-legislation, would come into the reckoning also. That matter is being investigated. It may be that the amount of reallocation that will be necessary will be limited. There may be other ways to handle such matters.

Mr. Dewar: The Minister is giving the impression that debt would accrue to the new privatised companies that replace the new boards. I had understood that a large portion of the debt was in connection with the nuclear capacity, so presumably that will accrue to the joint holding company. This is rather more complicated than the Minister seems to be suggesting, and there is also the question of the write-off effect and whether that has been ruled out.

Mr. Lang: I will come to the write-off later. If there were to be restructuring of the kind that the hon. Gentleman suggests, that would have to take account of matters other than just the generation of electricity, the boundaries of the boards and the consumers.

The hon. Member for Edinburgh, Central asked whether the debts of the electricity boards could be compared with those of the Rover Group. It is fair to point out that we are talking about debt entered into by two successful commercial ventures. Two thirds of the net current cost assets have been financed from internal resources. These are profitable companies. Currently, the north board is a net repayer of debt. As I have said, we anticipate that the combined debt of the two companies will peak fairly soon and start to decline. The south board's debt is being fully serviced and is being repaid or rolled over on a commercial basis. Indeed, 58 per cent. of the south board's debt has been incurred from overseas lenders on commercial terms.

The question of writing off debt is not as important as Opposition Members seem to think.

It being Seven o'clock, and there being private business set down by direction of THE CHAIRMAN OF WAYS AND MEANS *under Standing Order No. 16 (Time for taking private business), further proceeding stood postponed.*

North Killingholme Cargo Terminal Bill

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on Question —[22 June]—That the Bill be now read a Second time.

Question again proposed.

7 pm

Mr. Kevin Barron (Rother Valley): I mentioned the question of coal movement in my constituency when, on the previous occasion, my hon. Friend the Member for Stretford (Mr. Lloyd) was talking about what is likely to happen in the North Killingholme area if coal is imported through the proposed port. In the villages of Dinnington and Thurcroft there has been intense movement of coal by lorries and, as a result, there has been a procession of people to my surgery and to local authority representatives' surgeries to try to get that stopped.

This coal traffic is a road safety hazard and wakes people up early in the morning. There is also the question of the substantial damage being done to the roads by the heavy lorries. That will involve the local authority in the cost of repairs and so on. I am sure that my hon. Friend the Member for Stretford will agree that the hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown) should take the message back to his constituents that substantial movements of coal are not good for the local environment or its people.

Mr. Tony Lloyd (Stretford): Since my hon. Friend began his intervention I have been able to go to sleep 12 times and travel back and forth between Manchester and here on two occasions. Surely that must make it one of the longest interventions in the history of Parliament.

I have also had an opportunity to visit the constituency of the hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown), as I told him I would. I went to the funeral of one of my aunts who was a county councillor on Humberside county council for many years and who had also served on Lindsey county council. Her political contribution, unlike that of the hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes, was geared to improving the north Lincolnshire and Humberside region. On the way to the funeral I took a detour through the port of Killingholme. I shudder when I think of the impact of the traffic on Myrtle villas or Westfield farm in his constituency, both of which are a long way from the A180, which the hon. Gentleman told the House would be the only area affected. The roads to the port of Killingholme will be severely affected. As the hon. Gentleman knows, the roads are narrow and are not capable of taking the amount of coal that will travel by road. All the information that I have received shows that the coal will have to travel by road.

Mr. Joseph Ashton (Bassetlaw): Is my hon. Friend aware that a village called Blyth in my constituency, which used to win the title for the best kept village, has 1,100 heavy lorries thundering through it every day? Is he further aware that in many of the villages in my area, where there is to be a new power station, there are literally hundreds of lorries tearing up the roads where there are no pavements and no street lighting, and that as a result there will be horrendous costs for repair? Who will pay for the repair of the roads? Will it be the county council and the ratepayers of the hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown)? It certainly will not be the people operating the ports. Will the people in the area have to pay more poll tax to cover the cost? Has the hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes taken that into consideration? Is he aware of the drop in property values because people do not want to buy a rural house, no matter how pretty it is, if 1,000 lorries pass it by every day and night, shaking it to its foundations?

Mr. Lloyd: My hon. Friend has made an important point. I cannot answer for the hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes. As my hon. Friends will know, the hon. Gentleman's speech was short on answers and comments on the impact of the scheme. The answer to the question about who will pay for repairs to the roads is that it will be the poll tax payers in my hon. Friends' constituencies. A significant amount of the coal will travel by road.

In an intervention in my speech on the previous occasion the hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes said that it was not long ago that 5 million tonnes of coal were being taken through the ports on the River Humber in his constituency. Since my hon. Friend the Member for Rother Valley began his intervention I have had time to find out what has changed since then. The hon. Gentleman omitted to tell the House that what has changed is British Rail's capacity to carry the coal. British Rail is not in a position to pick up the minimum 1 million tonnes of coal that would come through Killingholme initially. British Rail could not take up that capacity, unless it was on a permanent basis. For the coal mining communities it would be worse if it were on a permanent basis. At least initially the coal would come in on an experimental basis, to test the market, and in those circumstances the coal would not be carried by British Rail because it does not have the rolling stock to do so. That means that the coal would travel by road and, as my hon. Friends have said, it would travel through the coalfield villages and other villages, destroying the roads and the environment and making the lives of the residents in those areas significantly worse, at no cost to the promoters of the Bill.

Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse (Pontefract and Castleford): Is my hon. Friend aware of why British Rail does not have the rolling stock? It does not have the stock because it is inefficient. In my area it is carrying coal from Selby coalfield, the major coalfield in the country, more than twice the distance that it needs to because it will not spend £2 million to provide a shorter route. It allows 150 coal trains to pass through the town of Nottingley every day, when they could travel half the distance. British Coal and the coalfields have to pay for that. British Rail will be doing that for 60 years and it could result in some of the pits becoming uneconomic.

Mr. Lloyd: My hon. Friend highlights the central point in the debate. I know that many of my hon. Friends want to make a contribution about the impact of the scheme on their communities. They want to talk about the social implications, the consequences of unemployment and so on.

My hon. Friend the Member for Pontefract and Castleford (Mr. Lofthouse) has criticised British Rail. British Rail's senior management should be criticised, but I should like him to join me in ensuring that some criticism is directed at the Government. There has been a poverty of planning in the way in which British Rail undertakes its operations. The Government should be criticised for the absence of any ports policy, the result of which we see in the Bill. We have seen no justification for the Bill on the grounds of the port capacity of Britain. We have seen no

[Mr. Lloyd]

justification in terms of a policy for energy requirements, because the Bill is irrelevant to the energy needs of the nation. We have seen no development of planning for road transportation, because it is obvious that neither the Minister nor the proposer of the Bill has any idea of how the coal will be carried when it is imported.

The Bill seeks to subvert the British economy. It will increase massively the imports of coal to Britain. It will destroy the jobs of those who work in the coalfields in Nottinghamshire and Yorkshire. That concern is shared by hon. Members on both sides of the House. It will put Britain in hock to the purveyors of apartheid. The hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes is smiling, but at no point has he sought to distance himself from that view.

The House would be negligent if once again it went through the pretence that the Bill had received adequate consideration or that answers had been given to the searching questions that have been posed by my hon. Friends and myself. I hope that even at this late stage the hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes will give answers to those questions or, preferably, withdraw the Bill.

7.10 pm

Mr. Richard Alexander (Newark): In common with other hon. Members, I have sat through several hours of debate on the Bill. Most hon. Members present tonight are not friends of the Bill. My hon. Friend the Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown) has received no support from his hon. Friends. Even the Minister is neutral, or so he says.

I believe, like many of my hon. Friends, that if the Bill were passed it would harm the mining industry. I am sorry that much of the debate has been bedevilled by discussion of South Africa. The debate should be about not South Africa but what the Bill will do to the coal-mining industry of this country.

I accept that I am making a constituency and county point—I make no apology for that—but the Trent valley power stations provide a market for 70 per cent. of Nottinghamshire's deep-mined coal. Together with my hon. Friends, I am articulating a worry that has been expressed. As the Coalfields Communities Campaign points out to hon. Members in its briefing, British Coal has undertaken a significant and major programme of restructuring the industry in recent years. It has taken enormous strides to become competitive.

Those strides, which would be reversed if the Bill were passed, have been taken at some cost to the industry and its employees. At the end of the Scargill strike there were 169 pits in this country; there are now 96. Nottinghamshire has lost eight pits and 16,500 jobs. The industry is now concentrated on high-performance pits and coal faces. The human cost has largely been accepted by the mining industry's employees—certainly by the Union of Democratic Mineworkers—in the full knowledge that the industry is and was gearing itself to becoming competitive now and until the end of the century against world prices.

Today, international prices are low, yet no one pretends that they will continue to be. If by legislation the House makes it easier for foreign coal to enter this country, thus closing more pits before the industry is profitable, hon. Members will be doing grave harm to the industry. Imports will certainly come, and they will be based not on real, long-term prices but on spot prices. As a result, British coal will be driven further into deficit, at a time when it is looking to balance its books. Its profitability and ability to compete with other fuels will be nil.

Mr. Martin Redmond (Don Valley): I beg to move, That Strangers do withdraw.

Notice being taken that Strangers were present, Mr. Deputy Speaker, *pursuant to Standing Order No. 143 (Withdrawal of Strangers from the House), put forthwith the Question,* That Strangers do withdraw:—

The House divided: Ayes 24, Noes 168.

Division No. 393] **[7.14 pm**

AYES

Ashton, Joe
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Buckley, George J.
Dalyell, Tam
Eadie, Alexander
Flynn, Paul
Grocott, Bruce
Hinchliffe, David
Illsley, Eric
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Meale, Alan
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
Patchett, Terry
Redmond, Martin
Richardson, Jo
Salmond, Alex
Skinner, Dennis
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wise, Mrs Audrey

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Frank Haynes and
Mrs. Llin Golding.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Alexander, Richard
Allen, Graham
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Ashby, David
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bowis, John
Boyes, Roland
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Conway, Derek
Cope, Rt Hon John
Corbyn, Jeremy
Couchman, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Devlin, Tim
Dixon, Don
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dunn, Bob
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Fearn, Ronald
Forth, Eric
Fox, Sir Marcus
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Gill, Christopher
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Ground, Patrick
Hanley, Jeremy
Harris, David
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
Madden, Max
Major, Rt Hon John

Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Miller, Sir Hal
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Neale, Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Page, Richard
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pendry, Tom
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Price, Sir David
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Redwood, John
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rogers, Allan
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Speed, Keith
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Stanbrook, Ivor
Steen, Anthony
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Tracey, Richard
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Wall, Pat
Watts, John
Wheeler, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Wood, Timothy
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Richard Ryder and
Mr. Kenneth Carlisle.

Question accordingly negatived.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. On other occasions, most hon. Members have voted not to exclude Strangers from the Gallery. You will have noted that in this Division a few of my hon. Friends decided to vote for the exclusion. They wish to place on record their worry not about those in the Strangers' Gallery—I am not supposed to refer to that—but about the promoters of the Bill who are sitting in the Under Gallery. I hope that the press understands that those who called the Division did so to exclude those representing South Africa and the coal importers.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): The hon. Gentleman has put his point on record, but it is not in order for him to refer either to the Strangers' Gallery or to the Under Gallery.

Mr. Alexander: Before I was unnecessarily interrupted, I was trying to draw to the attention of the House the effect that the Bill would have on the future profitability of the coal industry and the viability of coal as against other fuels. I was about to suggest that the results of a further large-scale contraction in the industry would be permanent. In those circumstances, it would not be possible to resume the current march towards profitability in our coalfields.

A pit that closes stays closed. It would be far too expensive ever to reopen a pit that closed, even if the closure was originally thought to be on a temporary basis—until it proved possible to sell coal at a higher price. One cannot simply mothball a coal mine as one can parts of many other industries. Therefore, the Bill has very serious implications.

Some of my hon. Friends might say that the industry should be completely governed by market forces. They might say, "If foreigners come in and dump coal and destroy our markets, so what?" I hope that none of my hon. Friends will take that view; it is a very simplistic view of the market economy. I do not take that view and neither do the electors of Nottinghamshire, especially members of the Union of Democratic Mineworkers, who would certainly not expect Conservative Members representing Nottinghamshire to adopt that line. We are here to protect those who sent us here. If we do not stand up and look after them, we should be doing a different job elsewhere.

The issue is wider than protecting the industry and our constituents' jobs. If we destroy our coal industry, as I believe the Bill will, we will put the cost of electricity and possibly even its supply in the hands of our competitors abroad. They could do that with the benefit of our destroyed coal industry. From the day we pass the Bill, the cost of our energy could well be in the hands of others.

Those who supply cheap coal will not continue to supply it cheaply once our industry has been destroyed. Why should they when they have destroyed our market? We would be totally in their hands as to cost. There may be an added cost which we would be unable to control—the cost of paying seamen and dockers to handle imported coal.

Mr. Terry Patchett (Barnsley, East): Is the hon. Gentleman aware that I have heard this speech before, but that it previously came from Arthur Scargill before the 1984 strike? What has changed the hon. Gentleman's attitude? Is he playing up to the Union of Democratic Mineworkers and forgetting the warnings that were given?

Mr. Alexander: I am sure that Mr. Scargill speaks common sense from time to time. If he shares my view, I believe that he speaks common sense.

I should like to underline the fact that we are proposing to risk this damage just when British Coal feels ready to take on the world. On 13 June, British Coal's chairman said:

> "The nation's coal reserves are a great asset, and we have in sight a viable and competitive coal industry. I believe we are through the worst and poised on the brink of success. To sum up, we have an excellent opportunity to turn British Coal from a long-term national liability into a successful business and national asset."

I share his view and believe that the chairman would be hostile to the Bill as presently drafted.

Our reserves are a national asset and we should protect them. We should not be making it easier for our competitors to come in and ruin our market. No other country in the world would do that. If we allow the Bill to pass, we shall be allowing our competitors to come in and take advantage of the short term—of the current spot market rate. We should look after our mining industry. In my view, the Bill will not do that.

7.34 pm

Mr. Alan Meale (Mansfield): I found parts of the speech of the hon. Member for Newark (Mr. Alexander) quite interesting. I have a feeling that some of his hon. Friends do not agree with him—they are not in the Chamber. All Labour Members who represent

[Mr. Alan Meale]

Nottinghamshire are here, as are those from Yorkshire and elsewhere. I hope that, with this Bill, we do not have a repeat of what happened with previous legislation, when 115 Conservative Members walked through the Lobby to agree to legislation which had a similar effect.

Mr. Patrick McLoughlin (Derbyshire, West) *rose*——

Mr. Meale: I shall not give way now.

I am grateful for this opportunity to speak as the Bill is important to Nottinghamshire and to my constituency. It is unfortunate and inappropriate that the method being used to introduce it and other Bills associated with it is described as the private Bill procedure. They should be described as commerical Bills—that is surely their prime objective.

On this and other related matters, the House has often heard the pleas of hon. Members who oppose the blatant misuse of parliamentary procedures to push commercial interest legislation such as this on to the statute book. The House should not fool itself into believing that the main aim of this Bill is anything other than private gain set against the undoubted effects on the nation as a whole.

Because of those effects, we should also consider whether it is in the interests of the public to allow the Bill to proceed. Is the Bill's purpose to aid the importation of cheap, foreign coal for a privatised electricity industry? Is its purpose to aid British Coal's pit closure programme? Is it simply the free market strategy pursued by the Government taken to its wildest extremes? Not surprisingly, I believe that the answer is a combination of all three, and that it is motivated by the desire for profit which is set against the needs of the nation.

If the Billl and others associated with it are approved, they will have a devastating effect on Britain's remaining mining communities. Pits will close in all coalfields, particularly because of the importation of cheap foreign coal, mainly from South Africa and Colombia, where it is dug by child labour or miners on such low wages that every other civilised nation in the world condemns its purchase.

I must tell the hon. Member for Newark that we cannot disregard what is happening in the mining industry in South Africa. Children are being used to dig coal and miners are dying underground because of appalling conditions. Appallingly low wages are paid to workers.

Mr. Allen McKay (Barnsley, West and Penistone): That is an important point. Is my hon. Friend aware that, 150 years ago today, Husker pit in my constituency lost 26 children aged between seven and 11? That is what is happening in South Africa today.

Mr. Meale: I am grateful for that intervention.

The facts and figures are clear. If the Bill and others associated with it go through, coalfields in Yorkshire, the midlands and Nottinghamshire will be affected. They currently supply 65 million tonnes to the market, 50 million tonnes of which go directly to power stations. In Nottinghamshire, building facilities such as is proposed will mean that at least 13 of the remaining 18 pits in the county will be at risk as most of their product goes to power stations. I should like to give the figures for the pits in Nottinghamshire. At Blidworth colliery, 51 per cent. of output goes directly to power stations; at Calverton, 80 per cent.; at Ollerton, 87 per cent.; at Thoresby, 93 per cent.; at Creswell, 95 per cent.; at Harworth, 97 per cent.; at Bilsthorpe, 98 per cent.; at Silver Hill, 98 per cent.; and at Bevercotes, Cotgrave, Sherwood, Welbeck and Clipstone, 100 per cent. Building facilities such as those proposed would put directly at risk at least 12,000 miners' jobs in the county. In Yorkshire, 16 pits would be threatened; in the midlands and Derbyshire, five out of the nine remaining pits might close. Up to 37,000 jobs would be directly at risk in those areas alone.

Mr. Ashton: Has my hon. Friend seen the report of the Unemployment Unit that was sent to hon. Members last week listing a new jobs table for 633 constituencies in England, Wales and Scotland? Does he realise that during the past 12 months his constituency was number 627 and mine was number 621? Even the constituency of the hon. Member for Sherwood (Mr. Stewart) was number 586. Those areas are in dire straits even before the importation of coal—let alone after these port facilities are built.

Mr. Meale: In addition to the jobs lost directly, the indirect effect will mean a total job loss well into six figures in those communities. I am grateful to my hon. Friend for pointing out that both of the remaining pits in my constituency would be at risk. Eight others in a 12-mile radius would be similarly threatened. There are already more than 38,000 unemployed in that geographical area. The Government's recent refusal to support the coal industry has led to the closure of Mansfield colliery in my constituency, with a loss of more than 1,000 jobs. I am pleased to note that my hon. Friends have expressed their sorrow about that, while Conservative Members have had little or nothing to say.

The Bill would have devastating effects on my constituents and others in the area. We may ask what the benefits could be of such measures, apart from fat profits for its backers and promoters. It would jeopardise Britain's ability to be self-sufficient in coal; it would lead to mass unemployment in mining communities; and it would allow artificially priced coal to increase prices when the opportunity arose.

Mr. Michael Welsh (Doncaster, North): If those pits are closed because of the proposed port facilities, the remaining pits will have to pay for and carry all investment costs. Therefore, unit costs will rise in the remaining pits, causing them to suffer. Is it not possible that our coal industry will cease to exist and we will depend completely on foreign coal?

Mr. Meale: I agree with my hon. Friend's analysis. This Bill, coupled with the appalling management of British Coal, would probably ensure that fate for it. It would also set Britain apart from most other civilised nations, which refuse to allow the use of cheap, slave labour, blood coal imported from South Africa and Colombia.

It has been established that the Humber ports, in particular, would be used to import bulk South African coal to our power stations. That was proved by the recent visit of four representatives from major South African mining corporations to try to arrange long-term contracts for their businesses. The Dutch company Van Ommeren is part of the company that will run the terminal. It is the second largest Dutch coal importing company. According to the Dutch central statistics bureau, last year it imported about 5·8 million tonnes of South African coal—4·3 million tonnes were shipped on to other countries, of which 2·9 million tonnes were transhipped from Dutch ports to the United Kingdom. The signs are that the figures will increase this year and that South African coal will be piled up not only in Holland, but in such places as Ghent and Rotterdam.

Mr. Lofthouse: Does my hon. Friend agree that, apart from a loss in national resources, the Bill could result in the loss of 50,000 miners jobs, plus 26,000 spin-off jobs? That will cost the nation more than £500 million in unemployment pay, redundancy and so on. Could not that money be better spent by British Coal than by competing with coal from abroad mined by slave labour?

Mr. Meale: I agree with my hon. Friend. However, the figures I gave earlier showed that the situation could be even worse than that.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: My hon. Friend will recall that the week before last I pressed the hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown) about the role of Van Ommeren, and the hon. Gentleman either feigned surprise or genuinely did not know the answer. Will my hon. Friend press the hon. Gentleman again about the role of Van Ommeren and ask him to come clean with the House?

Mr. Meale: I am happy to ask the hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown) to disclose his links with Van Ommeren, whether through meetings or other contacts. For example, I should like to know whether those persons who are not actually in the Chamber but to whom he spoke earlier are either part and parcel of that company or have links with it. The hon. Gentleman will have an opportunity to come clean and admit that his trip to South Africa was not merely to study the tourist industry—or, indeed, to eat the Outspan oranges that he undoubtedly liked—but was linked with the commercial private companies that wish to set up Britain for private gain, using the Killingholme terminal.

Many hon. Members on both sides of the House want to speak against the Bill. I have yet to hear of anybody who wishes to speak in favour of it, apart from its sponsor. I take pride in urging hon. Members to vote against the Bill for the sake of Britain generally, but especially of Nottinghamshire, and of South African and Colombian miners.

7.48 pm

Mr. Martin M. Brandon-Bravo (Nottingham, South): On the surface, this is round two in a debate on another Immingham dock. In practice, of course, it is really round four, because the Bill that was given a Second Reading last week provoked contentious arguments for and against another dock at Immingham. That Bill included two other docks, one in south Wales and another in Kings Lynn, but they were not objected to by hon. Members on either side of the House. Conservative Members who voted for those two ports may regret that because they will be tied to the inevitable delaying tactics in Committee and at later stages about the contentious issue of the Immingham dock. This Bill concerns the single dock at Immingham, so there are no issues to sidetrack us.

Sadly, I feel that the Second Reading last week has caused some Conservative Members to think that because of last week we are trying to close the stable door after the horse has bolted. Perhaps that is true, but I believe that the arguments should be made and I wish to put them on record.

On commercial and industrial matters I am normally what is described as "dry". Therefore, on this particular issue, I admit to being on unfamiliar and perhaps uncomfortable ground. Normally it is not my wont to argue against matters that are better dealt with in purely commercial and industrial terms, but I have looked at this issue in commercial, industrial and human terms and I wish to oppose the Bill. A number of my colleagues will join me. We shall oppose it not just for narrow constituency reasons, but because we believe that the whole region will be adversely affected by it.

The two pits that used to be inside the city boundaries of my constituency closed 20 years ago, and I doubt whether there are 100 miners, if that, in my constituency. Nevertheless, wider issues must be considered. The hon. Member for Mansfield (Mr. Meale) has sought to disparage Conservative Members' comments on this matter. Other Labour Members have sought to suggest that, in some way, Conservative Members have been acting out a charade. As this is probably a time-limited debate, I speak for all my colleagues in and around Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire. They feel strongly about this matter. When they voted last week against Second Reading of the Associated British Ports (No. 2) Bill, they were not seeking phoney publicity.

Mr. Meale: I am pleased that the hon. Gentleman has said that. It is true that the other associated Bill to this was given a Second Reading last week and that in Nottinghamshire a lot of publicity followed that decision. The reason why the Bill was given a Second Reading last week was not the failure of any one Labour Member, but the number of Government supporters who marched through the Lobby in support of it.

Hon. Members: The payroll vote.

Mr. Brandon-Bravo: The real reason is that the Labour party could not organise a digestive explosion in a storm. Last week, at 7 o'clock, there were more than 100 Labour Members present. By half past eight, when the vote on the Bill was taken, it suited Labour Members, having made all the noise and the shouting about South Africa and the miners, to go home. All that was necessary was for 100 Labour Members to remain at half past eight and, together with Conservative Members, the Bill would have been defeated—*[Interruption.]* Any honest study of the vote that night would show that few members of the Government voted.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Now that hon. Members on both sides of the House have got that off their chest, let us return to discussing the Bill.

Mr. Brandon-Bravo: I agree. I am seeking to oppose the Bill on two grounds.

Mr. Allen McKay: The hon. Gentleman is deceiving the House.

Mr. Bradon-Bravo: Would the hon. Gentleman like to say that on his feet?

Mr. McKay: The hon. Gentleman knows about the figures. If he compares the number of absent Labour Members with the number of absent Conservative

[Mr. McKay]

Members, he will find that one cancels out the other. If he looks at the Division list in *Hansard*, he will see those who voted from the Government Front Bench range from a Secretary of State to the Chief Whip, the Deputy Chief Whip——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. We cannot hark back to debates of many days ago.

Mr. Brandon-Bravo: I am grateful to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but Labour Members are trying to make a silk purse out of a sow's ear. They know that they were not here, and that is the bottom line.

I have two reasons for opposing the Bill. The first reason may be described as an emotional one—it is a sense of debt. I do not believe that I am going over the top if I say that some Conservative Members——

Mr. Meale: Are in debt.

Mr. Brandon-Bravo: Some Conservative Members feel that they have a debt of honour. *[Laughter.]* Apparently that causes great amusement on the Labour Benches, but that surprises no one.

My second and main reason for opposing the Bill is on straightforward, longer-term economic grounds. No one on either side of the House could say that, on economic grounds, the creation of the port—the one that was voted for last week—will not have a major economic effect on the east midlands. No one needs reminding of the events of March 1984 to May 1985.

Mr. Redmond: The Bill will have a devastating impact on the east midlands coal industry, but it will also have a tremendous impact throughout the country. The hon. Gentleman and his hon. Friends talk about the need to be self-sufficient and to protect the balance of payments, but they continue to support the Government's attacks on the coal industry. What they should do is work jointly with British Coal, the unions and the Government to give the industry and the country the future that it desperately needs.

Mr. Brandon-Bravo: I have never heard such rubbish in my life. If the hon. Member for Don Valley (Mr. Redmond) is seeking to suggest that his country could have gone on defending, via massive wasteful subsidies, the type of coal industry that we had eight years ago, he is living in cloud-cuckoo-land. We set out to create a viable coal industry, one that did not need massive support. We now have a splendid coal industry and the Government are now seeking to give it a fair chance to make it right through to the next century. That is a different story from the one that the hon. Gentleman was seeking to put to me.

Mr. Andy Stewart (Sherwood): Is my hon. Friend aware that, since the end of the disastrous strike, productivity has increased by 60 per cent. due to the skilful negotiations of the Union of Democratic Mineworkers, whose negotiated conditions were subsequently imposed on the other people who work in the industry? Does my hon. Friend agree that that is the way forward?

Mr. Brandon-Bravo: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. It is a great pity that the written word in *Hansard* never quite conveys the feelings of the House. What was apparent last week, and is apparent tonight, is the animosity that is still felt on the Labour Benches for the 30,000 Nottinghamshire miners and their families who said no to the concept of Scargillism. That is what the debate should be about.

Mr. Redmond: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It is not my intention to prolong the hon. Gentleman's line of argument, but I suggested that the British Coal board, the Government and the unions should get together for the good of the country.

Mr. Brandon-Bravo: I am not certain whether that was a point of order or a question to me.

I repeat that a number of my Conservative colleagues recognise the debt that they owe to the 30,000 Nottinghamshire and east midlands miners. They had no great love for the Conservative party and they probably still do not, but that does not take away from the fact that my hon. Friends and I believe that we owe a debt to those miners and their families for what they did three years ago and for what they have done since. We would like them to continue their success in the next 10 to 20 years. They probably will not thank us for it, but it should be put on the record. That is what I meant when I said that we owe a debt of honour.

There is an economic base for our opposition to the Bill, and in support I should like to quote from the former Secretary of State for Energy, who was asked at the 1984 Conservative party conference why we do not import cheap coal. He said:

> "We could import a lot of cheap coal at certain times. That would undermine our industry and we could lose all of our pits. Then we would become very dependent upon that imported cheap coal—and when we did so it would no longer be cheap. That would mean enormous economic and social disruption. We have not done that. Nor have we rushed into closing pits the moment they have become uneconomic. If new investment and machinery could make a pit economic, we have put in that new investment and machinery. We have done it in a way showing that the community's problems are understood. We will follow a sane policy towards the coal industry."

My right hon. Friend closed his speech by saying:

> "To the miners we say this. We promise you a future better than the past, a future of high investment in your industry, a future of better pits, better machinery and better conditions, an expanding future in which, as the industry becomes more profitable and prosperous your pay packets will reflect that new prosperity. We promise your communities a programme which will help their future so that the sons and daughters of miners where pits now close have a better future than their fathers had in the past."

My right hon. Friend is still a member of the Cabinet and, to the best of my knowledge, that philosophy and policy have not changed.

Mr. McLoughlin: Is my hon. Friend aware of the words of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister during that same conference? She said that the bravery of the thousands of miners who went to work during the dispute had kept the coal industry alive and that not only the nation but the miners who went on strike and whose jobs were saved by the UDM members owed them a great debt? They also enabled British Coal to continue to supply its customers.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I remind the House that we are not debating the coal industry. But the coal industry is relevant to the Bill and references to it in the context of the Bill are in order.

Mr. Brandon-Bravo: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. Those words of the Prime Ministers and of the former Secretary of State for Energy are evidence that the Government deliver what they promise, and the screams and shouts from the Opposition no longer hold water.

My right hon. Friend the former Secretary of State did not promise that there would never be exposure to free and fair competition. Nor would I argue that the coal industry should never be exposed to such competition because by that means we can judge its efficiency.

Mr. Pat Wall (Bradford, North): The hon. Gentleman talks about fair competition and economic arguments. I repeat the question that I asked previously. Is it not true that we already have an overcapacity in docks? The argument is that this port will bring work for dockers, but in fact it will take work from other ports and not increase the number of jobs for dockers and other people connected with that industry. That is the first point.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Interventions must be brief.

Mr. Wall: I take your point, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Is it not a fact that continental ports are subsidised in relation to their infrastructure and dredging, and that they work to a plan under which shipping is directed to different ports? In Britain the matter is completely open and a dock never knows when it will get a contract. To get fair competition with continental ports, would we not have to introduce such planning? If we do not, this new port will be entirely unnecessary.

Mr. Brandon-Bravo: The hon. Gentleman has made two fairly valid points. If we create a dock here or a new factory there, we may be simply taking work away from somewhere else. We may gain 100 jobs there, but lose 50 elsewhere. That is not in dispute, but our case against this dock is not along those lines. We oppose it because of the risk to the pits in the east midlands and the line of power stations along the Trent valley, not because it will take dockers from other ports. I go along with the hon. Gentleman's point about fair competition. I have spent 35 years in commerce and industry, and I have never known a time when there was strictly free and fair competition. Industrial life is more of a "rough-and-tumble," and I use the phrase in inverted commas, not in the absolute sense.

The argument for importing coal is that it would be cheaper. I recognise that fuel represents almost half the cost of producing electricity and that if we could halve the cost of fuel, in theory, the price of electricity would be reduced by 25 per cent. That is attractive to commerce and industry and it would be extremely interesting to an employer like me. If that cheap fuel—in this case, coal—is unfairly dumped on the British market, we shall have cheap electricity for as long as the cheap coal comes in, but we must ask: for how long? If we build up a stock during the next few years, we may benefit from lower coal prices while our pits are still alive, but, as my hon. Friend the Member for Newark (Mr. Alexander) said, once our pits are closed or their output gets so small as to make no difference, the price of the imported coal will increase.

Mr. Jim Lester (Broxtowe): Is it not interesting that, although some companies are prepared to sign long-term contracts for the supply of imported coal, they are not prepared to sign long-term contracts for the price of that coal? The price has to be re-negotiated every year, so it will not be as long as my hon. Friend suggests before prices return to the production costs which they are now well below.

Mr. Brandon-Bravo: That is a valid point. All the cheap coal is either spot coal, as my hon. Friend the Member for Newark pointed out, or bought one year at a time, as my hon. Friend the Member for Broxtowe (Mr. Lester) said. Electricity boards must have long-term stability and know what price they will have to pay. We are saying that the early construction of this terminal could be terminal for Nottinghamshire.

There are some interesting figures about British Coal's contributions to industry in Nottinghamshire. It is estimated, for example, that about £300 million is paid in wages and salaries, about £5·6 million in rate contributions, and about £130 million is added to purchasing power in and around our area. Conservative Members do not want to put that at risk. The dock does just that; and that is why we are arguing against it.

No one can doubt the strides that British Coal has made these past three years. The improvement in productivity has been nothing short of astonishing. It could be argued that the natural changes and improvements that should have taken place were blocked, first, by the oil crisis of 1973 and then by the first coal strike in 1974. From then on the union was appeased and a blind eye was turned to good management practices. The only thing that British Coal could do was to try to improve matters by capital spending. In a way, capital spending became a substitute for management and normal commercial decisions.

The board has a fine record these past three years. All we are asking is that hon. Members on both sides of the House should give the board the time it needs to ensure that it can compete in "free and fair competition" with the rest of the world, once normality has returned to world coal.

In discussion of world coal and subsidised prices, in this debate and the three previous ones, there has been constant harping on South African coal, as if we were debating apartheid by means of the Immingham terminal. Nothing could be further from the truth. It is a pity that the hon. Member for Mansfield has left the Chamber. At least he did us the courtesy of mentioning Colombia. My hon. Friend the Member for Broxtowe mentioned it last week. I understand that Colombia has opencast mining, which is quite different—although I understand that all sorts of oddities are associated with that country's production. Australia also has mostly opencast coal, so let us not fool ourselves into thinking that we are arguing only about South African coal. The Colombians, Australians and even the Chinese have been trying to export coal for the Western hard currency that it can bring them. I agree with the hon. Member for Bradford, North (Mr. Wall) that this is not free and fair competition. We want enough delay in the construction of the terminal—if it is ever to be built—for British Coal to be able to get its act together.

Finally, I want to quote Sir Robert Haslam's address to the UDM conference. He said:

> "National productivity records have been broken four times in the opening seven weeks of 1988-9."

He also spoke of the records that were established by the Nottinghamshire coalfield in the early part of this year. Then it was announced—I think on the day of our debate last week—that the Nottinghamshire pits had, for the first

[Mr. Brandon-Bravo]

time, passed the five tonnes per man-shift barrier. *[Interruption.]* The people who tried to kill off the Nottinghamshire miners were on the Opposition side and the Nottinghamshire miners know that.

Sir Robert said:

> "National productivity is currently 16 per cent. higher than a year ago".

He added that productivity is 60 per cent. up over the past three years.

Sir Robert also made a point that concerns Leicestershire miners. He referred to the new mine at Asfordby, to which many people in Leicestershire and Nottinghamshire were looking for their future:

> "At present exchange rates it is difficult to justify going ahead with this project. But the Corporation are planning to do so as an act of faith".

Sir Robert Haslam is prepared to make that act of faith—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I interrupt the hon. Gentleman again because he is again debating the coal industry. He must link his remarks to the Bill.

Mr. Ashton: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. This is a three-hour debate and the hon. Member for Nottingham, South (Mr. Brando-Bravo) has gone on for almost half an hour in a partisan speech. May we have a 10-minute rule so that other hon. Members will be allowed to reply, or will the closure be moved when we have had only a one-sided contribution from the hon. Gentleman?

Mr. McLoughlin: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It ill becomes the hon. Member for Bassetlaw (Mr. Ashton) to complain about the length of speeches. If he had read the previous debates on this subject, he would have seen that many of his hon. Friends spoke for 40 or 50 minutes and prevented Conservative Members from speaking.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: At the moment the Chair has no power to impose a 10-minute limit on speeches, but the hon. Member for Bassetlaw (Mr. Ashton) has given me the opportunity to say that many hon. Members wish to take part in the debate. I hope that those who are called will bear that in mind.

Mr. Brandon-Bravo: I apologise if I have been longer that I intended to be, but the record will show how many times I have given way. If I had not, I doubt whether that criticism would have been made of me. It is also true to say that last week a colleague of the hon. Member for Bassetlaw (Mr. Ashton) spoke for one hour and 20 minutes, so his point of order was grossly unfair.

You are right, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to say that we are not debating the coal industry, but we are debating another terminal at Immingham, which is seen by hon. Members on both sides as providing a means for cheap, subsidised coal to enter the country. It is on that basis alone that we seek to oppose it.

8.18 pm

Mr. Eric Illsley (Barnsley, Central): My hon. Friend the Member for Doncaster, North (Mr. Welsh) informed the House that he had failed to identify the sponsors of the Bill as it is drafted. I believe that the hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown) should withdraw the Bill or suspend proceedings on it until it is so drafted that all hon. Members can identify which organisations or companies are promoting it.

My hon. Friend the Member for Mansfield (Mr. Meale) referred to a company called Van Ommeren, which is not even mentioned in the Bill. That makes one wonder which company is involved, as the parent company listed in the Bill, Chemical and Oil Storage Management Ltd., cannot be identified.

The Bill is designed to enable considerable work to be carried out on a cargo terminal, which will increase imports of various cargoes, but most of all of cheap foreign coal. It is a sad fact that some Conservative Members support a private company in order to make profit out of imports, even after the horrendous balance of payments figures that were announced recently. As we have heard from every speaker so far, these imports will lead to a loss of jobs in our industries.

One of the main factors behind the Bill is the import of cheap South African coal, mined by exploited labour in South Africa at a time when public opinion is turning against the South African regime, as we have seen recently, with concerts opposing the apartheid regime. Even now a march is taking place in this country, which will end with a mass rally in London, calling for the release of Nelson Mandela. We all noted that in the *Daily Mail* on 6 April this year the promoter of the Bill, the hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes, was referred to as having invited representatives of the South African coal industry to this country. It is obvious from that that South African interests will be paramount if the Bill is passed. The hon. Member for Nottingham, South (Mr. Brandon-Bravo) mentioned how hon. Members were trying to support the coal industry, but it makes a mockery of that and of ideas of buying British or supporting British industry when we see the hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes promoting South African interests.

As I said earlier, the terminal is for imports as opposed to exports. Our balance of payments figures show that our exports are not doing well. Recent figures for imports and exports through the ports on the Humber show that in 1987 imports were exactly double exports. In that year there were about 20 million tonnes of imports, compared with 10·5 million tonnes of exports. Therefore, the idea that the Bill will facilitate any exports through the Humber is a fallacy.

It is appropriate to consider the contents of the Bill in detail, in view of the considerable number of powers under it, together with special powers to give directions and make byelaws. The powers are wide-ranging. I feel that it is an abuse of the House that we are asked to bestow those powers on a private company, as opposed to an authority that will be accountable.

Mr. Redmond: My hon. Friend is making a valid point. It is correct that people are using the House as a backdoor method of promoting private interests. One would hope that the Examiners will take that into consideration and bring some semblance of order and justice to this place.

Mr. Illsley: I agree with my hon. Friend. The Examiners could take the Bill as an example of that abuse. I hope that they will consider that in their deliberations.

As I mentioned, the Bill gives powers to make byelaws and special directions to an unelected and unrepresentative body, a private company that will have absolute power over the terminal area. Those powers include the power for the Central Oil Refining Company Limited—we cannot identify it; we have been told that perhaps it is now a subsidiary of another company, Simon Engineering plc—to become a public harbour undertaking. That is interesting. If we are to believe the Bill, that company has direct commercial interests in oil and it will become the controlling authority for the terminal. It remains to be seen whether, in the circumstances, the House should let this private company become a harbour authority. The company might abuse its position in the use of those facilities and of the powers that will be granted under the Bill.

The parent company is listed as Chemical and Oil Storage Management Ltd., although we are not sure whether it is still in existence, or even still connected with the Bill. Obviously the company has chemical and oil interests at heart. I shall refer to some of the powers in the Bill that could affect adversely the communities in and around Killingholme.

If the terminal is to be built and expanded, there should be adequate controls, and the byelaws and powers granted under the Bill should be in the hands of an authority that is accountable and representative, not in the hands of a private commercial interest. The Bill states:

"It is expedient that the other powers contained in this Act should be conferred on the company."

Expedient to whom? Why should it be expedient that the powers in the Bill are conferred on the company? We have heard fronm Conversative Members that the Bill will not do any favours for Nottinghamshire or Leicestershire, and Opposition Members have said that it will do nothing for south Yorkshire or Nottinghamshire. It will certainly not be to the benefit of miners or others whose jobs are affected.

There are wide powers in the Bill to improve, maintain, regulate, manage, construct, alter, demolish and reconstruct. There is every conceivable power that the private company would need to enable it to carry out whatever function it likes and ride roughshod over the community, which will have no right of redress against the private company, because it will be unaccountable to anyone other than the shareholders.

One must ask why the Bill has been brought forward in this manner. One must ask whether the promoters, who as yet remain unidentified, are seeking to avoid the necessity of obtaining planning permission in order to use the wide powers of construction and demolition.

A further power is to stop up footpaths, extinguishing present rights of way in the process. I am sure that the environmental lobby in the House—some hon. Members supporting it have already spoken in the debate—will want to look long and hard at the power granted to a private company to stop up footpaths throughout the Killingholme area and extinguish rights of way, which might have been there for many years. The people of the area are to lose their amenities without any redress against the authority that will remove them.

There is another interesting power in the Bill, which enables a company that remains unidentified to take at least 10 years to do the works in question. If the need for those facilities is so pressing in Killingholme, why is there a power in the Bill to allow the company to take 10 years to build the terminal? Surely that is contradictory. However, like outline planning permission, it could be a selling point for the company. As we have heard, the company appears to be changing hands at a rapid rate, so when it is offered for sale again to the next bidder it will be able to advertise the power of having 10 years in which to build a cargo terminal. So much for the pressing need for port facilities on the Humber. This is simply a speculative Bill.

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): Is my hon. Friend aware that under the North Killingholme *(Admiralty Pier) Act 1912*—the pier was built with much earlier technology—the period permitted for building was nearly seven years?

Mr. Illsley: My constituents speak of little other than North Killingholme Cargo Terminal Bills——

Mr. Barnes: And Admiralty Pier Bills.

Mr. Illsley:—and Admiralty Pier Bills. My hon. Friend makes an interesting point.

The Bill contains a power to impose special penalties if works are obstructed. Why should that power be contained in the Bill? Does the company expect the works to be obstructed? Why should there be local opposition to the construction of these facilities? Does the company expect obstruction because of local opposition? I remind the House again that local people cannot take on the company.

Mr. Skinner: Why should there be opposition? It is not long since the hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown) was encouraging opposition to dumping nuclear waste in his constituency. He threatened to resign, and he did not get paid for that. Naturally, these matters lead to demonstrations. My hon. Friend is right to say that not only will this upset miners in Nottinghamshire, south Yorkshire and Derbyshire, but will upset environmentalists, ramblers and so on. If so many groups are against the Bill, who is in favour of it? It must be that the Prime Minister and those in South Africa are in league and are determined to pass the Bill, come hell or high water.

Mr. Illsley: I thank my hon. Friend for that intervention. It is obvious from what we have seen so far that the Government are determined to get the Bill through the House.

Mr. William O'Brien (Normanton): In view of the contributions of my hon. Friends the Members for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) and for Barnsley, Central (Mr. Illsley) about the delay and the number of people, including environmentalists, who object to the Bill, should there not be a public inquiry, in fairness to all concerned? Would that not be more in keeping with the position than proceeding in this way?

Mr. Illsley: My hon. Friend makes a valid point. Obviously a public inquiry would be preferable to the Bill, which only Members of Parliament can debate. The public in Killingholme have no opportunity to make representations about the wide powers in the Bill.

Mr. Skinner: Normally when a Bill goes through the House there are hon. Members for and hon. Members against it present in the Chamber debating it. Nearly everybody present, including Conservative Members, is against this Bill. If an hon. Member moved the closure and you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, accepted it—I do not believe that you should—the Tory Whips, acting like shop stewards, would herd Conservative Members into the Aye

[Mr. Skinner]

Lobby, while all the hon. Members now in the Chamber would vote in the No Lobby. It is strange that those who support the Bill are outside the Chamber and do not know anything about it, except what the Prime Minister has told them to do.

Mr. Illsley: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for making those valid points. So far, only one hon. Member has spoken in favour of the Bill. My hon. Friend made an interesting point about the hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes opposing the Nirex proposals. I hope that those who oppose the Bill will be as successful as the objectors to Nirex were and that we shall prevent the terminal from being built.

After the powers come the byelaws. The company is seeking power to make byelaws. Surely Parliament should take great care before granting a private company the power to make byelaws. As my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) said, the majority of hon. Members are outside the Chamber and not listening to the debate. If more were present to listen to the list of powers, byelaws and special directions, they would be more inclined to vote against the Bill.

Mr. Ashton: Did my hon. Friend notice that when my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) accused the hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown) of being paid to promote the Bill the hon. Gentleman had plenty of opportunity to deny it? There is no mention of that in the Register of Members' Interests. Time and again when the allegation has been made the hon. Gentleman has taken no notice, but continued to sit and talk to his hon. Friends. He refuses to answer these allegations. Is the hon. Gentleman being paid to promote the Bill? If so, are we entitled to know how much and by whom?

Mr. Michael Brown: No, Sir.

Mr. Illsley: The hon. Gentleman is being economic with his contributions to the debate. Obviously, he has had the opportunity to inform the House of his interest in the Bill.

Mr. Brown: I have no financial interests, only a major constituency interest.

Mr. Illsley: The hon. Gentleman has a constituency interest, as have many of my hon. Friends and some Conservative Members. It is interesting to note that he implies that his constituency interest outweighs the interests of his constituents, to which I have referred, such as the amenities that will be taken from them.

The Bill will give the company power to create byelaws for 19 different purposes. Clause 21 will give the company power, by a byelaw, to discharge into the terminal any material or substance. A chemical and oil company is asking the House for power to create a byelaw to tip chemicals, oil and anything else that it sees fit into the Humber. I wonder whether the people of Killingholme are aware of these powers and whether they would agree to such a byelaw. I hope that the environmental lobby will take note of that.

The company also wants power to regulate fishing in that area of the river—that is, if there are any fish left in the Humber after the company has finished discharging chemicals and oil into it. Again, amenities will be removed. It seeks a byelaw to regulate bathing. I am not sure that I should like the idea of bathing there, in view of the possible discharges if the Bill is passed.

Mr. Michael Brown: I am merely speculating on whether the hon. Gentleman would contemplate bathing in the River Humber now.

Mr. Illsley: I would consider bathing in any clear river in this country. I would campaign for the River Humber to be cleaned up, and for the Bill to be stopped, so that the river is not further polluted. It is sad that the hon. Gentleman should have to challenge Opposition Members on whether they would bathe in a river in his constituency which he obviously believes to be polluted.

Let me remind the House of the wide powers that the company is seeking. They will be unrepresentative, and the people of Killingholme will have no redress. Moreover, another byelaw in the Bill allows the company to levy fines. Anyone in breach of one of the company's byelaws or caught by one of its powers or special directions can be fined.

There is another good clause in the Bill. Just in case the company has left anything out of the 19 byelaws and the powers to which I have referred, clause 21(3) allows it to make

"different provision for different circumstances."

It says nothing specific, just "different circumstances." What sort of different circumstances are meant, and what sort of different provision is the company seeking? Which company is seeking those different provisions? Perhaps the hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes should identify it.

Mr. Michael Welsh: That is an important issue. The company does not have the money for which it is applying, and cannot raise it until a meeting is held in September. If it is decided that the company cannot have the money—it could be just over £3 million—it means that nobody knows what will come out of the terminal. It could be anything.

Mr. Illsley: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for making such an important point. We could be passing a Bill that would give powers to a company about which we know nothing, and we have no idea whether it can raise the finance. We are being asked to take a shot in the dark by giving the Bill a Second Reading.

Clause 21(4) allows the company to take on the powers of a local authority—the power to make byelaws and give special directions—while being unaccountable. A local authority must be accountable to its electors. That is a key issue that goes to the heart of the Bill, and I hope that, should we be so unwise as to give the Bill a Second Reading, the Examiners will consider it in detail.

After the byelaws come the special directions. There are only a dozen. Fines can again be imposed on anyone in breach of them. There are further powers, including the power to sell the entire undertaking. We are being asked to give a Second Reading to a Bill whose sponsor we cannot identify, and are giving the sponsor the power to sell or lease the undertaking to a further body whose identity we do not know either.

The Bill also gives the power to mortgage, and a further key power to transfer all the powers that I have mentioned to any of its subsidiaries. That makes a mockery of the drafting of the Bill. The powers, special directions and byelaws are listed in minute detail, but neither the identity of the parent company nor that of any subsidiary is given.

Mr. Harry Barnes: As my hon. Friend points out, this is a massive piece of legislation. It has 19 extensive byelaws, and it refers to 10 other bits of legislation to be incorporated. At one stage it refers to the Harbours, Docks, and Piers Clauses Act 1847. Although 31 sections of that Act are excluded, 72 are to be incorporated. That means that when the Bill comes back on Report we must go through all those provisions.

Mr. Illsley: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. I, too, consulted the Harbours, Docks and Piers Clauses Act, which is in the Library, and abandoned the idea of reading it, such was its length. When combined with this Bill, it would give very wide-ranging powers.

The Bill can be boiled down to three main powers. The first is the right to do the work over 10 years. The second is the right to sell the terminal, with that power to construct over 10 years. Thirdly, the powers and byelaws in the Bill can be transferred to a subsidiary. This is a speculator's document. The speculators are banking on the import of coal because of the decision announced in February this year to privatise the electricity supply industry.

The Secretary of State has said that there will be a free-for-all over the purchase of coal supplies by the CEGB and it will be able to choose the cheapest source for its fuel. The sponsors of the Bill have not been slow to react to the White Paper. A recent speech by the Secretary of State for Energy to the Institition of Mining Engineers gave the game away. He said:

> "But there is a limit to the rate at which coal imports could build up in any case—for a start they will be limited by the lack of handling facilities."

That is a key quote that was not missed by the hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes or the Bill's sponsors. They have taken the Secretary of State at his word and have decided to put right what he sees as a lack of coal-importing facilities by starting to build them.

The hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes is a member of the Select Committee on Energy. He knows the evidence given by the CEGB in and after 1986. In 1986 the CEGB said that it could get another 10 million tonnes of imported coal into the country quite easily, and within two or three years could bring in another 30 million. Why, then, is there any need for these port facilities? Since then the CEGB has revised its estimate, and in recent evidence to the Select Committee and in recent statements has mentioned 50 million tonnes.

Even more disturbing is the fact that the SSEB did not wait for the privatisation of the electricity supply industry, but went straight out for imported coal. In doing so it has put in jeopardy the whole Scottish coalfield. It is interesting to note that the three-month period in which negotiations were to take place between British Coal and the SSEB expired today. If those coal contracts are not sorted out amicably, there could be a drastic announcement about the Scottish coal industry in the next few days.

Mr. Skinner: Surely this is a short-sighted policy for anyone, including the Secretary of State for Energy, whom I am told now has a new job, in charge of the Star Chamber. Within our short political lives many people have come along with bright ideas, assuming that a particular situation would go on for ever. At the moment there is some cheap coal knocking about on the market, especially from South Africa. At one time there was a lot of cheap oil, but then in 1973-74 it went up to four times the price. This is a very short-sighted policy. That is probably one reason for the 10-year period in the Bill, so that the speculators can pounce at the appropriate time in case the market turns against them.

Mr. Illsley: My hon. Friend reinforces the point. It is a Bill for speculators. The sponsors have 10 years in which to chance their arm in the market for cheap imported coal. The promoter knows that British ports can bring in more coal than the Secretary of State believes. The promoter just wants his South African connections to get in early and cash in on the imports. We are led to believe that the world is awash with coal imports just waiting to be dumped in this country through the Humber and other ports. The promoter and his confederates just want to get in early to promote the South African coal industry.

If we consider the capacity of existing British ports and those already under construction, we can calculate the capacity for importing coal or, indeed, any other cargo. Taking the maximum ship size and the fastest unloading time for each port, this country could import 27·7 million tonnes of coal, assuming total devotion of all ports to those imports. In practice, the figure would clearly be much lower. In 1985, in the absence of any specific policy —we have heard from Conservative Members how the Nottinghamshire miners brought this about by keeping their lights on—12 million tonnes of coal were imported. So we already have facilities to bring in plenty of cheap coal.

Let us consider the maximum capacities of the various ports. Gladstone dock, Liverpool, can bring in 4 million tonnes. Southampton and Fawley could bring in 8 million tonnes. That is the other 25 per cent. of the South African connection. The ex-Shell refinery site, Tees and Hartlepool, could bring in a further 5 million tonnes. Kingsnorth on the Thames could bring in 5 million tonnes. The Humber ports could bring in 7 million tonnes if this Bill and the Associated British Ports (No. 2) Bill are passed. In Scotland, at the Hunterston terminal, Grangemouth and even Rothesay, 2 million tonnes could be brought in. That makes a total of 31 million tonnes. Added to the 27 million tonnes, that makes 58 million tonnes capacity. It is thus not true that a new facility is needed. The fact that the sponsors are allowed 10 years to build it makes that clear. Imports from the Humber are simply not needed.

The figures that I have given are somewhat theoretical, as they would entail total devotion of all ports to the import of coal. Nevertheless, 12 million tonnes were imported in 1985 and the CEGB stated that a further 30 million tonnes could rapidly be brought in. Adding the 31 million tonnes that I have mentioned to the 12 million tonnes that were actually imported gives a total of 40 million tonnes.

Every hon. Member who has contributed to the debate, apart from the promoter of the Bill, has pointed out that that scale of imports would have a devastating effect on the British coal industry, especially in south Yorkshire and Nottinghamshire. It could mean 50 to 60 further colliery closures and a further 60,000 jobs lost. The British coalfields would face the same devastation as we saw in 1985 and 1986. Since then, 107,000 jobs have been lost in the British mining industry. In my constituency unemployment is still about 17 per cent., and in

[Mr. Illsley]

neighbouring constituencies the figure is as high as 22 or 23 per cent. in some areas. We do not want that kind of devastation again.

As Conservative Members have said, we want our industry to achieve the targets set for it. In 1985, whole villages and communities were blighted by the rundown of the coal industry. The proposed imports are unnecessary. Our coal industry is on target to compete internationally and to break even by the end of this financial year, but even if British Coal dropped its price tomorrow the Government and the CEGB would still not buy that coal. They would look elsewhere. They would support the promoter of the Bill and his South African interests. They would support their comrades in South Africa, who make profits on the backs of exploited labour.

Why should that be? The Conservatives are always talking about competition in the market place. If British Coal dropped its prices, it would make sense for the electricity industry to buy British coal. Why should that not be so? The hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes will be aware of the recent evidence of Lord Marshall of Goring to the Select Committee. He said:

"However, British Coal also has 99 per cent. of our market and therefore there has to be some change"—

not because British coal is too expensive, but because it accounts for 99 per cent. of the market. The Conservatives want away from British Coal, and their motive has nothing to do with market prices.

We have heard that collieries are to close in the next two or three years, although they would have been profitable by 1995. The *Financial Times* coal report has stated that it would be a shortsighted policy and a mistake to close collieries that will be profitable in a few years' time. We have heard that the world price of coal will increase as soon as any country starts dipping into the market. Conservative Members have pointed out that coal is being dumped in this country, especially from Colombia, at far less than the cost of production. It is not merely expensive to reopen collieries once they have been closed—it is damned nigh impossible. We should not close those collieries, and we should not allow legislation of this kind to pass. I call on all hon. Members to vote against the Bill.

8.58 pm

Mr. Jim Lester (Broxstowe): I should like to draw together some points that have not been made and to support one of the remarks of the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner). My hon. Friend the Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown) is promoting the Bill because of a constituency interest. To link the Bill with South Africa, as some hon. Members have done, is not the way to deal with a private Bill. I am sure that Labour Members, because of their considerable rhetoric, will persuade many of their colleagues to follow them into the Division Lobby in voting against the Bill, but they failed to do so on the Associated British Ports (No. 2) Bill. There is no Whip for Conservative Members on this private Bill.

The hon. Member for Barnsley, Central (Mr. Illsley) gave an exposé of the speculative nature of the Bill. The House should take account of the 10-year period in which the work can be carried out. It is vital in this country's interests that we have a secure energy supply. I do not agree with the argument that British Coal wants to import coal. That is not in its interests, even when privatised. British Coal wants to check that the accurate world price of coal is reflected in the price that it pays. That is not unreasonable. We are talking about the percentage of coal imports necessary to balance the fact that British coal can be produced at a reasonable world price. That is in the interests of the industry as a whole and of the electricity boards.

Some of us have been involved thoughout our lives in the life of Nottinghamshire. We remember when people thought that coal was out of date because oil was so cheap. I vividly remember, as I am sure does the hon. Member for Ashfield (Mr. Haynes) because we were on the same authority, that we thought that we could build oil-fired power stations because we did not need our coal. Many Nottinghamshire pits were closed at that time and many of us put a great deal of effort and energy into finding alternative jobs for the miners. It was believed that oil would remain cheap for a long time. The hon. Member for Bolsover rightly pointed out that that changed.

The same could happen with cheap imported coal. It is good sense to make an investment on the basis of need. The hon. Member for Barnsley, Central said that there were sufficient coal-importing facilities to balance the price of British coal against the price of coal on the world market. We do not need this facility to ensure that the price paid by the CEGB, or the privatised body that takes over, is fair and reasonable. That need is not proven.

Speculation that cheap coal produced in the rest of the world will undermine the price of our coal for all time is dangerous. Investment in strip mining in many of the countries mentioned by my hon. Friends was carried out on the basis that oil prices would remain high. That is why many oil companies speculated in Australia, Colombia, and other countries. They thought that strip mining of that energy source would be profitable.

Mr. Michael Brown: My hon. Friend is right. It would be ridiculous from an investment point of view for anyone to consider putting a new port facility in North Killingholme solely on the basis of securing that facility's future through coal imports. I draw my hon. Friend's attention to the fact that this facility is not just for coal. As I said on 22 June, the purpose of the facility is to take bulk commodities—not only coal but

"grain, coal, coke, aggregates, fertilisers and minerals."—[*Official Report*, 22 June 1988; Vol 135, c. 1183.]

Mr. Lester: My hon. Friend may make the case for bulk commodities, but most of us recognise that the key bulk import that can be handled much more cheaply at this facility is coal.

The oil companies that invested in this production world wide have burnt their fingers. They have invested and overproduced, which is why the spot prices at Rotterdam are so low. My hon. Friend the Member for Nottingham, South (Mr. Brandon-Bravo) referred to China coming on to the world market. China is a big coal producer that wants hard currency and is not too bothered about the price. We have seen this all before. We do not need to rewrite history. Those of us who lived through the 1960s and saw the impact on the coal industry of the Labour Government's short-sighted policy do not want those events to happen again.

9.4 pm

Mr. Terry Patchett (Barnsley, East): I am pleased to catch your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker, so that I can speak in this debate. I shall be as brief as possible, as I am aware that many hon. Members with constituencies similar to mine wish to speak. These are all constituencies where employment has already been heavily hit by the Government's attitude to the coal industry and the closure programme of British Coal.

This private Bill may appear to be quite innocent, but its enactment would devastate our constituencies. I accept that this is a private Bill, but I am convinced that the Government support it, and that it is all part of their plans for the energy industry and the privatisation of that industry. Not only would their supporters be in a position to buy our power industry, but this Bill would provide the opportunity to import cheap, subsidised coal. I am satisfied that, although the Bill is not Whipped, as happens with other Bills, just before the vote is taken, we shall see the arrival in the Chamber of the so-called payroll vote.

Mr. Meale: My hon. Friend mentions the payroll vote. We are debating a vital subject, and Nottinghamshire has been mentioned many times, but, again, only three Nottinghamshire Members are on the Tory Benches, including the hon. Member for Nottingham, South (Mr. Brandon-Bravo). Is that not disgraceful?

Mr. Patchett: That needs no further comment from me.

My hon. Friend the Member for Barnsley, Central (Mr. Illsley) spoke about the Secretary of State's speech to the Institution of Mining Engineers, in which he said that imports are limited by handling facilities. This reflects the Government's attitude. Why did he have to make that comment? The Centre for Fiscal Studies, another Tory think tank, has called for 30 million tonnes or more of coal imports. This Bill and others like it will provide facilities that will meet that demand eventually. We are all aware of the recent visit of a high-powered delegation from South Africa, looking for markets, a delegation that had sympathy and support from Tory Back-Bench Members. All these considerations lead me to suspect that Tory Members will vote strongly in favour of the Bill.

To put the matter into sharper perspective, let us look at a recent decision by the South of Scotland Electricity Board to import 1 million tonnes of coal, part of this contract to be filled by Shell, itself subject to an anti-apartheid contract. Apparently, Shell has sent out subtenders for 20,000 tonnes of coal to be shipped from Rotterdam to the Firth of Forth. This means only one thing—a South African blend. Coal is shipped to the huge complex of Rotterdam and then blended and re-exported as Netherlands coal. There are suggestions that we already import 200,000 tonnes of South African coal in this way.

I could speak at great length about the morality of dealing with South Africa, but instead I shall speak about the inherent dangers of our electricity supply industry relying on subsidised cheap coal imports. This will last only until our coal industry is decimated. Even the chairman of British Coal has expressed fear for the future.

It is no accident that the CEGB is looking at coastal sites for future power stations and that privatisation is on its way. We are all aware that it has already applied for planning permission to build a new 1,800 MW station at West Burton, on the Trent. That will be the closest power station to North Killingholme cargo terminal. Therefore, if West Burton A and West Burton B were to be privatised, the CEGB would be in a good position to import coal for those stations from South Africa and other countries, which even now rely on child labour in some instances to provide cheap coal.

The use of South African coal may not come about immediately, but we all know that certain Tory Members have visited South Africa and discussed coal sanctions with the mining industry in that country. They are against the CEGB ban on South African coal and they may even have encouraged South African business interests to buy into the United Kingdom electricity supply industry on its privatisation.

I have already referred to the West Burton power stations and their likely use of imported coal.

Mr. Skinner: My hon. Friend has said that Tory Members have been to South Africa on paid visits and have come back to support Bills of this nature. He is absolutely right. Does he accept that they are subject to a system of apartheid voting in the House of Commons? The Tory Whips have told the few Nottingham Members bordering on the coalfield areas, "You can have one system of voting and you can vote with the Labour party, as long as you acknowledge that the rest of us will have another form of apartheid voting. We will vote in substantial numbers for South Africa and South African coal." That is what the game is all about—an apartheid system of Tory voting.

Mr. Patchett: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for exposing some of the Tory Members' double talk on apartheid and their support for South Africa.

Mr. Brandon-Bravo: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Patchett: I have just given way.

The Bill would enable the North Killingholme cargo terminal to import 2 million tonnes of coal per year, which would be aimed at the Trent and Aire power station markets. If that were to happen, constituencies such as mine would be devastated. We already have one of the highest unemployment figures in the country and there is little prospect for the young unemployed. The effects of the Bill are unthinkable.

It is ironic that the problems will also apply in constituencies in Nottingham which supported the Government during the miners' strike and betrayed their comrades in Yorkshire and other areas. It is a poor reward for their treachery. I hope that the leaders of the Union of Democratic Mineworkers and its membership realise the consequences that the Bill will have on their communities. It may be that North Killingholme has an unemployment problem, for which I have every sympathy. However, to steal jobs from other areas is madness and a poor investment.

The Bill does not have the interests of the country at heart. One can imagine the effect on our balance of payments and the likely increase in costs to our energy industry when the Government have finally decimated our coal industry. It will not be the greedy few who will benefit from privatisation——

Mr. Andy Stewart: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Patchett: I said that I would be brief so that all interested Members would be able to take part in the debate.

Mr. Stewart *rose*——

Mr. Patchett: The hon. Member for Sherwood (Mr. Stewart)——

Mr. Skinner: Will my hon. Friend give way to me?

Mr. Patchett: Yes, I will give way to my hon. Friend.

Mr. Skinner: My hon. Friend knows who his friends are. Does he realise that during the debate on the Associated British Ports (No. 2) Bill the hon. Member for Sherwood (Mr. Stewart) sent a letter to some of his Tory friends telling them to stay on for dinner? He said, "Hang on for dinner." He got nobody to back him. The people to whom he sent the letter stuck up two fingers. They turned up and voted with the Tory Front-Bench Members and Tory Whips. He sent out that letter and did not receive any support apart from that of a handful of hon. Members in the Nottinghamshire area.

Mr. Patchett: The information given by my hon. Friend is fascinating. Some of the information that one hears in the Chamber is remarkable. I hope that the hon. Member for Sherwood will listen and learn.

Mr. Andy Stewart: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The letter to which the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) referred resulted in 300 Conservative Members staying away from the House, which was its objective. Of those who voted for the Bill, four were parliamentary private secretaries but there was only one Cabinet Minister. The rest stayed away.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Let us return to the debate.

Mr. Patchett: The hon. Member for Sherwood should sit quietly, listen and learn.

It will not be the greedy few—who will benefit from privatisation—but the public who will have to pick up the bill for the increases in unemployment. The customer will suffer increased electricity prices because no one will buy into an industry that is making a loss.

The Government's strategy, under the guise of a private Bill, is government by deceit, which I find abhorrent. I hope that all hon. Members will recognise that and show their disgust in the Lobby.

9.17 pm

Mr. David Hinchliffe (Wakefield): The purpose of the Bill and of the Associated British Ports (No. 2) Bill, which we discussed last week, is clear. It is designed, as other hon. Members have said in detail, to open up the heart of the British coalfields to import penetration. It is designed specifically to shunt foreign coal on to the doorsteps of the power stations in the Aire and Trent valleys, which currently are supplied by the Yorkshire coalfield and especially the midlands coalfield. The hon. Member for Mid-Worcestershire (Mr. Forth), who is a friend of South Africa, is happily nodding his head at that fact.

I have three objections to this legislation. First, such imports would be the kiss of death for the coal mine that is left in my constituency and to the Yorkshire and midlands coalfields. There is evidence to prove that fact.

My second objection is that the provison of specialised additional port facilities—we understand the connections of the hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown)—will boost the import of South African coal.

Mr. Eric Forth (Mid-Worcestershire): And Polish.

Mr. Hinchliffe: I am sorry that the hon. Gentleman should try to intervene. The Bill raises moral issues that concern me, my constituents and other Labour Members.

My third objection has been made effectively by my hon. Friends and by some Conservative Members. It is economic nonsense, with British Coal moving to profitability and being competitive in international markets, to allow vast amounts of imports to penetrate our market.

I make no apology for taking a parochial attitude to this matter, as other hon. Members have also done. My family has had connections with the mining industry in the Yorkshire area for nearly 200 years. The coal industry remains the life-blood of the local economy in Wakefield, the rest of Yorkshire and, indeed, the midlands, and I am deeply worried about its future. The industry is fighting for survival.

Let me give some facts and figures which are relevant to the debate. When the Government came to power in 1979, the Wakefield constituency had 4,395 jobs in mining at eight pits. Now we have 565 jobs at one pit complex, the Denby Grange Calder drift complex. That huge reduction worries me and my constituents, as well as my hon. Friends. One aspect that has not arisen out of this debate or our previous debates on similar legislation is the knock-on effect of the reductions on other industries. I am especially anxious about the engineering industry and the service sector. People forget that corner shops and supermarkets and other places of employment—especially for women—are directly affected by the reduction of employment in the mining industry.

I shall concentrate on the impact of the figures on engineering in my constituency. British Ropes, a famous company of long standing, closed down in 1986, with a loss of 180 jobs. That closure was directly related to the rundown of the coal industry. In 1986 British Jeffrey Diamond, a famous company with a record second to none in manufacturing and exporting mining machinery, employed 950 people in my constituency; it now has 780 employees there. There have been 90 redundancies in the past two months alone. That, too, is directly related to the Government's deliberate running down of the coal industry. Fletcher Sutcliffe Wilde, another company in my constituency, is a major exporter. We should be concerned about such companies, given the drop in exports and the balance of trade figures announced last week. That company employed 781 people in my constituency in 1981, but the figure is now down to 385. There have been 30 redundancies at that company in the past two months. One point made forcefully by the management of that company when I visited it recently is that the rundown of British pits makes it more and more difficult for it to market machinery for export. The company needs British pits to display machinery and to show people from abroad the expertise available in the British mining and engineering industries. The management argued strongly that the engineering and mining supplies industry depends heavily on the prosperity of British Coal. We should consider that in the context of the Bill.

In Wakefield metropolitan district, there were 15,061 mining jobs in 1983; now there are 4,252; and 2,225 jobs have disappeared so far in 1988. A research report from Leeds university published only today shows the full economic cost to the area. The hon. Member for Nottingham, South (Mr. Brandon-Bravo) talked about massive wasteful subsidies. Let us consider the figures in the report. Since 1985 the reduction in the Wakefield metropolitan district has cost British Coal £65,585,000 in redundancy payments alone. It has cost Wakefield metropolitan district about £5·5 million in loss of rate revenue and resources to meet the additional needs of unemployed miners. It has cost central Government about £169 million in redundancy contributions, loss of income tax, rent and rate rebates and unemployment benefits, and it has cost £884,000 in European Community redundancy contributions. That is a total of £241 million. Conservative Members refer to massive wasteful subsidies, but look at what it is costing British taxpayers and ratepayers to keep people unemployed in the coal industry.

Mr. Allan Rogers (Rhondda): When my hon. Friend talks about subsidies, will he take account of the fact that agriculture receives subsidies which far exceed those received by mining? Would he like to reflect on why Conservative Members never oppose such subsidies?

Mr. Hinchliffe: My hon. Friend is right to contrast the Government's attitude to those two industries. It is important to kill the idea that when a pit is shut down it costs the public no more through subsidy. The economy is drained by our having people chucked on the dole and the other costs which I have mentioned and which are described in the report published today by Wakefield metropolitan council.

We often talk about Government assistance to areas such as mine, but Wakefield metropolitan district has received no assistance, bearing in mind the number of jobs that have been lost. I shall give the Government's record of assistance to the area. In 1982, they scrapped the industrial development certificate system, which had a direct bearing on northern constituencies and districts such as mine. Also in 1982, they took away assisted area status and, most recently, in 1985, they took away our eligibility for urban development grant, which we had previously used well to generate employment.

I should like to say something about South African coal. My hon. Friend the Member for Barnsley, West and Penistone (Mr. McKay), who unfortunately is not in the Chamber at the moment——

Mr. Forth: He could not give a toss.

Mr. Hinchliffe: If the hon. Gentleman wants to make a point, I shall happily give way to him. I know that he represents South African interests. If he wants to say his piece, I shall give way to him.

Mr. Forth: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving way. He will recall that when this matter was last before the House, about 50 of his 229 colleagues cared enough about the issue to be in the House early on a Thursday evening to vote on it. It is all very well for the hon. Gentleman to lecture us about morality, but when enough of his colleagues turn up in the House to back their words with action, I shall be impressed.

Mr. Hinchliffe: I would not waste my time lecturing the hon. Gentleman on morality.

I shall continue with the point that I was about to make. My hon. Friend mentioned an event that took place in his constituency yesterday. I attended, but not as an invited guest. We were commemorating the 150th anniversary of the Husker pit disaster, when 26 children were killed as a direct result of exploitation by mine owners.

I am glad that the hon. Member for Mid-Worcestershire is leaving, as my argument would be wasted on Conservative Members who are lackeys of the South African Government. That is the job that they are here to do. They are here to give excuses for apartheid.

Mr. Redmond: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I do not know whether you heard what the hon. Member for Mid-Worcestershire said as he was leaving the Chamber, but I understood that he was leaving to secure a Division. I hope that that is not the case. If it is, is he not presuming your good nature and the policy of the Chair? I hope that the hon. Gentleman will say that that is not the case.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Let us get on with the debate.

Mr. Hinchliffe: There is a clear similarity between what is being commemorated in Yorkshire today—the 150th anniversary of a pit disaster in which 26 children were killed—and what is happening this very day in South Africa and in the mining industries of other Fascist regimes. Lives were cheap 150 years ago. Children's lives were cheap. I went along yesterday because my great grandfather was a 10-year-old child in that area when those 26 children were killed. I went because there are family associations and memories of the event, and I feel deeply about it. It nauseates me when I see Conservative Members grinning happily at what is happening in South Africa, where 1,000 miners are killed every year. Those people are promoting South African coal.

The fact that scores of miners are still being detained following the strike in South Africa is a disgrace in this day and age. We all know that South African coal is coming into this country. A company called Optimum, in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Hemsworth (Mr. Buckley), already openly imports South African coal. That is a disgrace. Conservative Members want to import even more South African coal, despite the moral implications.

I must say something about the role of the hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes. On the first occasion that we debated the principles of the two Bills, I said that the South African coal industry had recently formed in Britain an organisation called the Office of South African Coal specifically to advance its case. *Anti-apartheid News* said in January:

> "A group of Conservative Members led by the hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes is believed to have connections with the office of the South African coal industry."

On 5 April 1988 *The Times* noted the visit to South Africa of a delegation of Conservative Members who claimed that the South African coal industry should not have sanctions applied by Britain or by the EEC. Of course, that delegation included the hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes, who is openly promoting the Bill.

Following that visit people from the South African coal industry came to Britain looking for ways and means to support the moves to import South African coal.

Mr. Skinner: Will my hon. Friend——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Is this a point of order?

Mr. Skinner: No. My hon. Friend is giving way. There is more to say yet on the South African matter.

Did my hon. Friend notice that while he was speaking about South African interests and all their lackeys, one of

[Mr. Skinner]

the Government Whips, who is sitting near to Mr. Deputy Speaker, spoke to the Bill's promoter—another South African supporter in the House—and said that there would be a vote before 10 pm? That really is an attack upon the Chair because it presupposes that the Government Whips and the promoter of South African interests have it in their power to close the debate. I suggest, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that you have a cast-iron opportunity to prove that you will not be a lackey of the Tory Front Bench. You must refuse that closure. I hope that my hon. Friend agrees with that.

Mr. Rogers: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. If such a Division were called, would it be in order for Conservative Members who pay many visits to South Africa, financed by South African——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. That is quite hypothetical. We must continue with the debate.

Mr. Hinchliffe: My hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) made some important points. It is disgraceful that the British Parliament is being so openly used. Other legislation has been put aside to discuss openly a Bill that promotes the interests of the most obnoxious regime in the world.

Mr. Illsley: Before my hon. Friend concludes his remarks, he should refer to the frequency with which the two Bills have come before the House during the past two or three weeks. He should also mention that the Government have been trying to push through these port facility Bills before the proposed legislation to privatise the electricity industry.

Mr. Hinchliffe: As a new Member, I am increasingly surprised by the way that this place works. Quite frankly, what has happened stinks. I say to people in the Strangers' Gallery that if they want a really good seat in this place, all that they need to do is to find a soft Tory Member to promote private legislation. They can then sit in the Under Gallery on the Floor of the Chamber and have an even better view of what is happening. It is interesting to note how those with a special interest in the Bill are sitting in that special Gallery while other members of the public are sitting——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I realise that the hon. Gentleman is a fairly new Member, but it is not in order to refer to the Galleries.

Mr. Hinchliffe: I accept that, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I raised a point of order during the debate on the sister Bill because it surprised me that we seemed to accept that people from private commercial companies could sit in the Chamber and hand briefs to the promoters of such obnoxious legislation. That is disgraceful.

On several occasions, the hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes has been asked to make it clear that he has no pecuniary interest in the legislation. He has stated that he has not, despite the fact that the South African coal industry paid for his freebie trip there. No doubt he will have more freebies in future. Shortly after I came here, I vividly recall seeing my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover being chucked out of this place for saying what I believed to be the truth when he raised the issue of another hon. Member who had been involved in promoting the privatisation of British Telecom, and who now sits on the board and gets a good rake-off because of what he did here. What concerns me is not whether the hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes is getting something now, but what he will get in the future. I am damn sure that he will get someting out of this before he is finished.

Mr. Bill Michie (Sheffield, Heeley): I agree with the allegations that have been made today about certain Conservative Back Benchers. Does my hon. Friend agree that if the payroll vote goes through the Lobby tonight in favour of the Bill, they will be just as much implicated as anybody?

Mr. Hinchliffe: I agree with my hon. Friend, who has anticipated what will happen tonight and during the remaining stages as the Bill passes through the House.

Finally—I am aware that many of my hon. Friends wish to speak—I come back to the issue that has been stressed time and again by my hon. Friends and by certain Conservative Members. There is every reason to believe that British Coal will be able to compete with imported coal by 1995. All the information available proves that argument, and it is available not just from British Coal, the NUM or, dare I say it, the other union whose name I have forgotten. Other hon. Members have quoted the *Financial Times* article of 9 May by Prior and McClosky—an independent objective analysis—that demonstrated that, by 1995, our industry will be able to compete in the world. The hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes is trying to smash that industry and the jobs in our areas. We must defend those jobs before any change takes place.

It is vital to the interests of my constituents, the rest of the Yorkshire coalfield, the midlands coalfield and elsewhere in Britain that we retain a viable coal industry and do not destroy the pits that, on any objective analysis, will be competitive in the near future.

9.37 pm

Mrs. Llin Golding (Newcastle-under-Lyme): I oppose the proposals. The miners of Staffordshire say that we should not be investing in ports to facilitate the importing of coal, but that we should be investing in British Coal. It is already clear that the development of the Gladstone dock at Liverpool to supply Fiddlers Ferry power station with the bulk of its 4·5 million tonnes per year is likely to be harmful. I am told that those imports will threaten jobs at Silverdale colliery in my constituency and the jobs at Hem Heath colliery, where many of my constituents work. If imported coal were used at Rugeley and Ironbridge, that would add to the threat to Hem Heath. It would not be right to put those pits at risk by the production of British opencast coal. To threaten them with coal imports is economic lunacy.

In the Staffordshire coalfield, Silverdale pit has done well. It has been a model pit, the men have worked well, investment has taken place and production records broken. No imported coal that puts those jobs at risk can be described as cheap—it would be very expensive. Even on the Department of Employment's doctored figures there are more than 8 per cent. unemployed in my constituency, and we must not add to that number.

Taking coals to Newcastle—my Newcastle—would be lunacy in social and economic terms. What is the point of producing lower-cost electricity—lower-cost only for the moment—if it means that we have to pay out more in unemployment benefit? But it is not only a waste of money, which is estimated at £21 million a year by the unemployment unit for Newcastle. What worries me is the waste of men's lives. Our miners should be producing coal, and the Bill brings a threat to miners throughout the coalfield. The immediate impact of the work at Immingham, North Killingholme and King's Lynn will be on pits in Yorkshire, north Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire, where eight collieries and 9,000 miners' jobs could go. Engineers estimate that the work at Immingham and King's Lynn will cost £34·5 million, and that the work at North Killingholme will cost £4,209,000, but they have ignored completely the real costs to our mining communities and to those who produce mining equipment.

The implications for Yorkshire, north Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire are clear, but the story will not end there. The attack on our mining industry will continue and spread. Efficient, profitable pits will close as the Central Electricity Generating Board takes advantage of coal dumped here. Colombia plans to sell coal at a great loss, as the Australians have done. It is not only their loss, it is our loss. The *Financial Times* made it clear that protecting the British coal industry would make economic sense. The result of buying cheap coal now will be dearer electricity in the long run. That will hit many other jobs, too. The Government have devastated our industrial base, and the Bill will add to that devastation.

9.41 pm

Mr. George J. Buckley (Hemsworth): I am pleased to be able to speak in the debate. I have listened to the debate during the two days allocated to it, and I recognise that there is a conflict of interest between British Coal and foreign imported coal, especially South African. Conservative Members seem to be sensitive to any mention of South Afrcia, and it is not surprising that the sponsor of the Bill, the hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown), recently visited that country and has been associated with the mining industry in southern Africa.

This is a debate about economics. The economic case made by hon. Members for the North Killingholme port does not bear examination. The hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes says that he has promoted the Bill in the interests of his constituency. That is questionable, but at least it is an honest statement. But what he and the House must consider is whether his constituency's interests are more important than the nation's interests. There is no doubt which interest is paramount to Opposition Members. If the Bill is successful, it will cause devastation in other parts of the United Kingdom. I understand that the hon. Gentleman wishes to generate employment in his constituency, but the Bill will have far-reaching consequences for other constituencies.

The Secretary of State for Energy told the Institution of Mining Engineers that one of the factors affecting the imposition of imports on the mining industry was the limitation of the facilities for importing and handling such coal. Since then, private Bills have been brought in to rectify that. It is clear why they are being promoted. My hon. Friend the Member for Barnsley, Central (Mr. Illsley) said that there is more capacity for importing coal than is being used by the importing companies. I suggest that these new ports and facilities are being promoted to handle larger tonnages with larger vessels. At Killingholme, for instance, facilities will be provided for vessels that can import 65,000 tonnes. The Associated British Ports (No. 2) Bill will provide facilities for 100,000 tonne vessels. Imported coal is already coming in from Rotterdam and other continental ports, but how much more profitable it will be if it arrives in vessels of larger tonnage.

It is obvious that the hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes is not concerned with the economic argument. He is happy to accept the promoters' praise, if not financial appreciation, for promoting the Bill.—*[Interruption.]*

Mrs. Alice Mahon (Halifax): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. A Conservative Member has just used a very offensive term. I ask him to withdraw it. It offends all decency.

Mr. Speaker: I heard no offensive term. I was listening with great care to what the hon. Gentleman was saying. I hope no such term was used.

I may say to those hon. Members below the Gangway, whom I have been watching rather than listening to, that they should listen to the speeches and not chat to each other.

Mr. Buckley: I did not hear the offensive word to which my hon. Friend referred, but the offensive word that I have heard constantly in this debate is apartheid. It is obvious that the Government, unlike the Governments of most nations, are not prepared to turn their face against it. This Bill presents the Government with an opportunity to oppose apartheid by opposing its passage through the House—but they are supporting it. By promoting this private Bill the Government are assisting the Botha Government in South Africa.

The hon. Member for Nottingham, South (Mr. Brandon-Bravo) made a valid point about why there is a surplus of low-priced coal in the international market. I agree with his view that there is a bulge in international production of coal as a result of the large investment that took place after the escalation of coal prices because of the middle east crisis. There is now a flood of cheap coal on the market because that capital investment's results have come on to the international market. This coal must be sold at all costs, and the most natural place for it to find a market is in the United Kingdom, because of the Government's intention to privatise the electricity industry. The chairman of the electricity board told the Select Committee on Energy that the CEGB was in a position to import 30 million tonnes of coal in the next three years.

There seems to be a combination of circumstances encouraging the promoters of the Bill to increase the facilities for handling coal. The chairman of what could be a future privatised industry says that they are eager and prepared to take an increasing amount of imported coal, from 30 million tonnes up to even 50 million tonnes. That is their preference, rather than using indigenously produced coal. We have a major national asset of millions of tonnes of coal reserves that could be mined in this country. One must balance mining that coal with the consequences of not mining it.

Importing 30 million tonnes of coal, as outlined by the chairman of the CEGB, Lord Marshall, would have devastating consequences beyond the coal mining industry. It would probably increase the number of unemployed by nearly 80,000, including miners, at a cost

[Mr. Buckley]

to the nation of over £500 million in unemployment benefit alone. That would be the consequence of a preference for coal from South Africa and other countries, costing the taxpayer over £500 million. There would be an estimated 47,000 redundancies in the mining industry, costing the Exchequer well over £1 billion. Those matters must be taken into account by the House before it gives a Second Reading to the Bill and the Bills consequential upon it.

Recently the Government announced the devastating balance of payments figures. We shall increase the problem by a minimum of an estimated £1 billion by importing 30 million tonnes of coal.

Mr. Bill Michie: My hon. Friend is giving realistic figures for where the economy is at present, with the imbalance of payments and the problem with imports and exports, yet we are now at the mercy of foreign competitors in respect of engineering steels, for which we argued the same case in the House. The Government have still not learnt their lesson and will do the same for coal.

Mr. Buckley: I thank my hon. Friend for his intervention. He is following my train of thought on the economic argument.

Speeches have been made mainly by hon. Members representing mining constituencies because of the obvious and glaring effect that the passing of the Bill will have on their constituencies.

Mr. Illsley: Will my hon. Friend reflect on the possibility that nuclear waste and materials could come through the port facilities?

Mr. Buckley: I thank my hon. Friend for his intervention. He made quite a few points in his speech about the byelaws that the Bill will give the company. A chemical company could be given the authority to dispose of substances. That leaves open the inclusion of nuclear waste. I understand that the hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes was opposed to such waste being disposed of in his constituency.

Mr. Hinchliffe: My hon. Friend makes an important point about waste. Is he aware that, of the 60,000 tonnes of special waste—dangerous substances—that the United Kingdom imports from Europe because European countries cannot dispose of them due to environmental regulations, 20,000 tonnes comes up the Humber? Is he further aware that it is highly likely that these port facilities will be used to increase even further the import of such waste?

Mr. Meale: Is my hon. Friend aware that Conservative Members who have not been present for the debate are now streaming into the Chamber to force a vote rather than to allow hon. Members to continue arguing these points?

Mr. Buckley: That is a valid point. I have noticed the sudden increase in attendance in the Chamber.

Recently, in his speech to the Institution of Mining Engineers, the Secretary of State for Energy pointed out that the Government supported British Coal. He claimed that £9,000 billion had been invested in British Coal——

Mr. Michael Brown *rose in his place and claimed to move,* That the Question be now put.

Question put, That the Question be now put:—

The House divided: Ayes 165, Noes 114.

Division No. 394] **[9.56 pm**

AYES

Allason, Rupert
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Ashdown, Paddy
Atkinson, David
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowis, John
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nicholas
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Conway, Derek
Cope, Rt Hon John
Couchman, James
Critchley, Julian
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
French, Douglas
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gow, Ian
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Griffiths, Sir Eldon *(Bury St E')*
Ground, Patrick
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Harris, David
Hayward, Robert
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Holt, Richard
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howells, Geraint
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Lang, Ian
Lawrence, Ivan
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
Maclean, David
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Maude, Hon Francis
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Paice, James
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Price, Sir David
Redwood, John
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Steen, Anthony
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thatcher, Rt Hon Margaret
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*

Thorne, Neil
Thurnham, Peter
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, John

Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wood, Timothy

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Eric Forth and
Mr. David Davis.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Alexander, Richard
Allen, Graham
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Battle, John
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Buchan, Norman
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Cousins, Jim
Cummings, John
Dalyell, Tam
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Doran, Frank
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eadie, Alexander
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Faulds, Andrew
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Derek
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*
Golding, Mrs Llin
Grocott, Bruce
Haynes, Frank
Hinchliffe, David
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Knowles, Michael

Latham, Michael
Leadbitter, Ted
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
McAllion, John
Macdonald, Calum A.
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
McLoughlin, Patrick
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Maxton, John
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Robinson, Geoffrey
Rogers, Allan
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Steinberg, Gerry
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Strang, Gavin
Turner, Dennis
Wall, Pat
Wareing, Robert N.
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Michael Welsh and
Mr. Kevin Barron.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Question put accordingly, That the Bill be now read a Second time:—

The House divided: Ayes 156, Noes 120.

Division No. 395] **[10.9 pm**

AYES

Allason, Rupert
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Atkinson, David
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowis, John
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nicholas
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carttiss, Michael
Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Conway, Derek
Cope, Rt Hon John
Couchman, James
Critchley, Julian
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Day, Stephen
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Emery, Sir Peter
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
French, Douglas
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gow, Ian
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Griffiths, Sir Eldon *(Bury St E')*
Ground, Patrick
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Harris, David
Hayward, Robert
Holt, Richard
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*

Lang, Ian
Lawrence, Ivan
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
Maclean, David
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Maude, Hon Francis
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Paice, James
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Price, Sir David
Redwood, John
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Steen, Anthony
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Thatcher, Rt Hon Margaret
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Trippier, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann

Winterton, Nicholas
Wood, Timothy

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Eric Forth and
Mr. David Davis.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Alexander, Richard
Allen, Graham
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashdown, Paddy
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Battle, John
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Buchan, Norman
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Cousins, Jim
Cummings, John
Dalyell, Tam
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Doran, Frank
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eadie, Alexander
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Faulds, Andrew
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Derek
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*
Golding, Mrs Llin
Grocott, Bruce
Haynes, Frank
Hinchliffe, David
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Geraint
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Knowles, Michael
Latham, Michael
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
McAllion, John
Macdonald, Calum A.
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
McLoughlin, Patrick
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Maxton, John
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Rogers, Allan
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Steinberg, Gerry
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Strang, Gavin
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Turner, Dennis
Wall, Pat
Wareing, Robert N.
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Kevin Barron and
Mr. Michael Welsh.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Bill read a Second time and referred to the Examiners of Petitions for Private Bills.

Mr. Skinner: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. A substantial number of hon. Members took part in the Divisions on the closure and the principle of the Bill, including the Prime Minister. On previous occasions I have raised the question of the private Bill procedure and the fact that it is now being abused. At one time, private Bills were geographically constrained and hon. Members could serve on Committees without the fear being engendered that they might be tarnished by their activities. On Bills such as the North Killingholme Bill, which look after the interests of South Africa and big business, ensuring a turn-out of Cabinet Ministers, there cannot be an hon. Member on either side of the House who could be regarded as not being involved in the issue. Therefore, the private Bill procedure must be radically reformed.

Mr. Speaker: I think that I can help the hon. Gentleman. I share his concern, as does the House. A Committee is looking into the matter, and the hon. Gentleman's duty is to make his representations to it.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. I am a member of that Committee and I must endorse the views expressed by my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner). I cannot see how it is possible for the Bill to proceed to its Committee stage. On previous Bills we have looked round for hon. Members on either side of the House who could deal with them in an objective and impartial fashion. On that basis, the North Killingholme Bill cannot be considered to be a genuinely private Bill, and I have no alternative but to recommend to the Committee tomorrow that the Bill should not be considered as a private Bill.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Ordered,

That, at this day's sitting, the Electricity (Financial Provisions) (Scotland) Bill and the Legal Aid Bill *[Lords]*, may be proceeded with, though opposed, until any hour.—*[Mr. Dorrell.]*

Electricity (Financial Provisions) (Scotland) Bill

Postponed proceeding on Question, That the clause be read a Second time, *resumed.*

10.24 pm

Mr. Lang: When the debate was adjourned, I had been answering points raised by hon. Members on the treatment of debt. I had explained that the boards' debts were being fully serviced on a commercial basis.

Looking ahead to privatisation, I was about to say that the treatment of debt, like all other aspects of the capital structure of the industry, will be determined nearer the time of flotation in the light of a range of factors. Those might include market conditions, recent results and the trading prospects of the companies and the market's perception of them. It will be carefully designed to ensure a viable and robust industry while optimising the proceeds to the taxpayer.

The hon. Member for Edinburgh, Central (Mr. Darling) suggested that interest charges on existing debt might raise prices. I must disagree because the capital investment giving rise to interest charges will help to keep the industry modern and efficient and will secure a stable price base. The hon. Gentleman said that he had yet to see electricity prices reduce in real terms, but over the past six years electricity prices in Scotland have reduced in real terms by no less than 9 per cent.

The hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) and the hon. Member for Edinburgh, Central asked about decommissioning costs. Provision is already being made for such costs, which must vary from time to time to take account of changing circumstances—for example, the change by British Nuclear Fuels Ltd. in the way in which it estimates decommissioning costs to bring them in line with the rest of the industry, or the SSEB's decision to end the Chapelcross contract, which led to the need for provision for costs to be made several years ahead.

The amount provided for long-term decommissioning of the SSEB's nuclear power stations in 1986-87 was £27 million, bringing total provision until the end of March of that year to £182·6 million. The industry will continue to make provision to meet those future costs. I assure the Committee that the borrowing anticipated under the increased limits proposed in the Bill will be mainly for capital investment.

The hon. Member for Glasgow, Maryhill (Mrs. Fyfe), who unfortunately is not present, referred to various consumer concerns about deteriorating service and rising prices.

Mr. Dewar: I almost blush as I rise, but it just occurred to me that I am remarkably ignorant about this matter. The Minister said that £27 million had been set aside for decommissioning costs and that this process has been going on for a number of years. Does he mean that a separate fund has been built up for that purpose or is this a notional figure to be set against future borrowing expenditure? I am not clear, put in those simple and almost prime ministerial terms, whether there is a separate bank account in which money has been put for this purpose.

Mr. Lang: These are liabilities provided for by assets in the companies' balance sheets.

Following privatisation, the industry will comprise two dynamic businesses that will be responsive to the requirements of their customers. They will be under commercial and competitive pressure from other fuels and electricity suppliers to deliver what the customer wants.

Mr. Dewar: I have no accountancy background and am struggling on the ABC of this matter. I take it from the Minister's remarks that there is no separate fund for decommissioning costs and that there is a notional provision on the balance sheet. Will he say what will happen under privatisation? Is it a liability that will be inherited in that form by the successor company?

Mr. Lang: The structure of the company's balance sheet will be reconsidered at the time of privatisation. It will be the Government's purpose to ensure that the electricity boards are left with adequate cover to protect them against all foreseeable liabilities. If they were not protected, the companies could not be privatised.

Mr. Home Robertson: The Minister has explained to my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) that the money does not exist and is only an idea on a balance sheet. He said that the Government will provide for all foreseeable liabilities, but will he say what is their view of what the foreseeable liability will be of decommissioning any nuclear installation? Have they worked out how they will do it and how much it will cost?

Mr. Lang: Most of the anticipated liabilities are covered by existing contracts, so a forward estimate is not required. When the SSEB decided to terminate the Chapelcross contract it had to make provision for decommissioning costs arising from that contract and provide for them in the year of termination of the contract.

Mr. Dalyell: On a point of order, Miss Boothroyd. Is it in order for hon. Members to carry on conversations at the Bar of the House when we are trying to listen to the debate? It is very distracting.

The Second Deputy Chairman: Hon. Members often carry on conversations at the Bar of the House; it has happened every day of my 15 years here. However, it would help if they did so in quieter voices which do not carry through the Chamber.

Mr. Bruce Millan (Glasgow, Govan): The Minister mentioned decommissioning contracts. I do not know what he means by that. As far as I am aware, there are no decommissioning contracts for Hunterston, for example. Perhaps there are. Is that what the Minister is saying? If so, it is news to the rest of the House.

Mr. Lang: I was referring to the contract between the SSEB and BNFL over the supply of electricity from Chapelcross. It is necessary for the industry to anticipate future decommissioning costs and to make provision for them. It will be necessary for the privatised companies to have that provision, too. Otherwise investors will wonder how to place a price upon the companies.

The hon. Members for Garscadden and for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) referred to ownership of the grid and to the possible structure of the grid company. I draw their attention to the fact that the two companies in Scotland will be vertically integrated companies. In other words, they will each own and operate their own generating

[Mr. Lang]

systems, their own transmission systems and their own distribution systems. Each company will have wheeling rights across the other's transmission system.

In advancing his arguments about the English electricity industry, the hon. Member for Linlithgow seemed to forget that the problems that he foresees—which he may wish to pursue with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Energy—are not problems that can be foreseen in the Scottish context. The hon. Gentleman referred to his visit to Southwark, and said that the grid was controlled from there. I have not been to Southwark, incidentally; the hon. Gentleman has the advantage in that respect. I urge him to visit Perth, which I have visited. It is from Perth that the North of Scotland Hydro-Electric Board controls the different sources of supplies of electricity for its area. I would also urge him to visit Kirkintilloch, where the sources of energy from the two boards are co-ordinated under the joint generating agreement. That is done under a merit order system, capitalising on the advantage of a wide range of diverse supply which allows the generation and supply of electricity at the most economic cost to the boards at any given time.

The hon. Member for Linlithgow referred to the danger of fragmentation and the possibility of blackouts. That is not a problem that we foresee in the Scottish context. The boards will continue to be responsible for the stability of the system in Scotland and there is no reason for any diminution of standards. The boards will be under an obligation to supply and the system will be overseen by the regulator, so the technical case that the hon. Member for Linlithgow made is taken fully into account in developing the structural details. In a vertically integrated system, which is what we contemplate, the companies will have full control of transmission and generation and hence will be able to ensure system stability. As the hon. Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson) said, the substantial surplus and diversity of capacity in Scotland makes the scenario painted by the hon. Member for Linlithgow highly improbable, to say the least.

The hon. Member for Garscadden referred to the remarks made this afternoon by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Energy to the effect that no individual or group will have a controlling interest in the privatised companies. I am happy to reassure him that the same considerations will apply to the Scottish industry. No individual or group will have a controlling interest, and we are at present considering the most appropriate of the options open to us to achieve that.

Mr. Dewar: I await further developments with interest. The Minister said that no group or individual would have a controlling interest, but there is also the question of foreign ownership. The Minister has said that foreign shareholdings are not necessarily a bad thing, but even he conceded that foreign control—not only by one interest—might be dangerous, given that electricity is such a basic utility. Are we to have a limitation such as the 15 per cent. limit provided in the articles of association of Rolls-Royce? Will such a provision be introduced in this case?

Mr. Lang: As I said, the precise mechanism has not yet been decided upon, but the reference that I made to no individual or group having a controlling interest would apply equally in the foreign context.

Mr. Dewar: I am sorry to press the Minister, but there is a big distinction. There might be a mechanism whereby one group, one concert party or perhaps one individual, was limited as to the percentage of the equity that it or he could own. That would not necessarily prevent foreign ownership in a broader sense. In other words, a large percentage of the equity could pass abroad—perhaps to a number of different holdings. We seek protection against that, too.

Mr. Lang: It is certainly part of our purpose to ensure that foreign ownership could not develop, in the same way as we do not want any individual group or individual to secure a substantial proportion of the company. We shall seek to achieve that by using the appropriate mechanism, on which we have not yet decided.

Mr. Millan: Will the Minister clarify the question of foreign ownership? For example, in the case of Rolls-Royce it was possible to write those inhibitions into the articles of association as a national security interest was involved because of its importance to defence. In those circumstances, those inhibitions did not fall foul of the usual European Community rules. What is the position of the electricity industry in relation to the European Community? Is it permissible to interpret "foreign" for this purpose to include countries in the European Community?

Mr. Lang: Nearer the time when we come to prepare the legislation, we will certainly wish to ensure that nothing we do infringes any requirements of the European Community.

The hon. Member for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Wilson) raised the question of Hunterston, and argued that our manifesto did not contain a commitment to privatise the nuclear electricity industry. However, it did contain a commitment to privatise the electriciy industry, of which the nuclear component forms a large part. I cannot help wondering whether the hon. Gentleman told his constituents through the *Largs and Millport Weekly News*, when seeking election, that his party was committed to phasing out the nuclear generation industry in Scotland. The number of jobs that would have been lost in his constituency as a result of that commitment—to say nothing of the 30 per cent. rise in electricity prices, with their damaging consequences for manufacturing industry in Scotland—would have been considerable.

Privatisation will in no way reduce our concern for safety in the nuclear industry, because safety will continue to be governed by the Nuclear Installations Inspectorate, and any electricity company that failed to maintain the highest safety standard would not be allowed to retain its licence. That is a far stronger discipline on a private sector company than the profit motive.

The hon. Member for Midlothian (Mr. Eadie) mentioned the negotiations between the South of Scotland Electricity Board and British Coal. That point was also raised by the hon. Members for Garscadden, for East Lothian and for Edinburgh, East (Mr. Strang). The deadline for the conclusion of those negotiations is not 4 July, but 9 July.

The hon. Member for Midlothian referred to the remarks made by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Energy this afternoon. I would only add that the parties are very close on price and on quantity, and there is no reason why a settlement satisfactory to both cannot be reached in the timescale they have set. Agreement can be struck only when the parties have reached agreement on all matters in dispute. I hope that they will soon be able to announce that agreement, but it is for them to announce it and not for me, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Energy or my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland.

Mr. Eadie: Is the Minister telling us that the report that the Secretary of State is dissatisfied with the pace of the negotiations and that he will intervene is untrue?

Mr. Lang: The report that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will intervene is untrue. With regard to the pace of the negotiations, my right hon. and learned Friend is as anxious as anybody for a settlement, but it has to be settled by the parties involved. I want a successful Scottish coal industry, but that success must be earned by its being competitive. It cannot expect to ride on the back of a captive customer in the form of the electricity industry to which it would pass higher costs, which would in turn be passed on to the rest of manufacturing industry.

Mr. Dewar: It may not be a matter of enormous importance, but it is of some interest that *The Scotsman* today has a prominent story stating:

"Mr. Rifkind is understood to have asked for a meeting in the early part of this week of senior British Coal executives."

That is either true or it is not true. As I understand it, the Minister is saying that that meeting will not take place and there has been no such request from the Secretary of State. Is that really so, because that does look like an authoritative leak?

Mr. Lang: My right hon. and learned Friend has asked the chairman of British Coal to meet him. I was about to come to that point. What they intend to talk about is not the negotiations between British Coal and the SSEB but the long-term future of the coal industry in Scotland. *[Laughter.]* I do not know why Opposition Members think that the long-term future of the coal industry in Scotland is such a joke. I regard it as something of considerable importance.

Mr. Home Robertson: The House is having some difficulty understanding what the Minister is trying to say. How can there possibly be a long-term future for the Scottish coal industry unless a successful agreement is concluded by the agreed deadline?

Mr. Lang: It is for my right hon. and learned Friend and the chairman of British Coal to decide what the issues are that affect the long-term future of the coal industry. My right hon. and learned Friend did not ask the chairman of British Coal to come and talk to him about these negotiations. He has made it clear, as I have done this evening, that they are a matter for the parties to the negotiations.

It is no coincidence that the output of the Scottish industry is at a record level now and that unemployment is falling dramatically. At the same time, Scotland has moved from the bottom to the top of the productivity league. Efficiency does not destroy jobs—it protects and creates them. The Government are confident that, if it is competitive, coal will remain an important source of electricity generation.

The Scottish electricity industry has invested heavily in coal-fired capacity, and will undoubtedly wish to make the most of that investment to meet demand in Scotland and to take full advantage of the opportunity for the export of electricity to England and Wales.

I am sure that hon. Members are not in any doubt about the need for the increased borrowing facility provided for in the clause. I believe that the new limit is set at a reasonable level. It is most unlikely that borrowing will need to exceed it, but if for any reason the board's borrowings looked set to rise above the new limit, fresh legislation would be required and the House would have an opportunity at that time to review the position. I commend the clause to the Committee.

Mr. William McKelvey (Kilmarnock and Loudoun): I would not normally intervene in a debate at this stage, but the Minister, who has become a master of evasion, simply will not answer the question, so it will have to be asked again. That will give him the opportunity to have a rethink, so perhaps he will make a second winding-up speech in which he will answer what he has not answered so far.

I read, I think in the *Sunday Mail*, this weekend, with great interest, that the Minister is one of the few who are growing in stature. He is certainly growing in the art of evasion. As a master of ducking, dodging and weaving, he has been surpassed only once as far as I am aware—when Dick McTaggart won the gold medal for Scotland in the boxing ring. The Minister ought to think about going to the Olympics. He would win gold, silver and bronze when it came to the ducking, dodging, weaving and evading the question contest.

In the Scottish Grand Committee the Minister said that the most important reason why this should be the last time that the boards' borrowing limits will need to be increased is the Government's proposal to privatise the electricity supply industry. There is growing concern about the fact that, although we are aware of the Government's intention to privatise the Scottish industry, it is being done without a Green Paper or consultation because, we suspect, any consultative moves met a response that cast doubt on about proceeding along those lines. The Government therefore went straight into a White Paper without any consultations. The Minister has confessed that the only consultations that have taken place have been with the chairpersons of the boards. We have not heard whether they are in favour of privatisation.

The privatisation of the electricity supply industry is looming and that industry, together with its associate industries, will be the victims of Tory dogma. Yet again that dogma will be rammed down the throats of the Scottish people, but at no time have they voted for the privatisation and it is clear that they are opposed to it.

10.45 pm

There are enormous doubts about the practicability of privatisation. Nothing that the Minister has said will remove Scottish people's doubts, nor the doubts of those who are unlucky enough to be still working in that industry. My constituency was once famous for the mining industry, but it makes me sad to have to report that, as far as I am aware, there is not one working miner left in

[Mr. William McKelvey]

Kilmarnock and Loudoun. There may be some employed in surface mining, but there is no working underground miner or working member of the National Union of Mineworkers left in my area. The last time that I spoke to former miners was on the sad occasion of the Barlow Clowes collapse—again something for which the Government should take some responsibility. Twenty former miners in my constituency have fallen foul of that collapse and have lost all their redundancy payments in that ill-fated venture.

The Minister has not attempted to say how the two units of the electricity industry that are to be set up on privatisation will operate. He has never described exactly how we will properly and safely monitor the nuclear industry. He should demonstrate to the Scottish people the interest that he is supposed to show in such matters. The Ministers have been obvious by their lack of talent in the negotiations that are presently under way between the SSEB and British Coal. They have stood aside and not attempted to intervene in a positive and helpful way.

It is a disgrace that the Ministers have given up any front of properly representing Scottish affairs. They have told the House that there is no possibility of setting up a Select Committee on Scottish Affairs to oversee the Department's activities. The Ministers have sunk into a morass and will not allow any investigation of their activities, no doubt because they are aware that they would not stand up to proper scrutiny. Evidence is growing that the businesses involved in the electricity supply industry and its possible privatisation have never been consulted. They are worried about that.

The Minister has said practically nothing about the cost of electricity, which is of importance to the punter—the domestic consumer. The Minister has said that the cost of electricity has gone down by 9 per cent. in real terms. However, he has not said whether that price reduction relates to domestic consumption, or whether it includes industrial consumers. I would be interested to know whether the price of electricity to the domestic consumer has gone down at all in real terms. When the Government flog off the electricity supply industry, what are the Minister's plans to write into the articles of association a guarantee that prices will be kept at their present level and will not rise above the rate of inflation on an annual basis?

What really worries the people of Scotland and their representatives is our experience since the privatisation of British Gas. The number of disconnections has increased by about 100 per cent. since privatisation. The new company applies a code of practice, but it should apply a code of acceptable conduct. It is not acceptable for privatised industries to disconnect the supplies of many people who have been pushed into poverty by the activities of the Government.

Mr. Norman Buchan (Paisley, South): Is it not infinitely more serious when such draconian powers are given to private companies, which can then act almost as medieval bounty hunters? It was bad enough that public corporations had such powers, but to give them to private companies is disgraceful.

Mr. McKelvey: I agree that it is disgraceful to give such powers to a private company, and it is unforgivable to do so without establishing a proper code of conduct. The Minister waves that away and says that the private industry will look after consumers' rights to fuel.

Since it is said that the private companies will run the electricity industry more efficiently, I presume that that will mean cheaper electricity for consumers. The Minister still has not explained how a monopoly can be competitive.

We must protect those who most need fuel. After the privatisation of British Gas—I hope that the figures for electricity will be in no way comparable—disconections increased from 36,000 in 1985 to 62,000 in 1987. The number of pre-payment meters installed dropped from 53,000 to 19,000. If the Scottish electricity boards adopt a similar posture after privatisation and argue that it is not profitable to supply pre-payment meters, more debts will be incurred and there will be a greater likelihood of disconnections. We in Scotland will not tolerate the sort of case that was outlined so dramatically by Jack Jones of an elderly lady found frozen to death over the stump of a candle which she had to use for heat since her electricity and gas had been cut off. That is not the sort of Scotland to which we look forward in the 21st century, and as representatives of the people of Scotland we will not accept it.

I am not a great believer in signs from a higher place, but it is extraordinary that when the Minister stood up to reply to the debate just before 7 o'clock, my watch stopped. The battery was drained of its last vestige of power. If ever a sign boded ill for the people of Scotland, that was it.

Mr. Lang: I am happy to reply briefly to the hon. Member for Kilmarnock and Loudoun (Mr. McKelvey). I hope he will forgive me if I do not repeat the points that I have already covered in earlier parts of the debate.

The hon. Gentleman raised one or two interesting points, and it might be helpful if I clarified what has happened about reductions in electricity prices in real terms over the past six years. On average, tariffs have fallen by 9 per cent., as I said. The hon. Gentleman asked about domestic tariffs. There has been a fall in domestic tariffs of 7·5 per cent. in real terms, which is still a worthwhile reduction for domestic customers.

The hon. Gentleman asked about the competitive position of privatised electricity. There would be competition by comparison. I make no apology for repeating that phrase, because it is justified. There will be comparisons by customers and their watchdog organisations, by industrial consumers, by shareholders and by the regulator. There would be competition in fuel sources, competition for major industrial customers and competition in exports to England. We are on the way, with our privatisation proposals, to creating two viable, robust, competitive, free-standing companies.

On consultation, the hon. Member for Kilmarnock and Loudoun said that there had been no Green Paper. That is true, but there was a White Paper and there were extensive consultations. In the preparation of our proposals we had consultations with the chairmen of the boards, and I have met the full boards of the north and south more than once. I have had a number of meetings with trade union representatives, and I shall have further meetings with them. The CBI Scotland, the Scottish Council (Development and Industry) and the Chemical Industries Association have been invited to offer their views on the regulatory aspects of our proposals. I hope that that will serve to confirm and clarify to the hon. Gentleman that we are consulting widely. In due course we shall bring our proposals on privatisation before the House, and that will be the appropriate time to consider them further.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause 1 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 2 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Bill reported, without amendment.

Order for Third Reading read.

Motion made, and Question proposed, That the Bill be now read the Third time.—*[Mr. Maclean.]*

10.57 pm

Mr. Dewar: My hon. Friend the Member for Kilmarnock and Loudoun (Mr. McKelvey) told the Minister that he was a master of evasion. That was generous. I prefer the theory that the Minister is master of nothing. His was an unsatisfactory performance. It was incomplete. He sounded fluent only when he was promoting party pamphlets on the alleged advantages of privatisation.

Many issues were raised—the costs of decommissioning, the capital reconstruction of the industry in privatisation, the allocation of plant, the problem of foreign control. In almost every instance the Minister accepted that there was a problem, nodded in that direction and then passed on, giving us almost no information, except a bland assurance that something would be said at the appropriate time. The only time when I admired him was when he showed a certain disingenuous skill—on a grand scale—in dealing with the meeting that was to take place between the Secretary of State and British Coal officials. On that he was close to being misleading.

This is a woeful business, and the Minister's performance was dim and depressing. No one objects to the Bill. The Minister is right that no one would want to deny the boards this modest increase in their total borrowing requirement. I do not intend to do so, or to invite my hon. Friends to do so. However, I give the Minister notice that we shall worry and harass him and his colleagues on the many substantial points that were raised in tonight's debate. We shall not be satisfied with this endless prevarication, dodging of the issues and sorry pretence that at some stage the Minister will start to think out properly the answers to the problems that he should have considered long ago.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read the Third time, and passed.

[Mr. Dewar]

Legal Aid Bill *[Lords]*

As amended (in the Standing Committee), considered.

New Clause 2

DUTY TO DEAL WITH APPLICATIONS

'Where an application is made to the Legal Aid Board for Civil Legal Aid the Board shall have a duty to deal expeditiously with the application and if the Board have not within two months of the receipt of the application refused legal aid then it shall be deemed to have granted legal aid until such time as legal aid is revoked or amended or discharged.'. —*[Mr. Fraser.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

10.59 pm

Mr. John Fraser (Norwood): I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

The purpose of the new clause is to place a discipline on the Legal Aid Board to deal expeditiously with legal aid applications. We are concerned about the lapse of time at present between the making of an application for legal aid under the present procedures of the Law Society and the application being dealt with on its merits. We have reason to fear that if the experience in Scotland is anything to go by, the situation may get worse rather than better when the Legal Aid Board is in operation.

The problem is that when a prospective assisted person applies for legal aid, the lawyers—solicitors and counsel—can incur no expenditure until the legal aid certificate is granted. Any work that is done before the legal aid certificate is given cannot be recovered under the legal aid scheme even if subsequently it turns out that it would have been reasonable to do that work. The prospective legally aided person may suffer considerable disadvantage, at a time when he may be under the greatest of pressure from those who are bringing proceedings against him.

It might be an application for possession of premises, whether residential or business, or a claim for the recovery of a vehicle under a hire purchase agreement, but in all cases the prospective legally aided defendant could suffer great disadvantage, and even have judgment entered against him in default. The whole case can go disastrously wrong in the opening weeks, during which time the application for legal aid is still being considered by the Law Society or, under the Bill, by the Legal Aid Board.

We understand that in urgent cases it would be possible for an assisted person to apply for an emergency legal aid certificate, but we cannot contemplate a legal aid system where everybody goes for emergency civil aid certificates. The maximum period of about six months in some parts of the country—although I readily admit that the period of application for legal aid differs remarkably from one area to another—is far too long. We should do something in legislation to deal with the difficulties.

There are precedents for putting a limit on the amount of time that a public authority can be allowed to deal with an application. Under housing benefit regulations and law, the local authority is expected to determine an application for housing benefit within 14 days. I regret that in many areas local authorities do not act within that time, but Parliament placed that duty on them. I suppose that if anybody sought to challenge a local authority on a delay in dealing with housing benefit, he would be able to rely on the time limit laid down by Parliament.

In planning legislation, we say that if a planning application is not decided by a local authority within two months, there is a direct appeal to the Minister under the appeals procedure. There are other precedents for saying that if an application has not been refused by a public authority within two months, the application is deemed to be granted. I give the example of the Caravan Sites and Control of Development Act 1960. If an application for a caravan site is not decided by a local authority within two months, the person who made the application is deemed to have the application granted.

In the new clause we propose that if a legal aid application is made to the Legal Aid Board and is not dealt with within two months, it is deemed by default to have granted the application. After all, that is the way that the courts work. If a summons is issued, it is possible for a plaintiff to obtain judgment by default, whether in the High Court or a county court. We may have legal aid applications where the prospective legally aided person finds that judgment is entered against him because of the delay. If a default system is good enough against a defendant, it should be good enough for somebody applying for legal aid.

I said that our fears were worsened by what has occurred in Scotland. A short letter from a practitioner to the Law Society of Scotland, dealing with problems in Scotland, which has a Legal Aid Board, states:

> "The Legal Aid Committee and you may be interested to know that in two cases at Stornoway Sheriff Court this week the learned Sheriff recalled sists because three and a half months was more than enough time for the Scottish Legal Aid Board to process an application for legal aid. In both cases the application for legal aid was made promptly and in one case in fact before the tabling diet.
>
> Perhaps someone should tell the Legal Aid Board who seem unable or unprepared to meet the Sheriff's timetable.
>
> If Sheriffs throughout the country take a similar view, solicitors and their clients are going to be faced with some very difficult decisions. I would be interested to know whether or not practitioners elsewhere are experiencing a similar attitude. It may be that our local faculty should be taking the matter up with the Sheriffs or the Sheriff Principals to educate them on the subject and I would appreciate your views."

That is what has happened in Scotland.

The Government should make boards disciplined and efficient through legislation. Administrative delays are disgraceful. Many of my constituents have been inconvenienced by long delays in issuing passports, immigration applications and applications for registration of United Kingdom citizenship. This is one area where we cannot afford delay. If legal aid is not granted within two months of an application being made, the applicant should be deemed to be legally aided until such time as the Legal Aid Board has a further look at the matter. It would then be free to revoke or amend the legal aid application, or to deal with it differently. It would mean that lawyers could get on with the case and the legally aided person would not suffer disadvantage early in the case when delay in granting legal aid may prove fatal to his interests.

For those reasons, and because there is no reason why legal aid applications should not be determined within two months, I commend the new clause.

Mr. Humfrey Malins (Croydon, North-West): I shall be brief. I have some sympathy with the new clause. As a practising solicitor I have noticed a great difference in the time between determining a criminal application for legal aid and a civil one. The system in criminal courts seems efficient as usually the application is granted on the same day that it is lodged. For civil applications the position is worse.

I practise in Surrey and our applications are lodged at Brighton. Civil legal aid applications tend to take between four and six months to be determined. I appreciate the burdens carried at the legal aid headquarters, but that is too slow. Often the interests of the applicant can be seriously prejudiced by such a delay.

I know that the Law Society can grant emergency certificates, but only when it is an emergency, and those grants are fairly sparing. Anything we can do to make the decision on an application for legal aid quicker would be to the good.

I have sympathy with the new clause. I hope that when my hon. and learned Friend the Solicitor-General replies he can assure me that the board will have at the front of its mind the need to deal with applications quickly. Certainly in the past my clients have been prejudiced. We all hope that in future the system can be smartened up.

The Solicitor-General (Sir Nicholas Lyell): Although the Government cannot accept the new clause, there is a measure of common ground in the form of a common desire—as expressed by my hon. Friend the Member for Croydon, North-West (Mr. Malins)—to ensure that legal aid applications are processed with proper expedition.

As the White Paper states, the Government will require the board to set appropriate targets for the handling of its business, and those targets will be carefully monitored. The aim, as the White Paper makes clear, must be to ensure that the needs and interests of all concerned—that of course means the applicant and the taxpayer—are properly balanced.

We share that common aim, but we cannot agree that it is wise for legal aid to be deemed to have been granted if an application has not been dealt with within two months. The House will remember that there are two sides to the matter. There is the duty on the applicant, and the duty currently on the Law Society—in future, on the board—to process the application. If a system operated under which legal aid were deemed to have been granted within two months, there would be a positive encouragement for applicants often to be less than co-operative in answering requests for supplementary information. A solicitor who submits an inadequately completed application form, or a client who is unwilling to co-operate in the assessment of his means, could find himself the one to reap the reward by obtaining legal aid by default, while someone more co-operative might experience more trouble, to no better advantage.

The present system is to be continued under the provisions of the Bill. It provides for legal aid to be granted immediately where there is a genuine and real need for work to be done urgently. That seems to us the best way to ensure that emergencies—as mentioned by my hon. Friend the Member for Croydon, North-West—are properly provided for.

I return to the subject with which I began. We have made it clear in the White Paper that appropriate targets are to be set for the handling of the board's business, and they are to be monitored. We believe that that is the best way in which to overcome a problem which I accept must be overcome by one means or another.

Mr. Fraser: I am not sure that that is satisfactory. I know that the Solicitor-General says that the new clause would put a premium on the sending in of inadequate legal aid applications, but that could be solved very simply. If inadequate information was supplied by the applicant, the board could easily have the option of refusing the application. That is exactly what happens with immigration applications. If an applicant does not reply to the questions put by Lunar house, the application is refused on grounds of non-co-operation. There is a precedent for dealing with non-co-operative applicants.

I simply cannot understand what happens to the applications mentioned by my neighbour, the hon. Member for Croydon, North-West (Mr. Malins), during a period of six months. The process sometimes takes six months even when the applicant is in receipt of social security or income support, and therefore no means-testing arises. Where does the application remain for that time? Does it go into a pending tray? If so, it must be one of massive proportions.

I realise that it is not easy to set absolute time limits, but there must be some tougher target for the board to meet. In some parts of the country legal aid applications are dealt with extremely expeditiously. Letters are replied to within two or three days. In other parts, particularly in London—the hon. Member for Croydon, North-West mentioned Surrey as well—it takes six months. That simply is not good enough.

We should like the Legal Aid Board to be virtually instructed to have a target period, perhaps about two months, and certainly no longer. That would provide some means for us to come back and harry the Solicitor-General and the board if the targets were not met. Perhaps the hon. and learned Gentleman could put some target on the table that might act as a guideline for the future.

The Solicitor-General: I hope that it will assist the hon. Gentleman, even if it does not satisfy him fully, if I repeat that the Government will require the board to set appropriate targets for the handling of its business—I am not prepared to say that the appropriate target should be exactly two months in any particular area—and that those targets will be monitored. Subject to the question of a time limit, I think that that is the objective that the hon. Gentleman and the House as a whole wish to achieve. I commend that, rather than the new clause, as the proper way to proceed.

Question put and negatived.

Clause 3

THE LEGAL AID BOARD

11.15 pm

Mr. Fraser: I beg to move amendment No. 13, in page 3, line 19, leave out 'two' and insert 'three'.

This amendment will not detain us long. The Law Society has suggested that there should be three solicitors on the Legal Aid Board, as opposed to the two mentioned in the Bill. I should make it clear that I am not anxious to see a large number of places on the board pre-empted by lawyers. It is right that there should be a balance. We argued in Committee that there should be a balance between consumers and providers of the service, and a reasonable spread of membership by gender and by race. I am in no sense anxious to see the board monopolised by

[Mr. Fraser]

lawyers. On the other hand, 17 places are available for appointment. I understand that at present the basic number of solicitors to be appointed is two, and two barristers.

Once again, we can learn from the Scottish experience. I am told that the Scottish Legal Aid Board includes two solicitors and two barristers, and that the remaining 10 members are non-lawyers, mainly accountants. I am further advised that that has caused considerable problems because of the number of issues that the Scottish board considers to have a legal content and on which the Act requires that the board must be satisfied in a particular respect. In practice, it falls to the lawyer members of the board to ensure that those requirements are satisfied. Account should be taken of that experience to ensure that similar problems do not arise in England and Wales.

It is thus mainly for reasons of practicality that I suggest a modest increase in the number of solicitor appointees from two to three. Solicitors have been largely responsible for the management of legal aid in this country since the 1948 Act, so there is no shortage of people well experienced in the administration of the system. I am sure that the Government could accommodate the amendment without disturbing the balance of the board and the spread of interests that we wish it to include.

The Solicitor-General: In resisting the amendment, I repeat, first, as I said on Second Reading, that the Government are extremely grateful to the Law Society for its handling of legal aid over the past 40 years, and I fully accept that there are many solicitors who are extremely expert on the subject.

I hope that it will be of comfort both to the hon. Gentleman and to the Law Society if I emphasise that the Bill provides, not merely that there shall be two solicitors on the board, but that there shall be "at least" two solicitors, so there is absolutely nothing to prevent the appointment of more solicitors, or, indeed, more barristers or accountants, if that seems desirable. The Bill provides that there shall be at least four lawyers—two barristers and two solicitors—and I emphasise the words "at least".

I hope that in my response I have highlighted the key point and satisfied the Law Society that its interests can be fully met if it appears desirable to do so.

Amendment negatived.

Clause 8

SCOPE OF THIS PART

Mr. Fraser: I beg to move amendment No. 16, in page 6, line 40, leave out subsections (3) and (4).

The amendment would delete the arrangements that the Government propose for placing contracts for the provision of advice and assistance which, in practice, have the effect of excluding people from access to solicitors' advice under the green form advice scheme. The Government's arrangements would prevent people of moderate means from having choice and possibly from receiving any advice. If, in a fairly remote area, the Government chose to use a voluntary agency—the citizens advice bureau—for the giving of advice, problems of travel and of getting access to the advice centre at the appropriate times might rule out access to the advice.

The Government have still not spelled out exactly what is to be contracted out and excluded from access under the green form scheme. We know that they have been contemplating the exclusion of housing rights under social security legislation and immigration advice and that they have certainly decided upon the exclusion of advice on conveyancing of wills, even though there are a small number of cases in which advice on those matters might be useful. We know that the most likely candidates for contracting out advice are the citizens advice bureaux or other non-lawyer agencies. We cannot be certain about which subjects will be contracted out or to whom they will be contracted out.

In some ways, the Lord Chancellor is like Father Christmas—not because he wears a wig and red robes or because he gives away presents, because that is certainly not in his mind with the Bill, but because he gives out parcels that will not be opened until at least 25 December, and probably not until late next year. The problem about the Bill is that it is full of parcels that must not be opened and things that one must discover after it becomes law.

We do not like the contracting-out provisions, because they are likely to provide a second-class service for some people seeking advice. They are likely to restrict choice and to confer a monopoly in some areas. The provisions are likely to exclude advice from lawyers on important matters, such as housing and immigration, which are complicated parts of law. We dislike the sealed packet approach to law making contained in the Bill.

The very least that we want on Report is a definitive statement of the Government's intentions on contracting out so that, when the Bill becomes law, we shall at least know to which agencies work is likely to be offered and those subjects on which the Government intend to exclude solicitors' advice.

On matters of principle and matters concerning the basic rights of people to get advice affecting their future and livelihood, it is wrong that there should be the possibility of a Bill with blank spaces—the sealed packets that are to be opened once the Bill becomes law. I hope that the Solicitor-General will assuage the fears of many people about the contracting-out provisions and the exclusion of green form advice by telling us how limited will be the approach of the board and the Government to contracting out when the Bill becomes law.

Mr. Alex Carlile (Montgomery): I ask the Solicitor-General and the Government to bear in mind that there is a legal system outside the metropolis and the large cities. In dealing with problems of contracting out and deciding how to approach this part of the Bill, it is important to bear in mind the structure of the legal system, especially in rural areas. A wide range of legal services are provided in constituencies such as mine and that of my hon. Friend the Member for Truro (Mr. Taylor).

The way that the system operates is wholly dependent upon private firms of solicitors. People go to the solicitors with all sorts of problems, ranging from complex probate issues through minor pavement accidents to criminal cases. The solicitor is generally competent to deal with most of the work. If he cannot deal with the work, and does not feel able to solve the client's problems, he goes to counsel for advice, or occasionally turns to another solicitor who deals with a specialist subject. The effect is that a reasonably full range of legal services is available in an area like my constituency.

We fear, as do organisations such as my local citizens advice bureau, that if contracting out occurs, and affects small areas, some small firms of solicitors will go out of business. If they go out of business, there will be a reduction in choice available to those who need legal advice. In a rural area, people tend to know all about the choices available for legal advice. As I am sure that the Solicitor-General will know, legal advice is very much a horses-for-courses matter, and the client in rural areas tends to know, or can find out quickly, which horse is appropriate for which course. In such an area, there is usually some horse that can be ridden on almost any legal course, and past every legal obstacle.

Legal services in rural areas need safeguarding. They are already in decline in some respects. I ask the Government to ensure that this safeguard is applied.

The Solicitor-General: I am glad that we have had this short debate, because it is important that people should be clear about what the Government have in mind. The first thing to realise is that this is an enabling Bill. Nothing has been decided as to whether any particular part of the law should be contracted out and thereafter excluded from the local solicitors in a particular area. It will be for the new Legal Aid Board to give its mind to those questions. The Bill provides an opportunity to offer a better service in particular instances to different parts of the country, not a second-class or more restrictive service.

All who have practised in the law realise that in some sectors those who are not lawyers can provide a high standard of expertise. The Government have frequently mentioned welfare benefit law in this context. When we debated this matter in Committee, I said that I remembered my days in the DHSS and the enormous expertise in this subject that was provided by the Child Poverty Action Group and the National Association of Citizens' Advice Bureaux in the King's Cross area of London. I do not think that any hon. Member would gainsay me on that.

We contemplate that the board will look to see how advice is or is not being given through the green form scheme in particular areas. It will see what tenders or offers it receives from advice-giving agencies or law centres, or even from local solicitors in a particular sector. For example, in some inner city area, or part of a rural area, an advice-giving agency may say, "We believe that we could provide as good as or a better service than the local solicitors in this particular branch of the law"—for example, welfare benefits. Then the Legal Aid Board will consider whether or not to invite tenders for contracts to provide that type of service in that particular area. It will be open to all comers to tender, but invitations to tender will probably go to those who seem most suitable, for practical, administrative reasons. The matter will then be canvassed and considered by the board, but it cannot go ahead until it has received the approval of the Lord Chancellor. Therefore, nothing will happen overnight or without careful consideration. When it seems sensible to the board that particular types of advice can best be given, for example, by an advice agency in a particular area, then and only then will that type of advice in that area be excluded from the local solicitors.

11.30 pm

Mr. Alex Carlile: I am sure that the hon. and learned Gentleman would agree that over the years it has always been thought that the client, even if he is in receipt of legal aid, should have a choice of lawyer. Does he agree that his proposals remove that choice and therefore place the legally aided litigant, for the first time, in a different position from the private paying litigant?

The Solicitor-General: I am not sure that I agree. However, even if the hon. and learned Gentleman were right, what the legally aided client may lose by way of choice, he may more than gain by way of opportunity. For example, a citizens' advice bureau might provide a user-friendly, open and available service in welfare benefit law and make that sort of advice and guidance much more widely available to people in that area than it would ever be possible for local solicitors to do.

Mr. Paul Boateng (Brent, South): Let me put it to the hon. and learned Gentleman in another way from the experience that I have had practising as a lawyer in a citizens' advice bureau and in private practice. In private practice one often finds that while advising a client on a matrimonial matter, particularly in relation to the woman who has been deserted by her husband, issues of welfare law, tax and a whole range of other matters can arise. Is it feasible, or would it be desirable in such circumstances, for the solicitor to say, "I am terribly sorry, but I cannot assist you. You must go down the road to the local citizens' advice bureau, which is better equipped to do the job than I am"? That does not make sense. Does the Solicitor-General accept that we have fought a great battle on both sides of the profession over the past decade to equip lawyers to advise people on welfare law and on areas of law which, when I was studying, were regarded as being areas into which lawyers did not trespass? Will this not be a retrogressive step in terms of the service to the client and the education of our lawyers?

The Solicitor-General: The hon. Gentleman has given me an opportunity to explain more fully—I do not wish to do so at tedious length—what we have in mind.

The fact that an area of advice had been contracted out to an advice-giving agency need not necessarily, under the regulations that we are contemplating, prevent somebody who is already receiving advice in a general area, such as matrimonial law, from continuing to receive from that solicitor advice connected with the broad area of her divorce or family settlements. The regulations still have to be drafted. The details will come before the House in the precise regulations. As I have said, this is an enabling Bill. What the hon. Member for Brent, South (Mr. Boateng) has said can be taken into account during the drafting.

I do not believe that the hon. Member for Brent, South would argue that because that lawyer, who is already apprised of the problems of that client, might best deal with them, that should prevent us from looking ahead to what I believe is this imaginative and sensible new way of bringing legal advice to a wider audience than is ever likely to receive it from local solicitors. I hasten to say that we expect that the solicitors' profession will continue to be —perhaps for decades or for ever—the primary source of general legal advice in local areas. I hope that that is of comfort to the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile).

[The Solicitor-General]

The problems of country areas are different from those of inner-city areas. It may be for the board to consider whether in the early stages these ideas are more appropriate to the town or country. It may be found that people are receiving advice under the green form scheme on an inefficient and not cost-effective basis and that it is acceptable to local solicitors—although they would not be the ultimate judge—for an advice-giving agency to provide advice in an area. I do not think that solicitors or clients need be unduly anxious about this measure. The opportunity to contract out gives a chance for the provision of sensible and cost-effective legal advice to develop.

Mr. Menzies Campbell (Fife, North-East): If a person goes to a solicitor and is given negligent advice, it may give rise to an action for damages. Does the hon. and learned Gentleman's view of the regulations conceive of a person receiving negligent advice from one of the advice-giving bodies and being entitled to sue? If so, will people receiving advice from a citizens' advice bureau that they regard as negligent be able to sue the citizens' advice bureau?

The Solicitor-General: I understand the problem, and I do not believe that it is incapable of solution. The advice-giving agencies will be working under contract. Anyone offering advice, as the hon. and learned Gentleman will understand, is already liable to be sued if he gives negligent advice. That would probably be as true of a citizens' advice bureau if it overstepped the mark as of a member of our profession. Advice-giving agencies would be expected to insure against it and the contract would take account of that.

I have dealt with the amendment in some detail, and I stand by my position.

Amendment negatived.

Clause 13

COSTS OF SUCCESSFUL UNASSISTED PARTIES

Mr. Fraser: I beg to move amendment No. 17, in page 9, line 16, leave out from '(b)' to second 'the' in line 17.

We can probably deal with the amendment very briefly. The short point is that at present if an unassisted party has proceedings instituted against it and suffers severe financial hardship as a result of succeeding against a legally aided person, the court can make an order for the costs of the unassisted person to be paid out of legal aid funds. The one condition is that the proceedings must be instituted by the legally aided person. If they are instituted by the unassisted person, no award can be made out of public funds.

The Solicitor-General generously sent me an extract of a report into the operation of the arrangements for the costs of unassisted parties, and I thank him for his courtesy. The report says that few applications are made and little interest is shown in the way in which the law operates. I was somewhat surprised by that, given the interest taken in the matter by the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors.

Reading through the material supplied by the Solicitor-General, it seems that there would be a small risk to public expenditure by being even-handed about the costs of unassisted parties, whether they institute or defend the proceedings. In the light of the findings before the Solicitor-General, I hope that he will accept the amendment.

The Solicitor-General: The hon. Member for Norwood (Mr. Fraser) put the argument so charmingly and gently that it might have seemed to slip through my armour. I hope that I will not seem over-armoured when I reply.

The point to highlight is that the amendment has curious deficiencies, because it relates only to advice by representation and not to legal aid. For that reason alone, it would be a strange amendment to accept.

Under the present system, if someone is sued by an assisted person, he can obtain his costs out of the legal aid fund if he is likely to suffer serious hardship as a result of the rule. I emphasise that the serious hardship test is nothing like as difficult to overcome as is widely believed by the public and by both halves of the profession, and I urge solicitors, especially, to examine on their clients' behalf whether they can exercise their rights more widely in cases in which they are sued by an assisted party.

The amendment would widen the provision much more than the hon. Member for Norwood realises. If it were accepted, both for advice by way of representation and for legal aid, it would give the opportunity for a large number of defendants—some of them limited companies and some of them with very substantial means—to obtain costs. That cannot be our highest priority. The report that I provided for the hon. Gentleman goes into the cases quite carefully. It is available to anyone who seeks a copy, and it makes the case for the status quo more strongly than is generally realised. There is always a matter of priority in legal aid.

The amendment does not embody a high priority, and we must therefore resist it.

Amendment negatived.

Clause 15

AVAILABILITY OF, AND PAYMENT FOR, REPRESENTATION UNDER THIS PART

Mr. Fraser: I beg to move amendment No. 25, in page 10, line 44, at end insert—

'(2A) Subject to subsection (6) below, representation shall always be granted to a child who is a party to the proceedings.'.

The amendment would ensure that legal aid was always granted in cases involving a child. We argued the case unsuccessfully in Committee. I advance it again because, in the light of recent events, we need to be especially careful to look after children's needs. I know that we have not yet had the published report on Cleveland, but there is nevertheless widespread concern about the rights of children in proceedings—not for damages for personal injury but involving wardship or custody.

Once a child has been made a party to proceedings there is an overwhelming case for that child to be separately represented. An entirely objective mind should be put on the case with a view to looking after the child's interests. I know that in many cases the supposed interests of the child will be represented by a local authority or other statutory authority or a parent. However, it seems to me that there is no substitute for ensuring that the child is separately represented. Under the amendment the child would have to be made a party to the proceedings to be granted legal aid, but once that had happened the child

—innocent and often unable to make a judgment for himself—would have entirely independent and separate representation, apart from the other parties involved. I am sure that anyone who thinks about the need for a child to have his case properly put without its being influenced by those with a proprietorial interest in him would accept that the case is well made out. The amendment would involve only a modest increase in public expenditure, and I therefore hope that the Minister will accept it.

The Solicitor-General: There is much common ground between us. The only reason why we resist the amendment is that in a number of cases it might result in injustice, whereas under the law as it stands the circumstances that the hon. Gentleman has outlined will almost certainly always result in legal aid being granted.

The effect of the amendment is to remove from the case of a child

"who is a party to the proceedings"

any consideration of the merits test.

It has always been an essential feature of legal aid, first, that the applicant for legal aid should have insufficient means to be able to carry on the case for himself and, secondly, that the applicant should have a meritorious case. That must, in principle, apply to children as much as to anyone else. A child who is made a party to a case is very unlikely to fail the merits test, so that in practice there is likely to be nothing standing in his way in obtaining legal aid. However, making it a matter of principle that a child should receive legal aid would create an opportunity to exploit the position of children, which could be very unfair to those who found themselves on the other side in the litigation. It is for that reason, which I am sure is not intended by the hon. Gentleman, rather than for any reason of denying children with meritorious cases legal aid that I must resist the amendment.

11.45 pm

Mr. Ivan Lawrence (Burton): Is my hon. and learned Friend saying that children will be joined as parties just because there will be an obligation to give them legal aid? I do not follow the logic of what my hon. and learned Friend has said.

The Solicitor-General: I do not think that my hon. and learned Friend has seen how the amendment fits into the structure of the Bill; I suspect that that is his difficulty. It is proposed that children should be granted legal aid regardless of merit. I am sure that my hon. and learned Friend would not wish that, but would wish that any child with a meritorious case, who had not the means to be represented, should be granted legal aid. That is also our objective, and there we would find common ground. However, as I have explained, the amendment goes further and is contrary to principle. Consequently we must resist it.

Amendment negatived.

Clause 20

COMPETENT AUTHORITIES TO GRANT REPRESENTATION UNDER THIS PART

The Solicitor-General: I beg to move amendment No. 1, in page 15, line 40, at end insert—

'(4A) The magistrates' court inquiring into an offence as examining justices is also competent, before it decides whether or not to commit the person for trial, as respects any proceedings before the Crown Court on his trial.'.

The amendment inserts in the Bill what is currently provided for under section 2(1) of the Legal Aid Act 1982. It allows magistrates courts to make only one legal aid order at committal proceedings, which will cover both those proceedings and the defendant's trial in the Crown court, should the magistrates court decide to commit him there.

Those "through" legal aid orders as they are known were introduced to assist early preparation of cases by solicitors and to enable counsel's advice to be taken early where necessary. That is advantageous to the solicitor and the client. It also assists the court, it reduces administrative work in the magistrates court, and preparation should lead to improvements in the reliability of the information supplied to the Crown court for listing purposes and reduce the number of wasteful late changes of plea.

For those reasons, the Government seek to retain the provision and I commend the amendment to the House.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 23

REIMBURSEMENT OF PUBLIC FUNDS BY CONTRIBUTIONS

The Solicitor-General: I beg to move amendment No. 2, in page 19, line 1, leave out subsection (8).

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): With this it will be convenient to take Government amendments Nos. 3 to 11.

The Solicitor-General: These amendments are largely technical. They are drafting amendments designed to clarify the relationship between the costs provisions of this part of the Bill and those of part II of the Prosecution of Offences Act 1985, with particular reference to the treatment of contributions. The amendments remove what on further examination has been seen to be unnecessary duplication of the 1985 Act.

In relation to contributions, the amendments clarify both the proper area of operation of clause 23(9), which deals with repayment of contributions in particular circumstances, and the application of that subsection to the situation governed by clause 26, where green form costs are to be treated as part of the costs of representation under this part of the Bill. The amendments also ensure that, while the inter partes costs of an assisted person will not be reduced on account of any contribution, his contribution will not be included in his costs for the purposes of any central funds order.

That is clearly right, because where the court has power to order the remission or repayment of contribution to a successful assisted person, but where the court chooses not to exercise that discretion in the assisted person's favour —for example, where he is acquitted on a technicality or has failed to give notice of an alibi offence—it would be wrong for there to be any backdoor alternative method of discovery by means of any order from central funds. The availability of central funds to cover the assisted person's out-of-pocket expenses is, of course, unaffected by the amendments. I commend them to the House.

Amendment agreed to.

Amendments made: No. 3, in page 19, line 10, at end insert

[The Solicitor-General]

'where sums due under the order for costs are paid to the Board or the Lord Chancellor under section 20(2) of the Prosecution of Offences Act 1985 (recovery regulations)—'.

No. 4, in page 19, line 11, leave out from 'sums' to 'subsection' in line 12 and insert 'so paid'.

No. 5, in page 19, line 14, leave out from 'sums' to 'subsection' in line 15 and insert 'so paid'.

No. 6, in page 19, line 17, leave out subsection (10) and insert—

'(10) References in subsection (9) above to the costs of representation include any charge or fee treated as part of those costs by section 26(2).'.—*[The Solicitor-General.]*

Clause 31

ACT NOT GENERALLY TO AFFECT POSITION OF LEGAL REPRESENTATIVES OR OTHER PARTIES

Amendment made: No. 7, in page 24, line 16, at end insert—

'(1A) Without prejudice to the generality of subsection (1)(b) above, for the purpose of determining the costs of a legally assisted person in pursuance of an order for costs or an agreement for costs in his favour (other than an order under Part II of the Prosecution of Offences Act 1985) the services of his solicitor and counsel shall be treated as having been provided otherwise than under this Act and his solicitor shall be treated as having paid counsel's fees.'.—*[The Solicitor-General.]*

Clause 34

REGULATION

Mr. Fraser: I beg to move amendment No. 18, in page 26, line 31, leave out clause 34.

This amendment brings us back to familiar arguments which took place in another place and in Committee. Although they are familiar, it is worth raising them again now.

The amendment would enable us to challenge two major changes in the legal aid system of remuneration which are regarded with great apprehension by legal aid practitioners, I believe with good cause.

The Government propose that the principle of fair remuneration for work reasonably and actually done is removed. At the moment, the principle of fair remuneration for criminal legal aid is written into legislation. The Bill takes it out. The taxing masters, who vet the bills put in by lawyers, are bound to have regard to the principle of fair remuneration, so for civil legal aid work the principle is incorporated in our law by implication, the taxation rules and the practice of courts. There is no getting round the fact that the Bill removes that principle. The Government cannot pretend otherwise.

The second major change is a new criterion which is being put in by the Bill. One of the factors that will determine the remuneration of legal aid practitioners is the cost to public funds. Together, the two changes mean that there could be a significant change in how legal aid practitioners are remunerated. Considerations of public expenditure are likely to have a much more severe effect on payments than the principle of fair remuneration.

We all recognise that there are not unlimited public funds with which to carry out a social or public service. It is a legitimate area of public debate how much public expenditure there ought to be, but we all recognise that there is bound to be some limit to the amount of public expenditure available. If less money is made available for schools or house building, we will have fewer schools and, as has happened under this Government, fewer publicly provided homes.

Although it may have been done surreptitiously, Parliament has never approved the idea that when we restrict expenditure on homes, schools or hospitals, we reduce the pay of building workers, architects or teachers. We have never said that those who provide the service which is subsidised by the state should personally have to bear the brunt of public expenditure restraints.

Hitherto, we have said that a certain amount of money is available for a service, but as far as possible we have accepted the principle of paying the rate for the job. Here, for the first time, the legal aid practitioner is expected to bear and accept a factor in his or her pay which relates to public expenditure restraints. *[Interruption.]* It is difficult, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to put an argument when there is loud conversation at the far end of the Chamber.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I hope that hon. Members who are not taking part in the debate or listening to it will not disturb those who are.

Mr. Fraser: Although the principle of fair remuneration is built into the present system, there is evidence that more firms are giving away legal aid work than accepting it and that access to legal services is being denied as fewer people are prepared to take on lower-paid and less remunerative work.

If clause 34 is retained and the new criteria for remuneration regulations are written in, the position could become much worse. Clause 34 does not allow the Lord Chancellor to control and regulate legal aid remuneration. The Chancellor of the Exchequer is substituted for the Lord Chancellor and he determines the rate of remuneration for those who undertake legal aid work. As a result it would be possible for the Chancellor of the Exchequer or, more likely, the Treasury to starve the legal aid system so that it falls below a proper level of viability. Once that happens the legal aid system may collapse.

Presently the legal aid system faces a crisis for a number of reasons. First, legal aid rates, even under the present system, are regarded as too low. In addition, payment is delayed for far too long. Presently the system pays badly and slowly, even though the principle of fair remuneration is written into the system. The problem is especially acute with larger cases that involve High Court claims for the recovery of damages for personal injury and such like. It is true that remuneration for advice, for assistance and for the duty solicitor scheme is, on the whole, paid fairly promptly, and that is welcome.

Presently, remuneration for more expensive litigation is not very generous and the delays in payment place legal aid practitioners at a double disadvantage. In criminal work, where fees are fixed by the Lord Chancellor, the legal aid practitioners will get less than the comparable rate for private work. In civil cases, legal aid practitioners suffer long delays in payment for work.

Secondly, there is massive competition between those who take up legal aid work and those who are involved in the commercial and financial sectors of the law. Salaries in the private sector, even for new entrants, are high. There is a particular problem when the inner city, whether it is

London or elsewhere, is next to the financial centre. Recruitment of legal aid lawyers in such circumstances is now extremely difficult.

The third problem that faces the legal aid service is that solicitors are not being recruited in large enough numbers. The present rate of admissions to the solicitors' profession is 3,000 a year, but that will not be enough to staff it. Many of those who may apply for legal aid work will certainly drift into financial and commercial work. The universities and the polytechnics are not producing enough graduates to enter the profession. About 75 per cent. of those who become solicitors after Law Society examinations come from universities, but there is an acute shortage in the numbers recruited. The greater the recruitment problem, the fewer the people who will take up legal aid work. Given the demands placed upon the profession, there is shortage of entrants and, because of the difference in remuneration between private and legal aid work, there is double pressure on those who accept such work.

Mr. Lawrence: Is the hon. Gentleman's fear that the legal aid system will be wound down one reason why some solicitors are so anxious to extend their rights of audience in legal aid work in criminal trials?

Mr. Fraser: That may be so, but I shall not be tempted into that argument this evening. This is a debate not about the organisation of the profession, but about the remuneration of barristers and solicitors. Although I am rather better acquainted with solicitors than I am with barristers, I understand that almost exactly the same arguments apply to barristers as to solicitors. This is not the time to open a gulf between the the two branches of the profession. They have a common interest in proper remuneration for legal aid work.

12 midnight

The case for remunerating lawyers is not popular, but I am not arguing on behalf of lawyers; I am arguing on behalf of those for whom the service is provided. The worst thing that could happen is that, because of the changes in the regulations for remuneration of legal aid work, we shall finish up—there is a serious danger of this even now —with a first and second-class service. The changes proposed in the Bill will emphasise the trend and institutionalise a first and second-class service. That would abolish the principle that we all hold dear—that there should be equality before the law.

If the Government wish to assuage the anxieties of both branches of the profession, the least that the Solicitor-General could do tonight—of course, I hope that he will accept the amendment—is to reaffirm that the Lord Chancellor will stick to the principle of fair remuneration and resist as hard as he can the introduction of a principle that the remuneration of legal aid lawyers should be determined by public expenditure considerations. Even if the amendment is not accepted, such an assurance would go a long way towards assuaging the fears that have been expressed by members of both branches of the profession and by many commentators. There is a serious fear that the number of people undertaking legal aid work will diminish and that the pay differentials between legal aid and private work will become greater.

The Government must recognise the dangers that will be exacerbated by the fundamental changes in the Bill. I hope that, even at this late stage, they will give us a policy statement and reassure those who are observing our proceedings that the principle of fair remuneration, which has existed since 1948, will continue.

The Solicitor-General: I am tempted to say,

"He that hath ears to hear, let him hear."

We have debated fair remuneration at every stage of the Bill here and in another place. In Committee I was bold enough to say that I was confident that the Government and the Lord Chancellor were winning the argument. I remain absolutely confident of it, and may I state it again briefly?

Before I do so, I must say that we cannot accept the amendment, as the hon. Member for Norwood (Mr. Fraser) will understand. Technically, it would cut clause 34, and therefore all the regulation-making powers, out of the Bill. As this is an enabling Bill, that makes it a wrecking amendment. The hon. Gentleman did not move it as a wrecking amendment, and would not expect me to respond to it as such, but I shall answer the points made in debate, because they give us an opportunity to probe this important point which has caused much misplaced and unnecessary worry in the profession and which I hope I can assuage.

The legal aid legislation provides for fair remuneration for work properly and reasonably done. The words "fair remuneration" do not find a place in the Bill. What is in the Bill is a careful analysis of the ingredients that should be considered when one is deciding what is fair. My noble and learned Friend the Lord Chancellor has made it perfectly clear that he has every intention of being fair in the application of those principles, which are now set down, and those requirements, which are now enumerated in clause 34(9).

The hon. Member for Norwood suggested that it is difficult at present to recruit enough solicitors and barristers to do the work that is available to be done, particularly in criminal legal aid. There is a problem with criminal legal aid and it is recognised by the Lord Chancellor. It is being approached precisely in accordance with the principles set down in clause 34(9). The point being made on behalf of the solicitors—a study is about to be carried out to see whether it is a fair one—is that the general levels of criminal legal aid remuneration are not sufficient to meet their overheads. Paragraphs (a), (b) and (c) of clause 34(9) show that overheads are the very matters that the Lord Chancellor must take into account when he seeks to set proper levels of remuneration. Paragraph (a) deals with the time and skill that particular work requires; (b) deals with the general level of fee income arising in relation to that work; and (c) deals with the general level of expenses of barristers and solicitors that is attributable to that work. That constitutes overheads.

In accordance with the new principles set out in the Bill, the Law Society, together with the Lord Chancellor, has commissioned a well-known firm of chartered accountants, Touche Ross, to carry out a detailed study of the fee income and overheads of the firms of solicitors that have a substantial involvement in criminal legal aid. If I remember the details of the study correctly, about one in 10 of all such solicitors are to be visited and studied in detail to determine what their fee incomes and overheads are, and how the two match. I do not believe that anyone could devise a more sensible way for the Government and professions to inform themselves about the real problem that must be met.

[The Solicitor-General]

There is at the moment a problem of demand exceeding supply in the legal profession. I am sure that all hon. Members could make their own analyses of the reasons for that, but there has, in any case, been a great expansion in demand for commercial lawyers. It probably has something to do with the flourishing economy of the country and the new requirements for regulation of the City and other activities. Because such work is highly paid, it is perhaps more attractive to young lawyers than criminal legal aid. But those who look to the future of criminal and civil legal aid in other areas, as the Government do, and want not a second class but a first class service to be provided for those who lack the means to pay for litigation themselves, can take heart from the provisions of the Bill——

Mr. Alex Carlile: Does the Solicitor-General accept that one of the practical tests that the profession will apply to the Government's earnest in this matter will be the speed with which fees are paid? Does he accept that there are unconscionable delays in paying counsel for civil and criminal legal aid and that they must come to an end? Some young barristers are virtually starving because they are not being paid for work that they have done.

The Solicitor-General: The hon. and learned Gentleman slightly spoilt his case with his last few words. We are conscious that legal aid fees should be paid within a reasonable time. The hon. and learned Gentleman will know that steps have been taken, particularly in relation to matrimonial work—such cases drag on for years—to improve the rate at which legal aid fees are paid and to provide for interim payments. A new scheme was agreed with the Bar many months ago and is now up and running, which is making a considerable difference to the income and well-being of those who carry out that important work. There is nothing to divide us in principle, but I should not like the world to get the impression in practice that matters are in a parlous state, because I genuinely believe that that is an exaggeration. I have just made inquiries of those who advise me in the House, and, with regard to criminal legal aid, I could not accept that delay was grave. Delay is probably slightly more of a problem in civil rather than criminal work, but we shall monitor and keep a careful eye on the matter, as I said in answer to an earlier debate.

I commend the enormous improvement that the carefully set out criteria to be found in clause 34(9) provide for the discovery and approval by the Lord Chancellor of proper levels of remuneration for legally aided work. It has been recognised by the hon. Member for Norwood (Mr. Fraser) that cost to public funds must be part of those criteria. No Government can responsibly fail to take account of the overall cost of the service that they provide, but, as I said in Committee, the legal aid service is demand-led. Those who read the Bill carefully will recognise, first, that the Government have a duty to provide that service, and, secondly, that they must take into account those criteria, including the overhead costs of fulfilling and providing the service. That is a great improvement on the present vague provision for fair remuneration, which has been said in the debate by the hon. Member for Norwood himself not to be providing a particularly satisfactory outcome over the years.

I commend the clause to the House as an improvement, not merely a change, on the present position. I hope that both halves of the profession will soon come to recognise it as such.

Amendment negatived.

Schedule 2

CIVIL PROCEEDINGS: SCOPE OF PART IV

REPRESENTATION

Mr. Fraser: I beg to move amendment No. 20, in page 38, line 24 at end insert—

> '7. An inquest, statutory enquiry, immigration appeal tribunal, social security commissioners, vaccine damage tribunal, and industrial tribunal where it is likely that the applicant would be substantially disadvantaged without legal representation.'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take amendment No. 21, in page 38, line 27 leave out paragraph 1.

Mr. Fraser: There is a misdrafting in amendment No. 21, so I do not propose to discuss it.

Amendment No. 20 seeks at this late stage of the Bill to achieve a compromise over representation before tribunals. The matter was discussed at great length in Committee and in the other place.

There is now general agreement that representation should be available before a tribunal in cases in which the assisted person would otherwise be considerably or substantially disadvantaged as a result of not being represented. The Government have conceded that there should be representation in some cases before the social security commissioners and the Lands Tribunal, and the amendment seeks to extend the principle of representation before tribunals to industrial tribunals and inquests, where people might be particularly disadvantaged. Relatives of the deceased person might not be able to present the case properly themselves or put evidence to the test of cross-examination.

Complicated matters could arise before the immigration appeal tribunal. We are not suggesting legal aid before the adjudicator—we are modest in our demands—but we seek to make legal aid available before the immigration appeal tribunal where, under the regulations, the appeal can be only on a matter of law. We seek to extend the principle to other tribunals in which substantial issues are involved and where the assisted party would be substantially disadvantaged by not being granted legal aid. We are not suggesting any type of blanket representation. It would be within the power of the Legal Aid Board to set and define criteria by which the test of substantial disadvantage could be measured.

The Bill in part erodes the efficacy of the legal aid system. It enables the Lord Chancellor, at the discretion of the Treasury, to cut the cover of legal aid. The amendment provides a chance to extend the cover and to make advances, such as into vaccine damage tribunals, at a modest cost. I propose the amendment most reasonably. I have not given blanket approval to representations before tribunals, as I wish to achieve consensus this evening, and I hope that the Solicitor-General will respond in the same spirit.

12.15 am

The Solicitor-General: Even if I cannot accept the amendment, I hope that I shall respond constructively.

We have often debated this question of representation before tribunals, and rightly so. The House will be pleased to know that the Government have initiated research into the important question of the effectiveness of representation at tribunals. It will understand, and the hon. Gentleman well knows, that tribunals were often set up so that lay people could come before them with legal and quasi-legal problems and have the ingredients of their case teased out of them constructively by members of the tribunal. Tribunals dealing with legal matters are composed entirely of lawyers, and those dealing with a mixture of legal and lay matters of a combination of lawyers and lay people who have a deep understanding of the particular subject. They rightly see it as their duty to do justice and not to allow the litigant's case to go by default just because he or she may not be represented.

The research carried out by Queen Mary college, which we hope will report in the spring of 1989, seeks to discover how effective representation is before tribunals. It may be effective and desirable in some cases and superfluous in others. It will give us better guidance on the extent to which we should extend the right to legal aid before tribunals.

Full legal aid is already available, and has been for some time, for hearings before the Lands Tribunal, the employment appeals tribunal and the commons commissioners. Advice by representation was made available by the Government in 1982 for the mental health review tribunal and, in 1984, for prison disciplinary tribunals, so we have made some progress.

The Lord Chancellor has made it clear that when the opportunity for further progress arises—I make no bones about it: it is partly a matter of cost—representations to social security commissioners will be a high priority. Whether or not, and in which order, if it be right to do so, we should extend legal aid to statutory inquiries or inquests—which would be a broad advance—to immigration appeal tribunals—where the United Kingdom immigrants advisory service already provides help to applicants—to vaccine damage tribunals and to industrial tribunals is a matter for debate. It is better that it should be an informed debate once the results of the research are known.

Our answer must be that we shall look at this and take it by stages as the case develops and resources allow. I am sorry that I cannot accept the amendment, but the hon. Gentleman would not have expected me to agree to it in such blanket form. We have made progress in the past, we are conducting research into the matter and looking at it carefully at present, and we hope, as resources and the case allow, to make further progress in future.

Amendments negatived.

Schedule 4

Amendments of the Legal Aid (Scotland) Act 1986

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton): I beg to move amendment No. 26, in page 42, line 5, leave out '4(2)(a)' and insert '4(2)'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this we may take Government amendments Nos. 27 and 28.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The first two amendments are drafting consequences of the third. The effect of the third is to widen the scope of the determinations that can be made under section 4(2)(c) of the Legal Aid (Scotland) Act 1986.

The need arises from steps that my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland is taking in consultation with the Scottish Legal Aid Board and the Law Society of Scotland to improve the administration of legal aid. He proposes to allow the board to make payments to solicitors who have urgent steps to take in proceedings on behalf of clients before a legal aid application can be determined. Where in due course no award of legal aid is made, he proposes to set stringent conditions for such payments—notably that the solicitor should satisfy the board that he had reasonable grounds for believing that the client was eligible for legal aid, and that the work charged was necessarily, reasonably and actually carried out.

The purpose is to remove the need for emergency certificates in a sizeable number of cases, and the Law Society of Scotland has offered full co-operation in securing a reduction in the emergency certificates based on the availability of this new discretion to the board. That co-operation is most welcome.

The amendment is the key to a major improvement in legal aid adminstration in Scotland, and I commend it to the House.

Mr. Donald Dewar (Glasgow, Garscadden): I know that the amendment is widely welcomed—although perhaps I should not use that phrase, as it relates to a pretty arcane and technical matter. It is, at least, welcomed in the profession, and I am grateful to the Minister.

There has been a good deal of trouble recently over emergency certificates. As I understand it, they have been used extremely widely, largely because of the on-going complaint of the profession that it is now not possible to persevere with preparations for a case until the legal aid certificate has been granted, because solicitors who do will not be paid for it. It is possible to be paid only after the certificate has been granted. Under the old system—before the Scottish Legal Aid Board appeared on the scene—it was possible, if the solicitor took the risk, to proceed with the work; and, if legal aid was granted, he was then paid retrospectively from the date on which the application was lodged.

There is one point on which I am not clear, although I have no doubt that the Minister will be able to help me. He has explained very courteously that it is now possible for the Scottish Legal Aid Board, on what he describes as "stringent conditions", to pay for work that is done if the solicitor can reasonably have expected that legal aid would be granted. But I was under the impression that even if it was granted, if the work was done before the date of the grant, he could not be paid for it. I may be becoming confused. Perhaps the Minister could clarify the point.

Let me put it another way. This is a concession to cover circumstances in which work is done and, to the solicitor's surprise, legal aid is not granted. In those circumstances, payment can be made. Let us assume for a moment that the work is done, and legal aid is then granted. Is that work covered as well?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I am glad to reassure the hon. Gentleman. He obviously wishes to know what happens when urgent steps are taken by the solicitor and there is a grant of legal aid. The grant will cover those legal steps. That can be achieved by amending regulations that will come forward this month. The point will be met, I hope, on 1 August, assuming that the regulations are approved. It is very important to the Scottish Legal Aid Board and the lawyers that they should be.

Mr. Dewar: Is the Minister saying that, when legal aid is granted, there will be a change by regulation which will allow retrospective cover—which to some extent settles the argument about the effective date of legal aid cover?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: That is my understanding.

Amendment agreed to.

Amendments made: No. 27, in page 42, line 5, after 'fund)' insert '(a) in paragraph (a)'.

No. 28, in page 42, line 6, at end add—

'(b) in paragraph (c), the words "for the purposes of this Act" are repealed.'.—[*Lord James Douglas-Hamilton.*]

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I beg to move amendment No. 29, in page 42, line 12, leave out 'expenses' and insert 'fees and outlays'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take Government amendments Nos. 30 to 33.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The amendments are all of a technical nature and clarify certain aspects of the provisions of section 17 of the 1986 Act in relation to contributions and payments out of property received. In particular, they remove ambiguity as to what is meant by "expenses" and clarify the fact that the board can use sums recovered in civil actions to meet expenditure in related matters handled as advice and assistance. They also ensure that, once an account of expenses is agreed between the Scottish Legal Aid Board and the solicitor, it is not necessary for the solicitor to have the account taxed before he can recover any unpaid contribution from the client.

Amendment agreed to.

Amendments made: No. 30, in page 42, line 21, leave out 'the expenses' and insert

'(i) the fees and outlays'.

No. 31, in page 42, line 23, at the end add—

'(ii) recouping any sums paid out of the fund on his behalf in respect of advice and assistance in relation to those proceedings or to any matter to which those proceedings relate.'.

No. 32, in page 42, line 26, lave out 'to expenses.'.

No. 33, in page 42, line 31, leave out from 'off' to the end of line 34 and insert—

'(12) An account of expenses which:—

(a) has been agreed between the Board and the solicitor acting for the legally assisted person; or

(b) has been taxed,

shall not be liable to taxation by an auditor of court in any proceedings.'.—*[Lord James Douglas-Hamilton.]*

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I beg to move amendment No. 34, in page 42, line 46, at end add—

'5A. In section 36(2) (regulations), in paragraph (b) at end add:—

"and the power to substitute different amounts for the amount specified in section 10(2) of this Act includes power to substitute different amounts in relation to different cases or classes of case".'.

This amendment is necessary to enable a two-tier "prospective cost limit" to be set for advice and assistance, including assistance by way of representation. This limit is the amount of work which a solicitor may himself authorise without requiring the prior approval of the board. The limit is to be differentiated so that in particular circumstances, and subject to particular conditions, a solicitor may authorise himself to spend up to £150, whereas in normal circumstances he may authorise only £50—or £60 under new regulations proposed to be effective from 1 August. The Act as it stands will not permit this, and the amendment is proposed in order to allow this important additional facility. The facility is an important part of the improvements to the administration of legal aid discussed with the Law Society of Scotland and the Scottish Legal Aid Board.

Mr. Dewar: I feel a little more at home with the subject matter on this occasion. In the dim days of my past I worked in a jobbing solicitor's practice which depended very largely on what were known in the trade as "pink bombers"—the legal aid advice and assistance scheme. This is a very important feature of the legal aid system and one about which I feel strongly because there is no doubt that it allows an enormous amount of help to be given to anxious people with worrying problems which do not necessarily go on any formal legal process. In areas in which there are social problems this is a scheme of prime social importance.

Before we agree to the amendment, perhaps the Minister will say a little about the way in which it will operate, as it is an important change. As the Minister knows, the present limit is self-regulating. In effect, it is administered by the solicitor, who awards himself legal aid. Having exhausted the first £50 of provision, in my day one had to go to the Law Society for authority to increase the expenditure. As I understand the amendment, there is to be a two-tier system in future and in some circumstances the solicitor will be able to spend up to £150. I do not know what those circumstances are, but I have no doubt that they have been hard fought, with the trade trying to make the range of grounds as wide as possible and the Scottish Legal Aid Board, mindful of the Chancellor's hot breath on its shoulder, trying to ensure that the tier is as narrowly constructed as possible. In my day, for example, it was usual to obtain extensions for certain types of consistorial work at the preliminary stage.

The Minister should say a word or two about the circumstances involved because if the amendment produces a wide extension of this area of legal aid expenditure it will have a considerable impact. I welcome the amendment, and I am sure that the profession will welcome it even more warmly, but I think that the Minister should say something about the way in which it will be exercised.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) asked how the system will operate. There needs to be a higher limit where the solicitor expects to have to submit a civil legal aid application. At present, that limit is £50, and regulations which we shall introduce this month will raise it to £60. Above that, a solicitor should be able to incur expenses up to £150 in cases where he expects to submit a civil legal aid application.

The hon. Gentleman wanted to know about the particular circumstances that will apply. They will be set out in the regulations. The purpose of this provision is to ensure that lawyers should be entitled to take action on behalf of their clients without having to make unnecessary application to the Scottish Legal Aid Board. The key circumstance for availability is that the matter will progress to a civil legal aid application.

The regulations are not quite finalised, but agreement with the Law Society is virtually complete. The Law Society wants to see the final form of words, and that will happen soon. We are anxious that the regulations should progress as quickly as possible. The amendment will allow them to be laid.

12.30 am

Mr. Dewar: I am grateful to the Minister. The fact that the matter has been virtually agreed with the Law Society is a state of grace. I hope that its optimism is justified. I presume—the Minister need only confirm with a nod—that in circumstances where it is not obvious that a full legal aid application will be lodged but additional work may be required for the client, an application for extension can be made at the discretion of the Scottish Legal Aid Board, even though it does not fall within the category that allows a solicitor to award himself the additional room for expenditure.

Presumably, if we have energy and enthusiasm, we shall have a chance to discover what is in the regulations before they come before the House. No doubt, if we wish, we can make representations then. I welcome the amendment in general terms.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I shall check, but to the best of my knowledge the answer is yes.

Amendment agreed to.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I beg to move amendment No. 35, in page 43, line 11, at end insert—

'PART III

Board's property to be rateable

9. In Schedule 1, paragraph 2(4) is repealed.'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take Government amendment No. 36.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The amendment provides that the Scottish Legal Aid Board will meet its rates bill, instead of the Government making a payment in lieu of rates. The existing provision has resulted in an unnecessarily complex arrangement for the payment of the board's rates. The change will make the provision consistent with that for other major Scottish non-departmental public bodies. There are consequential adjustments to the list of repeals in schedule 6. These are contained in a later amendment. The funding will come out of the same Vote and the Scottish Legal Aid Board will not lose any funds, the funding coming from the Government.

Mr. Dewar: At another time of night and in other circumstances, this would be an opportunity for a splendid debate. This is an almost bizarre amendment. I am not clear as to why a payment in lieu of rates was made in the way described by the Minister. I presume that payment in lieu of rates happened to be exactly the same as the rates bill would have been. That may be a naive assumption, and we need not go into it in great detail. I am delighted that this "non-departmental body"—what a warm glow that gives—is to be treated in exactly the same way as all its kith and kin.

Schedule 5

MINOR AND CONSEQUENTIAL AMENDMENTS

Amendments made: No. 8, in page 44, line 45, leave out paragraph 12.

No. 9, in page 45, line 1, leave out 'that Act' and insert 'the Prosecution of Offences Act 1985'.

No. 10, in page 45, leave out lines 14 to 17 and insert—

'"(4A) Where one party to any proceedings is a legally assisted person then—

(a) for the purposes of sections 16 and 17 of this Act, his costs shall be taken not to include either the expenses incurred on his behalf by the Legal Aid Board or the Lord Chancellor or, if he is liable to make a contribution under section 23 of the Legal Aid Act 1988, any sum paid or payable by way of contribution; and

(b) for the purposes of sections 18 and 19 of this Act, his costs shall be taken to include the expenses incurred on his behalf by the Legal Aid Board or the Lord Chancellor (without any deduction on account of any contribution paid or payable under section 23 of the Legal Aid Act 1988) but, if he is liable to make such a contribution, his costs shall be taken not to include any sum paid or payable by way of contribution.".'.—*[Lord James Douglas-Hamilton.]*

Schedule 6

REPEALS

Amendments made: No. 11, in page 47, line 48, column 3, at beginning insert 'Section 16(8).'.

No. 36, in page 48, lines 11 to 14, leave out the third column and insert—

'In section 4(2)(c), the words "for the purposes of this Act".
In section 16, subsection (1) and, in subsection (2), the words "in this section and".
In section 17, subsections (3) to (8).
Section 18(1).
In section 32(a), the words ", out of the Fund".
In Schedule 1 paragraph 2(4)".'.—*[Lord James Douglas-Hamilton.]*

Order for Third Reading read.

Motion made, and Question proposed, That the Bill be now read the Third time.—*[The Solicitor-General.]*.

12.33 am

Mr. Lawrence: As I made clear on Second Reading on 4 May, I support the Bill, for it reflects the Government's determination to stop the trail of open cheques, to impose sensible financial controls, and to take the opportunity to introduce a measure of reasonable improvement in this important aspect of social need. Furthermore, it is clear from the quiet reception that the Bill is now receiving from interested bodies that the vehemence of their initial response was, as we said, a wild reaction to reasonable change and improvements.

Having said that, I must confess to some disappointment. In my speech on Second Reading, at column 896, I drew attention to five issues that were causing concern to the Bar, which has as close a knowledge of and expertise in the working of the legal aid scheme as any other

[Mr. Lawrence]

grouping. It is true that my hon. and learned Friend the Solicitor-General responded immediately and positively to two of those concerns. He put to rest the fears, first, that there would be no appeal against refusals to grant criminal legal aid—there will—and, secondly, that decisions on the granting of criminal legal aid would be taken from the courts, which knew best whether such legal aid should be granted—they will not. The Bar will be grateful for those two assurances.

I am disappointed that the Government have not seen fit to respond as positively as they might have done to three other issues. Those positive responses were also called for by eminent judges such as Lords Ackner and Griffiths in the other place, and by such a non-legal authority as Lord Benson. First, I asked that the principle of fair remuneration for work actually and reasonably done in section 39(3) of the Legal Aid Act 1974—as reasonable a principle of fair pay for a fair day's work as it is possible to devise—be maintained and not swept away. The Government have strangely refused to act, despite the fact that their decision has run contrary to the legal aid White Paper. Certainly there has been an improvement with the list of provisions that are required to be satisfied in an application for legal aid, but there is no reason why the general principle should not remain in the legislation, as well as these detailed requirements which are to be taken into consideration.

When my hon. and learned Friend says that the Lord Chancellor will construe the rules fairly and will be strong against the Treasury, that may well be so of the present incumbent of the Wool Sack, but what guarantee can be given that the next Lord Chancellor, or the one after that, will behave in the same way? I think that the Bar will be puzzled, as I am, by the refusal to leave in the general principle. It would cost the Government nothing. It would not have interfered in any way with those other factors, but the fact that they have taken it out must raise doubts about the future level of remuneration.

Secondly, I asked that parliamentary control be not weakened by substituting the Government convenience of the negative resolution for changes in civil legal aid for the time worn affirmative resolution. The Government have mostly, although not entirely, failed to budge on that one as well.

Thirdly, and most important, I asked that legal aid be extended to certain sectors where it is now not available. At a time when the welfare state activity by a caring and socially conscious Government is expanding, and when the country is becoming economically strong again, there seems to be no justification in continuing to refuse legal aid to poor applicants before social security and employment tribunals. What on earth is the point of giving rights to the individual in the 20th century that he cannot afford to enforce? The Government have not budged on that.

Research is not a substitute for taking action. It is more like a delaying tactic. When my hon. and learned Friend says that the product of the research that we are going into may have a positive response, we have to bear in mind that at least 14 years ago—that is as far back as my memory takes me—we were asking in this place for the extension of legal aid to some of these other tribunals. If we have not had research over 14 years, what is this new research likely to reveal?

I am disappointed, and I know that the Bar will be disappointed. I know that my hon. and learned Friend has tried and done his best, and we appreciate his efforts and his sympathetic approach. It is a cause of sadness to me that, although so much in the Bill is good and warrants support, on those three measures the Government have given the impression of being obdurate and unyielding. Perhaps one day they will see the error of their ways and put these matters right. Until that happy day when I can give the Government three cheers, I give them two.

12.39 am

Mr. Fraser: The Bill re-enacts and consolidates much existing law and to that extent we have no quarrel with it. However, it adds little by way of advance. It edges its way gingerly towards group actions by means of contracts and it makes tiny advances towards tribunal representation. The other changes in the Bill are unwelcome and are much more likely to erode rather than to stimulate the legal aid system. There is a danger—it was reflected in the speech of the hon. and learned Member for Burton (Mr. Lawrence)—that it will stigmatise the legal aid system and provide us with a second-class system with a second-class level of remuneration.

There are other matters about which we are concerned but which we have not mentioned during the Report stage. For example, we are concerned about the removal of conveyancing and will-making from the scope of the green form scheme. We are concerned at that not in general, but where we believe it would cause hardship to some groups, such as single parents who wish to appoint a guardian by way of will. We are also concerned about the imposition of contributions throughout the length of a case, which will be a deterrent to those pursuing justice. It will put a premium on delay and the burden of payments will be related to the weight of the case rather than the extent of the means of the assisted person. The extended payments are likely to be not just a discouragement, but in some cases a penalty upon those who seek legal aid.

We believe that contracting out will remove legal advice—I stress "legal advice"—completely from some people. We believe that the rate of payment for legal aid work will increasingly be dependent not upon value for money or the rate for the job but upon public expenditure considerations. That will involve an abuse of loyalty and commitment of legal aid practitioners. It will be a system of remuneration fixed by the Lord Chancellor without advice from any advisory body, without arbitration if there is a difference of opinion and without appeal. The Bill contains, if it was so used in the hands of another Lord Chancellor, machinery not to axe the legal aid scheme but to starve it to death.

The Bill contains virtually nothing on tribunals apart from what I have mentioned. It contains nothing on law centres. It does nothing to reduce the increasing difficulty of poor people or people of moderate means to obtain legal aid. The Bill has failed to enthuse the professions or the advice agencies, even those that may be the recipients of contracts. It has failed to enthuse the consumer movement and us. In its changes it introduces some mischief, but many opportunities have been missed. Throughout its proceedings in the House it has conspicuously failed to gain the vocal or unequivocal support of Conservative Members apart from incurring the critical appraisal of the Opposition.

12.42 am

The Solicitor-General: The Bill has had a constructive passage through all its stages in the House. We had a series of valuable debates that have helped to illuminate to hon. Members and to a wider public what the Bill is about. We are grateful for the contributions by way of briefing and representation we have received from the profession—the Bar and the Law Society—and from the bodies that comprise the Advice Services Alliance, including the citizens advice bureaux and the law centres.

The Bill sets the framework for legal aid into the next century. It introduces the new Legal Aid Board, which is designed to be responsible for all aspects of legal aid. On the date of the Second Reading in the House the Lord Chancellor announced the membership of the board. Since then, the board has started its work in preparing itself for the assumption of responsibility for legal aid fom the Law Society. I can now announce that the Government intend that that will take place at the beginning of April next year.

The board's objective is a high standard of service for all those who need legal advice, assistance and representation and who would otherwise be unable to obtain it on account of their means and to give that service through a scheme that is efficient and effective and gives value for money. The new scheme will offer the opportunity for improved management of the legal aid system and for an independent and informed reconsideration of priorities. It is an exciting prospect that promises benefits for the assisted person, the legal profession and the public as taxpayers and potential consumers. It is to be welcomed, and I commend it to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read the Third time, and passed, with amendments.

Combustion Plants (Air Pollution)

12.45 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Colin Moynihan): I beg to move,

That this House takes note of European Community Documents Nos. 11642/83, 5124/85 and the proposals described in the un-numbered Explanatory Memorandum from the Department of the Environment of 9th June 1988 and the Supplementary Explanatory Memorandum of 29th June 1988 on the limitation of emissions of pollutants into the air from large combustion plants; and calls upon the Government to support the agreement reached at the meetings of the Council of Environment Ministers on 16th and 28th June 1988 on proposals for a European Community Directive.

The motion concerns a major piece of proposed European Community legislation on the environment—the draft directive on the control of emissions from large combustion plants. This mainly concerns power stations, which are responsible for about 70 per cent. of United Kingdom sulphur emissions and 40 per cent. of nitrogen oxides, but also refineries and certain other large industrial plants.

It would be helpful to hon. Members to explain at the outset that the two deposited documents cited in the motion have been overtaken by events, and that my remarks are primarily addressed to the informal version of the directive which the Department submitted under cover of its explanatory memorandum of 9 June. I should mention that there have been a few changes in the proposals since then: notably, the emission reduction targets for individual states—details of which are set out in annexes 1 and 2 to the Department's supplementary explanatory memorandum of 29 June—revised proposals for monitoring and measuring emissions from new plants and special arrangements for Spain.

I am glad to be able to inform the House that agreement in principle has finally been reached on this directive. As hon. Members will no doubt be aware, the directive represents part of the European Community's response to the problem of acid rain and, in particular, the need to reduce emissions of pollutants which contribute to the problem—sulphur dioxide and nitrogen oxides. The other part of the response is the directive on vehicle emissions, which was agreed in December 1987 and, I am happy to say, is now to be supplemented by a further tightening of the controls on small cars agreed by European Environment Ministers last week.

The large combustion plant proposals were first put forward by the Commission in 1983, ostensibly in response to concern over the major forest damage being experienced in central Europe. Large elements of the directive were based on West German domestic legislation, which had been drawn up in response to this problem. I think that there is general acceptance that the problem of forest damage may call for rather more complex remedies than those being put forward five years ago. Equally, there is growing recognition that sulphur dioxide and nitrogen oxide emissions play a large part in forming acid deposition, which contributes to freshwater damage, notably in Scandinavia, but also in some areas of the United Kingdom and elsewhere.

The draft EC directive in its initial form sought to impose tight standards on new plant, and very substantial overall reductions in each country's total large plant emissions by 1995, based on 1980 figures, of 60 per cent.

[Mr. Colin Moynihan]

SO_2 and 40 per cent. NOx and dust. We and a number of other countries did not consider that the across-the-board approach to emission reductions from existing plant was on a consistent or equitable basis. It suited countries whose emissions had peaked at 1980 levels or those which were investing heavily in nuclear power and would not need to make a major effort to achieve the required emission reductions. However, the formula was a very difficult one for the United Kingdom, bearing in mind that our SO_2 emissions had fallen substantially in the decade before 1980 and in view of our heavy reliance on coal-fired power stations. It was also difficult for some of the less well developed states in the Community which are in the process of expanding their capacity to generate electricity.

Negotiations have taken place against a background of growing international concern about acid rain—concern that is fully shared by the Government. Growing evidence that emissions—not only from the United Kingdom but from a number of other countries—were implicated in the acidification of Scandinavian freshwaters prompted the Government to announce significant measures to deal with the problem. In 1984 we announced our aim to reduce emissions of SO_2 and NOx by 30 per cent. on 1980 levels by the end of the 1990s.

We have taken significant steps towards achieving those targets. In September 1986 we announced that all new coal-fired power stations would be required to have the technology to control SO_2 emissions, and that 6,000 MW of coal-fired generating capacity, the equivalent of three major power stations, would be retrofitted with flue gas desulphurisation equipment. In May 1987 we announced that all 12 major coal-fired stations would have low-NOx burners fitted, and that this technology would be a requirement for new power stations. Those measures will cost over £1 billion.

By any standards, it is a very substantial programme. Very few Community countries—only West Germany, Denmark and the Netherlands—are doing more than we are; most are doing much less. Nevertheless, the original Commission proposals would have required us to do considerably more.

We do not flinch from expensive measures when they are shown to be worth while to protect the environment, nor do we insist on absolute proof before taking remedial action, but we look for reasonable assurances that the action that we decide to take will be cost-effective. Under the original Commission proposals, the United Kingdom would have had to retrofit flue gas desulphurisation equipment to perhaps a further nine power stations at a likely additional cost of more than £2,000 million and within an impracticably short period.

We seriously questioned the extent to which action on that scale would bring worthwhile results ahead of the increasing use of low acid technology, such as fluidised bed combustion, low-NOx burners and coal gas gasification, towards the end of the next decade. Such a programme would bring with it major implications for waste disposal because of the quantities of chemical by-products produced in the scrubbing process—neutralising the acid with an agent such as limestone. The by-products concerned depend on the process used—gypsum, or, where regenerative processes are used to refine the product further, sulphur or sulphuric acid.

Up to a certain level of output, those products are of material value to the building industry or to the chemical industry, but too much and the countryside would be awash with them. Moreover, some of the targets set were just not physically attainable for the United Kingdom, with our high-sulphur indigenous coal, short of a massive switch to the use of imported low-sulphur coal.

The targets for emission reduction from existing plants have been modified under successive presidencies, and the position today is as set out in the annexes to the explanatory memorandum issued by the Department on 29 June. The basic approach is now a three-stage approach to reductions in overall SO_2 emissions and two stages for NOx emissions. Different targets are to apply for different member states to reflect their particular circumstances.

The proposals have gone a long way towards recognising the needs and problems of individual member states, while still requiring a substantial overall Communitywide effort to reduce emissions. In the case of the United Kingdom, for example, the SO_2 targets that we propose to accept give some credit for the emission reductions achieved before 1980. Those reductions—a 20 per cent. reduction on 1980 levels of large combustion plant emissions by 1993, 40 per cent. by 1998 and 60 per cent. by 2003——

Mr. Allan Roberts (Bootle): Will the Minister confirm that those are not percentage reductions of the nation's emissions of sulphur but percentage reductions applying only to our large combustion plants?

Mr. Moynihan: Yes, I certainly confirm that. Nevertheless, the hon. Gentleman will be aware that the reductions are very onerous and that even for the large combustion plants they will require a substantial further effort over and above the existing CEGB programme.

The Community has accepted that the United Kingdom's major programme to reduce NOx emissions from coal-fired power stations is fully in line with the spirit of the directive. I am glad to say that the figures proposed —a 15 per cent. reduction in large plant emissions by 1993 and 30 per cent. by 1998, again on a 1980 base—now reflect our programme.

The directive also sets stringent emission standards for new plant. It was during the United Kingdom presidency of the Community, in 1986, and under our initiative, that the negotiations on new plant standards began in earnest. Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Pollution is specifying requirements for SO_2 emissions from new coal-fired power stations which are as tough as, if not tougher than, those likely to apply in any normal application in Europe.

However, one particular area of difficulty for the United Kingdom has been that of our indigenous high sulphur fuels. We clearly could not accept any provision that would virtually rule out the use in large combustion plants of the bulk of the coal mined in the United Kingdom. I am pleased to tell the House that our concerns on that score have been recognised. The Community has accepted proposals that would meet the problem while not compromising the high standards for new plant, which the United Kingdom favours no less than our Community partners.

For NOx abatement, the specification proposed by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Pollution for United Kingdom plant is the tightest that it believes is achievable using "primary measures"—abatement through good design of the combustion system—which is the technical basis on which the directive is based. I am glad to say that Community agreement has been reached on new plant standards that reflect this. The Community has also reached agreement on a sensible and workable regime for monitoring and measuring those standards.

In return, we have been able to accept that the threshold at which the standards for large plants should begin to apply should be a capacity of 50 MW. Standards for SO$_2$ emissions from coal-fired plant in the range 50 to 100 MW will not, however, be set until 1990 and, when they are set, that will take into account the availability, or otherwise, of low-sulphur coal.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett (Pembroke): As my hon. Friend knows, I have asked several parliamentary questions about this directive as I have a number of oil refineries in my constituency. As a result of his meeting on 4 May with the UK Petroleum Industry Association, can he say whether that association is now satisfied with the part of the directive that relates to existing plants, as opposed to new ones?

Mr. Moynihan: I can give my hon. Friend that assurance. It was obviously important in our discussions with the UK Petroleum Industry Association to ensure that we took proper account of the operating constraints within the industry. I confirm that we have done that. We have especially taken into account the need for flexibility within the refineries as new plant is added. My hon. Friend referred specifically to existing capacity. I hope that I have satisfied his concern about that.

Negotiations on the directive have been long and protracted. Over the last few months we have worked hard with the German presidency and the Commission to remove the remaining obstacles. That work has borne fruit, and agreement was reached on all the outstanding points at issue at the meetings of the Council of Environment Ministers on 16 and 28 June. Subject to the removal of the United Kingdom parliamentary reserve, the way is now open for adoption at an early date. The directive will provide for substantial, but cost-effective, reductions in pollutants from large combustion plants. I will not disguise from the House the fact that the agreement will be costly for the United Kingdom, but it gives the industries concerned firm targets for their future planning. Above all, we can be proud of the major part that we are playing in reducing European emissions and hence in helping to bring about an end to the acid rain problem. The environment of the Community—and, indeed, that of other European countries—stands to benefit significantly from the agreement. I commend the motion to the House.

12.58 am

Mr. Allan Roberts (Bootle): The Minister has been as skilful today as the Government have been during the past few years when presenting their policies on acid rain. By telescoping all the pollution reduction measures planned until the end of the century, the Government have claimed that their clean-up programme is the second biggest in Europe and that the CEGB is taking substantial steps to deal with the problem. The reality is very different.

We have heard from the Minister some of the old hoary arguments. On the one hand he claims to be taking action on behalf of the Government to deal with the acid rain problems and the emissions of sulphur and nitrogen, and on the other hand he puts forward the old arguments. For example, he says that it is difficult to identify the real cause of forest damage and that it might not be due to SO$_2$ emissions.

In its first report in the previous Parliament the Environment Select Committee said that this was a complex process involving ozone and photosynthesis and that SO$_2$ was a major contributor to forest damage. Until recently, the Government have denied that sulphur emissions from our large combustion plants have contributed significantly to the problems of acid rain. They did what people used to do when the overwhelming evidence that cigarette smoking caused lung cancer was first presented—they denied that there was any real evidence because it was all statistical or circumstantial.

At one stage, some years ago, we thought that the Government would do something about it, the Prime Minister having been buttonholed by Chancellor Kohl and others, but then there was a meeting at Chequers with the Central Electricity Generating Board and Sir Walter Marshall—the longest, dirtiest weekend in history I think it was called—as a result of which the Government backtracked again.

The Government's present claims rest on two false premises. The first is that the United Kingdom has reduced substantially its sulphur emissions since 1970 and is already on target for making major reductions. If there was a 1970 30 per cent. club, they argue, we would be one of its founder members. The second is that their programme is the most expensive, or one of the most expensive, in Europe for cleaning up power station emissions.

Neither claim is really accurate. United Kingdom sulphur emissions have fallen by more than 40 per cent. since 1970 and nearly one quarter since 1980, but they were caused by external factors such as the increased use of natural gas in the 1970s and 1980s, the increased use of nuclear fuel over the same period and the oil price hikes of 1973 and 1979, when United Kingdom SO$_2$ emissions fell by 500,000 and 700,000 tonnes respectively. The major reason was the collapse of United Kingdom manufacturing industry during 1980 and 1981, when SO$_2$ falls of 400,000 and 250,000 tonnes respectively were recorded. The Government have claimed the credit for those external factors, presenting the pollution reduction as the result of successful policies.

The externality of the solution can be seen in what is happening now. The apparent revival of industry led to an increase of 200,000 tonnes in sulphur emissions last year. Worse is in store. The Electricity Council forecasts annual increases in demand for electricity of 1·6 per cent. for the next five years. Greenpeace-sponsored computer modelling indicates that United Kingdom power station emissions of SO$_2$ will increase by 10 per cent. by 1993, falling to their current level only by 1996.

Neither the Department of Energy nor the Department of the Environment has been able to disprove that projection, dismissing the rise of 200,000 tonnes in sulphur emissions last year as a hiccup—that is twice Norway's output. The Government's estimates, which appear in *Hansard* for 2 November 1987, are 3·4 million to 4·2 million tonnes of SO$_2$ by 1990, and 2·6 million to 3·5 million tonnes by 2000. The upper estimates represent a decrease from 1980 levels of only 10 per cent. by 1990 and 25 per cent. by 2000.

[Mr. Allan Roberts]

When compared with other European countries, those figures show an extremely small programme. We have still refused, even though we have signed this protocol, to join the 30 per cent. club, despite earlier indications that the Government might be tempted to do that. The members of the club are pledged to reduce emissions or exports of sulphur by 30 per cent. between 1980 and 1993.

The club includes Austria, which is pledged to a 70 per cent. reduction by 1995, Belgium, which is pledged to a 50 per cent. reduction by 1995, and Canada, which is pledged to the same by 1994. The figures for other countries are as follows: Denmark 50 per cent. by 1995, and Finland, France, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, the Federal Republic of Germany, Bulgaria, the German Democratic Republic, Hungary, Italy, Liechtenstein, the USSR and Ukraine, all 30 per cent. by 1993. Within western Europe the United Kingdom is the largest single emitter of SO_2 and we remain so despite what the Government have announced today.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: When the Labour Government commissioned many of the coal-fired power stations, why did they not include sulphur cleaning equipment as part of the programme? It has been left to the Conservative Government to do that.

Mr. Roberts: It has not been left to the Government. There are 40 major power stations and the Government will retrofit either five or six—the Government are refusing to do it all. If the hon. Gentleman believes that 10 years ago there was the same knowledge and information as there is now about the nature of sulphur emissions and acid rain, he is living in cloud-cuckoo-land. Ten years ago neither the hon. Gentleman nor I had even heard of acid rain. Certainly the environmentalists did not have all the information. They expected the SO_2 to be dispersed because of the tall stacks policy, but what goes into the air comes down. Within the past six years evidence has been collected and the forest damage in central Europe and the acid damage to lakes and rivers, which has killed large numbers of fish in Scandinavia, has become evident.

Despite the Government's claim that they are going to do something about it, we will remain, after the Government's programme, the largest single emitter of SO_2 in western Europe. In 1990 we will still be contributing 20 per cent. to the EEC's SO_2 emissions and will contribute 25 per cent. by 1995. In per capita terms, we are the fourth highest SO_2 emitter in western Europe, and we shall be the second highest in 1995.

We are one of only five western European countries that are still refusing to join and sign the 30 per cent. club protocol. We are in league with Spain, Portugal, Greece and Eire. We should all be ashamed of ourselves. The environmental consequences of SO_2 emissions are important to us as well as to the forests of central Europe and the lakes and waterways of Scandinavia. The forest damage in Britain is exactly the same in character and scale as that experienced in West Germany when problems were first revealed there. The environmental damage is similar to that suffered by The Netherlands and Switzerland, which consider that parts of their forest areas are a national catastrophe. According to the November Forestry Commission figures, 55 per cent. of all United Kingdom broadleaf trees and 57 per cent. of conifers had lost more than 10 per cent. of their foliage compared with an ideal tree.

We are facing increasingly serious problems with the acidification of our surface waters. Greenpeace has identified 80 acidified or vulnerable water bodies. Areas vulnerable to water acidification cover more than half of Scotland, nearly half of Northern Ireland, parts of Northumberland, Yorkshire, Cheshire, Cumbria, Sussex, Shropshire, Hampshire, Cornwall, Somerset, Devon, Dyfed, Gwynedd, Mid-Glamorgan and West Glamorgan. The level of pollution falling on those waters is so great that it is stripping them of their buffering capacity. Unless deposition is reduced by 50 to 60 per cent.—not the 30 per cent. required by the 30 per cent. club—those waters will continue to deteriorate. An authoritative independent scientist has said:

> "Few water bodies in acid, susceptible areas south of Loch Ness, will be immune from acidification."

The Government now herald a new initiative because they have signed the large combustion plants directive. Under the revised directive, the current programme of one 2,000 MW desulphurisation by 1993 will remain the same, and in addition to the two already to be desulphurised by 1998, another two will have to be desulphurised to meet the terms of the large combustion plants directive. That is the CEGB estimate. The Department of the Environment talks about desulphurising three, and the CEGB about desulphurising two. Will the Minister tell us which is correct? The CEGB estimates that the extra cost of meeting the directive will be about £400 million, whereas the Department estimates it at £600 million.

It is difficult for outsiders to work out how many stations will need to be cleaned up to comply with the directive, because we are not allowed access to the assumptions made by the CEGB. The Minister has given us some information today. It would be useful if he could give us more and disclose what proportion of nuclear supply is assumed and how much low-sulphur coal will be imported. It is an important question, not just for acid rain, but for the future of the coal industry. How much of an increase in gas-powered turbines is planned? Without knowledge of those assumptions it is impossible for outsiders to calculate whether the CEGB or the Department is right.

From an environmental point of view, it is important to emphasise that acid rain will not be stopped by the Government's new reduction programme, although that is likely to be the thrust of their propaganda. They are likely to say that they will stop or control it. On Saturday 18 June, in the *Daily Express*, Lord Caithness said:

> "Lochs in the eastern highlands of Scotland and English lakes will improve quite quickly."

The newspaper said that people would soon see the results of the clean-up campaign. That is simply not true. The 1986 figures for sulphur emissions were already 20 per cent. below the 1980 figure, so that the consequence of the Government's negotiations is to maintain the status quo until the mid-1990s.

A Greenpeace review of the scientific literature—"Acid Waters"—says that current levels of sulphur deposition are removing the buffering capacity of sensitive lakes across the United Kingdom, and for the next seven to eight years acid lakes will remain acid and sensitive waters will continue to deteriorate. Environmental improvements will take nearly a decade to be seen, and even then will not be seen everywhere as the proposed reduction programme is not big enough. A Government who care about the environment would not be hailing as a triumph the programme that will clean up five out of 40 power stations over 10 years.

The mechanics of the large combustion plant directive have been left vague. After the EC meeting the Department issued a statement saying:

> "We intend to leave it to the Electricity Industry to decide precisely how the reductions are to be achieved."

Planning for that will presumably take place over the next three or four years, but the industry is so transfixed by privatisation that its normal thought processes have become frozen. The mechanism by which this is to be achieved must be spelt out. Will the reductions be imposed legislatively? Will they be negotiated between the two new generating bodies? How will reductions be allocated between them? Leaving those decisions to the industry will mean procrastination.

The United Kingdom will not be dismayed by that. At our suggestion, a clause was inserted in the directive saying that any member states that do not achieve their targets may apply to have the figure varied. That is why the negotiations have been long and protracted: at each stage countries like Britain, but mainly Britain, have been trying to water down proposals from other EC countries. In the absence of governmental directive or a concrete system by which the reductions can be achieved, they are likely to fall by the wayside after privatisation.

Larger reductions than are proposed would be technically feasible, although the Government are spreading the myth that they would not. As the Minister said, 80 per cent. of large plants in West Germany will be dealt with. Eighteen will be retrofitted within 10 years, which is four times the size of the CEGB programme in less time. In Britain, three engineering firms—John Brown, Davy McKee and Babcock Wilcox—have said that they could desulphurise a 2,000 MW power station in between 42 and 48 months. Each company could clear up two stations simultaneously. A number of other companies have also shown an interest. The reduction figures arrived at for the United Kingdom are the result of political expediency, not environmental protection.

The reason for the Government's signing of the directive is to study the ground for privatisation. Greenpeace sees privatisation as a useful opportunity for rocking the boat in favour of greater environmental protection and is taking the line that anyone who buys a polluting power station will sooner or later be faced with the bill for cleaning up the mess. I hasten to add that that is the Opposition's view, too. The Government's signing of the phased directive, although a small improvement on the past, will not remove this financial threat from potential investors. The fact that polluting power stations are being sold will be a major difficulty when the Government come to sell off the electricity supply industry.

I was disappointed by the first report on air pollution by the Select Committee on the Environment. That recently published report gave the Government a get-out. I hope that when we hold a debate on that subject we shall be able to discuss it fully with members of the Committee. One of the anxieties felt by members of the Committee was that which the Minister advanced today—that if we go too far with getting rid of acid rain and cleaning up our power stations, there will be a need to import large quantities of low-sulphur coal, which will harm our coal industry. I do not believe that for one second. There is no need for people in our coal industry to fear clean coal. The best future for coal is clean coal, and desulphurisation will help and encourage the use of more coal-fired, oil-fired and fossil-fuelled power stations.

It suits many people in the electricity supply industry, and the Government, to ignore the problems of acid rain in the hope that others will stigmatise fossil-fuelled power stations as dirty and use that as a justification for more nuclear power. That is a double-dealing way of approaching the matter. Those who are worried about the future of the coal industry would best safeguard that future by campaigning for clean coal, desulphurisation and fluidised bed combustion. Under the Labour party's policy we would have joined the 30 per cent. club long ago and would be well on the way to implementing EEC directives to cut emissions by 60 per cent., not 30 per cent. The Minister admitted that the 20 per cent. reduction by 1993 and the 40 per cent. reduction by 1998 that the directive implies is a reduction in emissions from our major combustion plants, not in our national emissions from all sources of sulphur. That is why the proposals that the Government ask the House to support tonight are inadequate.

Britain's accession to the directive is tardy and inadequate. The current CEGB plans would be wholly inadequate to meet the required targets, even though the Government have agreed to them. Sufficient resources must be allocated to monitoring the new levels and an adequate legislative framework must be established before privatisation.

The secondary environmental effects mentioned by the Minister—fluidised gas desulphurisation, the gypsum problem—must be fully and quickly assessed and reported. The Government should publish their estimates of the scale and cost of desulphurisation before privatisation of the electricity supply industry.

We welcome the minor step forward that the Government have taken by agreeing to the retrofitting of an extra two or three power stations, but five or six out of 40 is not enough. The Government have been back-pedalling and fighting a rearguard action in Europe and elsewhere against conclusive and effective action to deal with sulphur and nitrogen-oxide emissions, and they will still be seen throughout Europe as the dirty young woman of Europe—if that is not to insult the Prime Minister too much. Britain is seen as a dustbin of the world and a major polluter in Europe.

1.19 am

Mr. Matthew Taylor (Truro): We have been delayed in having the debate. I regret the Government's decision to pull out of the debate before the EEC debates and decides on the document. It feels as if we are debating it after the horse has bolted, which is a shame. Looking at the Order Papers for 14 June and 1 July, I find it interesting that the first report from the Environment Committee on air pollution has been demoted from relevance. Perhaps the Minister looked at it and decided that it was more to his liking that it should be deemed irrelevant to the debate, which it is not. Even following the decision, as a country or as Europe, we still have not tackled the problems that we face.

Before we look at the agreements of the Council of Environment Ministers on 16 and 28 June, we must

[Mr. Matthew Taylor]

concentrate on exactly what our emission standards should be. Where are we starting from, and where should we go? It is important that we do so because the debate is not about some bleak coal-fired power station or the technicalities of how we go about this; it is about the reality of the gradual pollution of rivers and lakes, the decimation of forests, the erosion of ancient buildings and the poor health of ordinary men and women. It is reported that

> "more than 3·5 million people in Britain drink water with higher levels of aluminium than allowed under European Community regulations . . . a Water Authorities Association document recently suggested that metal gets into drinking water as a result of acid rain, and provides further important evidence that Alzheimer's disease may be caused by aluminium in drinking water."

That has caused considerable fear among ordinary people. Reading the reports and letters in local papers in Cornwall, I know that there is considerable concern about the state of affairs in my part of the country, so the debate is about the real impact of acid rain and the Government's record on its prevention.

In November 1987, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment said that few countries are doing more to reduce such emissions and few are likely to match our performance between 1970 and the turn of the century. Yet the truth is that the United Kingdom has continued and is continuing to oppose the 30 per cent. club. It has been on flimsy ground, because the original justification was that it lacked the necessary scientific, ecological, geophysical and economic substantiation. That has now been dropped. The suggestion that the emission reductions target is purely arbitrary has allowed the Government to duck the debate and not take the necessary action. That has been a drastic consequence. If one reads the experts' reports, one sees that many of them already believe that we have left it too late.

Sadly, two weeks ago, the Select Committee on the Environment was left with the option of repeating its recommendation from 1984 that the United Kindom should join the 30 per cent. club. Had we joined it then, we might not now have to bear the label of the "dirty man of Europe" among our European neighbours. Perhaps we would not now have the Duke of Edinburgh speaking publicly about just how unpopular we are in Europe over our apparent refusal to do anything serious about our air pollution.

Many scientists would now say that the reduction required is about 80 to 90 per cent. of SO_2 and 75 per cent. of nitrogen oxide. Environmentalists are already suggesting that the 30 per cent. club is out of date. To my mind, it is better than nothing, and the Government will not even give us that. I hope that during the debate hon. Members on both sides of the House will continue to attempt to persuade the Government that the United Kingdom should at least join the 30 per cent. club.

The Select Committee's report states:

> "we have concluded that the CEGB programme is still not enough."

The fact remains that the United Kingdom has not even reached the limits proposed by the West Germans of a reduction in SO_2 emissions of 70 per cent. by 2003. Instead, we are committed to 60 per cent., which is a small percentage when one considers the overall scientific evidence which suggests that the real target should be in the region of 80 to 90 per cent. In contrast, the West Germans aim to fit pollution control technology to 36 GW in eight years—six times the United Kingdom programme of fitting 6 GW in 10 years.

What about the British public? Do the Government believe that immediate action on acid rain will be unpopular? Perhaps they feel that there is no backing for what we are asking. It appears that British consumers are more than willing to face their responsibility for the safety of our environment. The Harris research centre found that a phenomenal 89 per cent. of its sample was "very" or "fairly" concerned about the acid rain effects of British pollution and 82 per cent. was equally concerned about its effect abroad. In the same poll 72 per cent. thought that our record on this was "poor" or "very poor", and they are in good international company in believing that. The public are also prepared to pay the price of it. Often it is said that the British public will agree to anything, bad or good, but, when faced with the cost, they take a different view. In a Harris poll last year, 84 per cent. were prepared to accept a 5 to 10 per cent. electricity price increase to clean up Britain's acid rain.

Mr. Allan Roberts: The highest estimate—the CEGB estimate—given to the Environment Select Committee of retrofitting enough power stations to implement the EEC directive was a 10 per cent. increase in electricity charges over 10 years. That is an increase of 1 per cent. a year. The Government have increased electricity prices by 8 per cent. already this year and by next year there will have been a total increase of 15 per cent. to prepare for privatisation. Therefore, cost does not seem to be the real reason why the Government are not taking action.

Mr. Taylor: The hon. Gentleman is right, and he is a little ahead of me. I was about to say that a 5 to 10 per cent. increase is more than we need. If we retrofitted with flue gas desulphurisation units at least a total of 12 power stations, we could halve our sulphur dioxide emissions by 1996 and the cost would be just 40 per cent. of funds generated by already scheduled price increases. That £1,700 million could be added to the £650 million already being spent by the CEGB. It would be a far more useful way of spending those funds that the Government insist the electricity industry raises than fattening the calf for privatisation, as the Government plan. We could not draw a better contrast between the views of the British public and of hon. Members on this side of the House on how public money should be spent and the Government's view that it should be spent on the privatisation of the industry —a limited number of people investing in an industry to make a limited gain.

So far I have painted a relatively bleak picture. There are constructive steps that the Government could take now. Although fitting coal-fired power stations with flue gas desulphurisation units may be part of the answer, we must still deal with the disposal of gypsum produced as a result of that cleaning process. Therefore, the key is to prevent rather than to cure.

Last week an international climate conference in Toronto, called by the Canadian Government, made some constructive recommendations. As reported in *The Observer* this weekend, one step

> "would mean cutting back on the burning of fossil fuels. The delegates at Toronto last week called for consumption of fossil fuels to be cut by a fifth over the next 17 years."

That does not mean embarking on a massive nuclear programme, as the Minister suggested during Question Time this afternoon. The recommendation is clear:

> "The best hope is strict energy conservation. Japan, the world's most successful economy, uses half as much energy per head as the US—and could do even better."

Again, the Government's record shows them to be short-sighted, blinkered or perhaps with their hands clapped firmly over their eyes, looking instead at drastic cuts in the budget of the energy efficiency office from £24 million to £15 million.

Another alternative would be to increase clean forms of energy production. The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Energy recently produced a renewable energy strategy paper entitled "The Way Forward." Unfortunately, it would appear that the safe keeping of our environment through clean forms of energy production will have to be developed by the private sector. Millions of pounds are spent on research and development in nuclear power, but the Government have the clear intention of relying on industry to develop and commercialise research into new forms of renewable energy sources. Again, they are ducking out of their responsibilities. The truth is that only Government investment at adequate levels will ensure that we are world leaders in the production of clean and safe sources of energy.

The agreement that we are considering, on the basis of now out-of-date EC documents, has been held back by the Government. Practical measures have been resisted; opportunities have been forgone. In taking note of the documents, we must also note that the Government are moving forward so slowly that, in terms of pollution, we are actually moving backwards.

I can only say that it is a great shame on Ministers and on the country that we are not taking the lead that we should be taking; that we are not living up to our responsibilities; and that in the process we are letting down not only our European neighbours, but ourselves and future generations.

1.31 am

Mr. Kevin Barron (Rother Valley): I view with disappointment this small move in the right direction. We have waited for a long time for action to control emissions from coal-fired plants. I was, however, pleased to hear in both the Minister's speech and a brief intervention from the hon. Member for Pembroke (Mr. Bennett) a recognition that the pollution in the atmosphere is not emitted only by coal-fired plants. It happens in other parts of the country as well, and is caused by oil and gas plants and also by petrol from cars. But, although those causes are acknowledged, there seems to be no headway in joining the 30 per cent. club, or getting anywhere near it. The responsibility always seems to fall on the shoulders of the big coal-fired power stations and industrial boilers—and, indeed, they are responsible for many such emissions.

I welcomed the speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Bootle (Mr. Roberts). We must recognise, however, that the Drax programme, currently before the Secretary of State for Energy and involving one of the biggest coal-burners in the country, envisages commissioning of the first two out of six units—covering 1,330 MW—in late 1993. We are responding very late to the use of technology that has been around for a considerable time.

The memorandum of 29 June, which the Minister put in the Vote Office, showed clearly that the flue gas desulphurisation and low nitrogen burners would meet United Kingdom targets for sulphur dioxide only in 1993, and for nitrogen dioxide only in 1998. On the future, it uses a quaint phrase, stating that it will be for the industries concerned and Her Majesty's inspectorate to determine the 1998 and 2003 sulphur dioxide targets.

I am not sure whether those decisions should be left in those hands. In my view, the memorandum falls far short of any major commitment for targets for this country to meet, even in the current directive. The responsibility is kept away from Government. In that sense, this is not a very positive response to either the directive or the report by the Select Committee on the Environment—although that was criticised by my hon. Friend the Member for Bootle.

The Minister has pointed out that the added expense will require a substantial additional effort over and above the existing programme if these further targets are to be met. If the Government's present plans are implemented, those decisions will be taken by newly privatised generators unless they are taken within the next two years. The competition that the Government wish to see will thus be under attack from the legacy of an indifferent response to the problems for a number of years. I do not put that down just to the present Government, although I think that it is fair to say that they are the first Government who can be accused of sitting on technology which could have been fitted to both new and existing power stations many years before programmes such as that proposed for Drax actually came before the Secretary of State. Previous Governments also dodged the problems of damage caused by emissions, but the present Government have not only known of the damage but have had the necessary technology. They could have done far more in the past eight years before these proposals were brought forward.

We are told that in the new privatised electricity industry competition will come from the introduction of small generators. There will be big G and little G, but the real competition will be from small generators, although there must be severe pressure on that concept, especially in relation to coal-fired generators, in view of the directives before us. The Government memorandum rightly estimates that it will cost two and a half to three times as much to remove one tonne of sulphur dioxide from a 50 MW plant as from a 500 MW plant, so the introduction of small plants will not be so easy as the Government appear to believe. In that sense, their plans seem somewhat contradictory.

Another way of proceeding is for the Government to ensure that research and development on clean coalburn progresses from its present stage. I trust that the Minister has been briefed on the joint programme, as it currently still is, by the CEGB and British Coal on the pressurised fluidised bed combustion project in south Yorkshire. The first stage of that project has made a major contribution to developing the clean coal technology that we have needed for so long, but the next stage is under enormous pressure, and if the funding does not come quickly it is likely that the next stage will not take place. The CEGB has withdrawn its support for the project, apparently on the ground that it wishes to concentrate its research and development on larger schemes of 900 MW or above. The Minister will be aware also that British Coal is being asked to break even. In those circumstances, the current prospects for the

[Mr. Kevin Barron]

second phase are not good. That is a great pity as what has been achieved at Grimethorpe in south Yorkshire is an even more efficient version of the pressurised fluidised bed combustion known as the topping cycle, which is a British invention. The work has been totally British, although some foreign money has been invested. The project is under threat.

Is the Minister prepared to ask the Secretary of State for Energy to support the current application by British Coal for further funding of the project? I should like the Secretaries of State for the Environment and for Energy to take action, rather than to utter the words that are so often spoken in these debates. I hope that the Minister will take up the challenge to discuss this matter with the Secretary of State for Energy. The hon. Gentleman nods his head. I remind him of the Government's response to the report of the Select Committee on Environment. Paragraph 3.36 states:

> "The Government agrees with the Committee that pressurised fluidised bed combustion (pfbc) technology offers excellent prospects for emission control at relatively low costs."

There should be positive Government action to ensure that the second phase at Grimethorpe gets off the ground and the technology is further developed.

The 29 March memorandum referred to the lack of technology already installed and to the sulphur content of coal. It said that Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Pollution and industry were considering implementing a sliding scale for sulphur emissions from power stations—from 30 per cent. for 100 MW to 90 per cent. for 500 MW or more. The matter was under discussion, and I should like to know whether the Minister has anything further to tell us.

The memorandum referred to the possibility of limiting the diversion of high sulphur coal to plant below 100 MW. The Minister mentioned the possibility of imposing restrictions on smaller plants and the associated expenses. Exactly who is considering this possibility? How does this square with comments on attacking emissions from large coal-fired plants?

Has the Department carried out a study into the sulphur content of coal now being produced and of known coal reserves? British Coal publishes regional figures annually. The sulphur content in opencast coal areas can be as high as 2·3 per cent. and as low as 0·7 per cent. in Scottish deep mine coal areas. It is ironic that coal production is decreasing in areas with low sulphur coal. The average sulphur content of British industrial coal is deemed to be twice as high as that in Scottish deep mine coal areas. We should consider exploiting those reserves to the full.

Mr. Jimmy Hood (Clydesdale): My hon. Friend has referred to the low sulphur content of Scottish coal. Is he aware that tonight the Prime Minister voted for a Bill that will increase imports of coal from places such as South Africa? Is he aware that Britain imports from South Africa and Colombia coal with a high sulphur content, while there is a threat to close the Scottish deep mine coalfields? Does my hon. Friend agree that that is contradictory?

Mr. Barron: I am grateful for that intervention. My hon. Friend makes a good point about what is likely to happen.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: He is the intellectual wing of the Labour party.

Mr. Barron: The hon. Gentleman is welcome to take part in the debate to discuss both employment and the damage that can be done by burning coal with a high sulphur content. We are trying to debate the matter in a way that will help Britain and the world environment. Therefore, I hope that he will take part in the debate or at least listen to what is said.

My hon. Friend the Member for Clydesdale (Mr. Hood) is right. It is obvious that high sulphur coal will be cheaper, because it has its disadvantages, especially for countries that are trying to restrict emissions from coal-fired power stations. If there is no restriction on the purchase of cheap coal, the scenario that he paints could occur, and there would be little that any Government could do, even if they knew it were happening, or, in this case, little that they would do. My hon. Friend makes that point well.

While we have deep mine reserves in Scotland of coal with a low sulphur content, I wonder why we are giving up mining it to go in for opencast mining, or even deep mining in other areas where the sulphur content of the coal is higher. If a study has not been carried out into British coal and its sulphur content, we should look at it in some detail to make sure that we are exploiting the right type of coal that could be used at this stage until all coal-fired power stations are fitted, if possible, with filters to prevent the emissions escaping.

It is obvious from what we have heard tonight that the Government's proposals to control emissions from large combustion plants, while they meet some of the future standards in the short term, in the long term are not likely to meet targets. That does not give us much faith that they will be able to do so. Post-privatisation, it will be up to the privatised generating companies, which are likely to be more concerned about short-term profit than about the long-term future of the environment. In those circumstances, I should have liked to have seen something more in these papers, and a better response from the Government than this. I have little faith that the Bill that will be introduced in the next Session to implement privatisation of electricity will contain any regulation that will protect the environment because it will be drawn up by a Government who seem to prefer to leave matters to the market.

I remind the House and the Minister about the major Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development conference in 1984 on the environment and the economy. It concluded:

> "Continued environmental improvement and sustained economic growth are essential, compatible and inter-related policy objectives . . . The environment and the economy, if properly managed, are mutually reinforcing and are supportive of and supported by technological innovation."

That is something that we seem to have forgotten since 1984, because we have not come forward in great haste to solve the problems that we have as a nation been creating with atmospheric pollution for many years.

Coal, which has been an energy source in this country for generations, if not centuries, and will be for many generations and centuries in the future, is essential. The only way we can ensure its future is by taking more positive action against the pollution that we have been putting into the skies for many generations. I hope that, if the Minister cannot refer at great length to this now, he will discuss it in great detail with the Secretary of State for the Environment so that Government action in the EEC can be more positive than it has been.

1.49 am

Mr. Moynihan: I will try to assist hon. Members by answering as many of the points as possible. There were one or two technical aspects on coal and specific energy questions raised by the hon. Member for Rother Valley (Mr. Barron) that I shall take up with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Energy. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will forgive me if my expertise on that aspect is not as competent as his. He can rest assured that I will come back to him on the specific points regarding energy that are not within my remit. The hon. Gentleman will be the first to accept that my main concern has been to ensure that emission reductions are achieved. However, there are a number of points on which I can assist the hon. Gentleman.

I accept the hon. Gentleman's point about clean coal and the joint programme with the CEGB and British Coal in south Yorkshire. I recognise the hon. Gentleman's strength of feeling on that matter. I shall be raising the issue with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Energy, because I feel that there are important environmental consequences in that programme which need to be taken further in discussions. The hon. Gentleman was right to underline a point made in an intervention by his hon Friend the Member for Bootle (Mr. Roberts) with regard to the directive not encompassing NOx and SO_2 emissions. We need to ensure that we do not look at the debate in isolation from the important work that must continue, not least with regard to vehicle emissions. During the negotiations the other night I was involved for four or five hours on the small car directive. It was important to reach a decision.

I should say to the hon. Member for Truro (Mr. Taylor) that I regret the fact that an earlier debate was not possible. He will recall that the House was weary, after many hours of debate, but it would have assisted me in preparing for my negotiations at the European Council because the issue was alluded to during the negotiations as a result of the work done by my noble Friend Lord Caithness.

On the point about who will decide the necessary reductions and how they will be acheived, it will be for the industries, such as the electricity industry, and the pollution inspectorate to determine appropriate means of meeting the targets. The important thing is that we have undertaken the commitment to emission reductions and we must look to the precise administrative arrangements. There are no plans to change the current general arrangements whereby operators are under a statutory obligation to use the best practical means for preventing emissions to air of noxious or offensive substances and for rendering harmless or inoffensive such substances as may be emitted.

Some detailed legislative changes may result from the directive. However, I envisage that that will occur primarily not within the proposed privatisation legislation, but in air pollution legislation. We will have to look in detail at the changes that may be required.

Mr. Allan Roberts *rose*—

Mr. Moynihan: We believe that some detailed legislative changes may be important, but, as the hon. Member for Bootle knows, we are involved in a current review of air pollution legislation and I will take on board whatever intervention he wishes to make.

Mr. Roberts: I have heard rumours on the subject. Is it correct that it will be announced in the Queen's Speech that in the next Session of Parliament there will be legislation to update pollution control and to deal with environmental issues?

Mr. Moynihan: I made it clear to the House that we are currently reviewing the air pollution legislation. The time at which that comes before the House is yet to be decided. The important point is that the review is under way. The implications of the directive with regard to some detailed changes make that review more important in legislative terms. I am sorry that I cannot assist the hon. Gentleman with the precise timing. No doubt he would not expect me to do so.

The hon. Member for Truro raised the issue of aluminium and Alzheimer's disease. There have been recent claims linking aluminium in water supplies with Alzheimer's disease. It is important to recognise the effect that acid rain, by acidifying surface waters, has on aluminium levels in drinking water. I cannot comment on the medical aspects of the problem. However, a further comprehensive report is coming later in the year, which I have already announced to the House. It will require detailed consideration. Fears about this matter can be allayed because Alzheimer's disease is believed to be related to other factors. Over 90 per cent. of one's daily intake of aluminium comes from foodstuffs, not water. That is not to minimise the importance of the debate or the need for full and comprehensive medical assessment, but to put it into an important perspective.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: I am sure that hon. Members will welcome the fact that the Minister will be making a further report to the House about this matter. Will that cover the different levels of the problem throughout the country? Clearly the problem concerns people in specific counties.

Mr. Moynihan: We are considering that matter in detail, not least because of its implications for different water authorities and their treatment processes. This is not a matter for over-reaction. It needs careful consideration in the light of the further evidence. There are no medical grounds for concern. It is accepted that the genetic element plays a large part in Alzheimer's disease. Some people are more likely to develop it than others.

Mr. Allan Roberts: Surely the Minister accepts that aluminium in water is not good for people and that it would be wise to reduce it?

Mr. Moynihan: The Government would not actively support an intake of aluminium well in excess of that used in water treatment. The Government's medical advisers have made it clear that there is no perceived medical risk as a result of the use of aluminium in water supplies. As to senile dementia, one must bear in mind that well over 90 per cent. of one's aluminium intake comes from foodstuffs. All these points are being borne in mind in the further consideration of the substantive report. The problem will be carefully considered in detail and we shall report to the House in the usual manner.

Mr. Hood: Given that 90 per cent. of our aluminium intake comes from foodstuffs, should we not be doing everything we can to reduce our aluminium intake, whether it be in food or water? The Government cannot say that 90 per cent. of our intake is from food so they will ignore water. We should be doing all that we can to reduce all intakes of aluminium because we know that it is harmful to health.

Mr. Moynihan: There is no medical danger in the consumption of a small amount of aluminium or any of the other minerals used in water treatment. The degree and amount of consumption are important factors. The link between aluminium in water and Alzheimer's disease, which was first suggested by the Norwegians, was such that research was increased. We are considering the results of that research and will report back to the House.

The central point of the debate has been the 30 per cent. club. I agree that the 30 per cent. club is out of date. A club should be set up on an arbitrarily chosen date because the base date makes a significant difference. The 30 per cent. club requires a pledge to reduce national SO_2 emissions by 1993 to 30 per cent. below the 1980 level. United Kingdom sulphur emissions fell by 1·5 million tonnes, or 24 per cent., between 1970 and 1980. In 1987 we were about 40 per cent. below the 1970 level and 20 per cent. below the 1980 level. To illustrate how differently other countries are placed within the European Community, including the United Kingdom, sulphur emissions rose by 1·5 million tonnes between 1970 and 1980. Our partners' emissions rose by twice the amount that ours fell. Large plant emissions fell substantially between 1970 and 1980, although not as much as total emissions. The important consideration is that there is a joint commitment to reductions throughout Europe.

I was asked how many retrofits were involved. For the first time we have a commitment based on a binding percentage reduction rather than a specific capital programme. It will be for the industries concerned, in conjunction with Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Pollution, to determine the best means of meeting the targets. It would not be possible to estimate precisely the number of retrofits for a programme extended into the next century, but it represents about double our present efforts. As has rightly been said, the CEGB estimates that there could possibly be as many as three extra retrofits.

Privatisation would not affect the United Kingdom's ability—indeed, its need—to meet its commitments. Successor generator companies will remain under the statutory obligation to use the best practical means for preventing emissions, as do current private sector operators of large combustion plants such as oil companies.

The environment of Britain, the Community and Europe in general stands to benefit substantially from agreement on the directive, and I commend it to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That this House takes note of European Community Documents Nos. 11642/83, 5124/85 and the proposals described in the un-numbered Explanatory Memorandum from the Department of the Environment of 9th June 1988 and the Supplementary Explanation Memorandum of 29th June 1988 on the limitation of emissions of pollutants into the air from large combustion plants; and calls upon the Government to support the agreement reached at the meetings of the Council of Environment Ministers on 16th and 28th June 1988 on proposals for a European Community Directive.

Richmond Yard (Valuation Contract)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Peter Lloyd.]*

2 am

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): The Richmond Yard and Cluttons contract affair goes to the very heart of the integrity of Government. It is a story of deceit and departmental and ministerial embarrassment. It has all the characteristics of a Le Carré novel—villainy, conspiracy, deception, bluff, obfuscation and the ludicrous.

It started with a memo from Mr. G. Hopkinson, director of the London region of the Property Services Agency, dated 29 April 1987 to Sir Gordon Manzie and to the Minister's private secretary. In this memo, a copy of which I have, the Minister is reported to have said:

> "The Prime Minister and the Secretary of State have specifically asked that Richmond Yard be valued now by a private sector valuer."

The memo goes on to say, "Please get it done." It was done. A £40,000 plus VAT contract was given to Cluttons to value Richmond Yard, the new DHSS headquarters in the heart of Whitehall. No tenders were invited for that contract.

We now know that no sooner had the contract been let than all hell broke loose in the Department. Civil servants, incensed by what they saw as the pouring of taxpayers' money down the drain, ran amok, leaking like sieves. My bucket was out collecting wherever possible as usual.

Enter my hon. Friend the Member for Warrington, North (Mr. Hoyle), who tabled a key question on 14 March this year—a whole year later. He asked:

> "what estimate the Property Services Agency has made of the cost of undertaking the valuation of the Crown premises at Richmond Yard by in-house staff".

The Minister panics, because by this time an in-house assessment has been made and it shows that the job of valuation could be done for £1,500 plus VAT. The Minister is clearly on the hook. Does he tell the truth to Parliament? His civil servants submit replies. All tell the truth; all are rejected. The Minister breaks out in a cold sweat and 14 days later, having rejected all replies, the Minister pens his own reply:

> "No in-house assessment was made."—[*Official Report*, 14 March 1988; Vol. 129, c. *461*.]

The die was cast as a lie was told. That lie will cost the Minister his job.

However, the truth refuses to lie down.

Mr. Michael Fallon (Darlington): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Is it in order for the hon. Gentleman to allege that a lie was told?

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): I did not understand the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) to accuse the Minister of telling a lie. If he did, he must, of course, withdraw.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: I unreservedly withdraw.

The truth refuses to lie down. Civil servants, by the coachload, are haemorrhaging information. They want not only retribution, but a head.

I then went to the National Audit Office to secure an inquiry. John Bourne, the Comptroller and Auditor General, ordered one. Its findings revealed that the

> "PSA subsequently considered that their own costs would have been about £1,500 in an estimate made after the commercial firm had completed their work."

The Minister was back on the rack. He responded with his next lie. In his letter of 26 May to my hon. Friend the Member for Warrington, North he said:

> "In the context of my reply I felt that the assessment to which I referred was the valuation for rental purposes and not the cost of undertaking that valuation. It was certainly not my intention to mislead you"—

that is my hon. Friend—

> "or the House on this point".

He then claimed that "ambiguity" was the cause of the misunderstanding. What garbage. Who does the Minister think he is fooling? He spent 14 days drafting the reply that he now claims was unintentionally ambiguous. He knew precisely what the question meant. He knew that the crucial words were "of the cost of".

Smelling not a rat but a skunk, I further corresponded with Mr. Speaker in an attempt to make an application for contempt against the Minister on the basis that he had deliberately misled Parliament. Mr. Speaker accepted the Minister's explanation. I suppose, in retrospect, that I could not expect Mr. Speaker to pronounce the Minister a liar. However, I should point out that Mr. Speaker was not given access to the draft replies that the Minister had rejected. I feel sure that the Minister was relieved, but his relief must have been short lived, because I subsequently found out that he was canvassing his colleagues in the corridors of the House for support.

Events then took a new turn, following a letter from me to the Prime Minister. My letter was clear and concise. I asked, first, whether the Prime Minister would endorse the Minister's explanation. Secondly, had she really ordered that the original valuation should go out to the private sector in the way that the Minister had told his civil servants? This morning I received the Prime Minister's reply. She said:

> "I fully accept his explanation."

She would, wouldn't she? To reject the explanation of a Minister would be to call him a liar.

The right hon. Lady did not reply to my second question. I am now informed that an inquiry into the Hopkinson memo is still continuing in Downing street. As I stand here tonight, the writing is on the wall. No. 10 is embarrassed; the Minister's private office is in turmoil; he is locked in an argument with Sir Gordon Manzie on the use of consultancies by the PSA; throughout the PSA he is treated with deserved contempt and ridicule; people in his private office snigger when he walks through the door; and, to cap it all, he actually ordered a leak inquiry to find out where the wally from Workington was getting his leaks from.

I shall let the Minister into a little secret in the Chamber tonight, which I feel sure is as safe between these four walls as was the story of his antics relating to Richmond Yard within his Department. I shall say it quietly for fear that it will leak out and cause congestion on all main line stations in the London area. An InterCity express train could not accommodate all the leakers. Everyone knows the truth; everyone cares; everyone is laughing at the Minister; everyone wants him to resign; everyone wants the truth out, most of all his hon. Friends, who have repeatedly said it to me privately over the past few weeks. Just tell us the truth.

2.9 am

Mr. Doug Holye (Warrington, North) *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Does the hon. Gentleman have the agreement of the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) to speak?

Mr. Hoyle: Yes.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: And of the Minister?

Mr. Hoyle: Forget about him.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. It is my job to preserve the Adjournment debate, and I shall not call another hon. Member to speak unless he has the agreement of the hon. Gentleman whose debate it is and of the Minister. I call Mr. Chope.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Christopher Chope): If the hon. Member for Warrington, North (Mr. Hoyle) wishes to speak, I do not object, but he has not canvassed the possibility with me before.

Mr. Hoyle: I shall not take very long, but I wish to speak about this despicable event because it was to my question that the Minister was forced to reply. He has been dragged to the House tonight.

On 14 March, I tabled the key question, asking

"what estimate the Property Services Agency has made of the cost of undertaking the valuation of the Crown premises at Richmond Yard by in-house staff".

The Minister replied:

"No in-house assessment was made."—*[Official Report*, 14 March 1988; Vol 129, *c. 461.]*

In his letter of 26 May, the Minister said that he was referring to the actual valuation rather than to the estimate. There can be only two explanations for the Minister's behaviour. The first is that he did not understand the question, in which case he is clearly incompetent to be a Minister. The second is that he was misleading the House. In either case, he should resign. We shall probably hear a resignation speech from him tonight.

That was not the end of it, however, as I gave him a further opportunity to clarify the matter when, on 25 March, I asked

"if he will ask for an estimate of the cost of the Property Services Agency providing a valuation of the Crown premises at Richmond Yard; and if he will make a statement."

The Minister replied:

"No. It would serve no useful purpose."—[*Official Report*. 25 March 1988; Vol. 130, *c.237.*]

Again, there are two explanations for his answer. Either he was saying that a statement would serve no useful purpose, which circumstances have shown to be incorrect; or he was saying that there was no useful purpose in estimating the cost of valuation, which is very odd given that he knew that a valuation had already been made by his Department.

It has been reported that the Minister told the London director of the PSA, Mr. Giles Hopkinson, that no less a person than the Prime Minister had asked for a valuation by a private firm. Will the Minister tell us whether that is true?

Either the Minister is incompetent, because he is unable to understand a question, or he has deliberately been misleading the House.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman, who is an experienced parliamentarian, knows that it is not in order to accuse any hon. Member of deliberately misleading the House. He must withdraw that remark.

Mr. Hoyle: I unreservedly withdraw that comment, but there are precedents for what has happened. Because of incompetence over the Crichel Down affair, a Minister resigned on 20 July 1954. There is also the precedent of John Profumo. I hope that the Minister will get up and announce his resignation.

Mr. John Butterfill (Bournemouth, West): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The hon. Member for Warrington, North (Mr. Hoyle) is implying that my hon. Friend the Minister has misbehaved and has attempted to mislead the House. Surely that must be out of order.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I ruled that the hon. Gentleman should withdraw that remark, and he did so.

2.14 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Christopher Chope): Even by the standards of the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours), he has gone over the top in the hysterical way in which he has approached the debate. Both the hon. Gentleman and the hon. Member for Warrington, North (Mr. Hoyle) put their case on the basis of selective quotations, especially from my reply on 14 March to not one but three questions from the hon. Member for Warrington, North. Their ease is based on the argument that part of my reply purported to be a specific answer to one of those questions. It is a sad day when hon. Gentlemen are not prepared to accept the explanation that is given. I make no apology for introducing less passion, but more reason, in my reply.

When the Government are considering the use and allocation of Government accommodation, it is important that we consider the way in which we can bring home to Departments the cost implications of their decisions. Such matters lie at the heart of our decision to seek a private sector valuation of Richmond Yard, and I shall use this opportunity to explain why our decision in this case cannot sensibly be discussed or understood except in the wider context of our policies on the location of Government Departments and, more generally, on contracting out.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: The cost of the valuation was 25 times the price of the in-house survey.

Mr. Chope: So why did we decide to use the private sector in the case of Richmond Yard? To understand our decision I have to begin by explaining how Departments are charged for the buildings they occupy. We expect Departments to pay the opportunity cost of the accommodation they occupy. In other words, they pay the full market rent. Minds have to be concentrated and Departments have to be made to take hard decisions on whether they need to stay in central London or should move to cheaper accommodation elsewhere. Even Opposition Members will recognise the benefits of the price mechanism for encouraging Departments to look seriously at the possibility of relocating away from London to cheaper accommodation. It is only one factor among several, but the cost of accommodation has a key role to play in Departments' consideration of whether to move Civil Service jobs to the less prosperous regions of the country.

With the right professional expertise it is not too difficult, in most parts of London, to assess what a market rent should be.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: We already know all that.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. It is impossible to hear what the Minister is saying because of constant sedentary interruptions. This is a serious debate. The Minister has had some harsh things said about him and he is entitled to reply and to be heard in silence.

Mr. Chope: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The PSA estate surveyors are as good as any of their counterparts in the private sector at analysing comparable rents for similar properties in a particular area and determining an accurate figure. The PSA estate surveyors do an excellent job and I am grateful to them, but we face a particular problem in Whitehall, where the Government themselves are effectively the only market makers. Whitehall is not a particularly popular area commercially, in part because there are so few buildings that are not in Government use, yet it is the one area, above all others, in which Departments would wish, if possible, to have their central headquarters.

Mr. Butterfill: Does my hon. Friend agree that many public companies and public bodies, such as the Church Commissioners, employ firms such as Cluttons? Cluttons is regularly employed by the Church Commissioners to carry out valuations, despite the fact that they have their own in-house surveyors capable of doing the job. If the Church Commissioners find it desirable to confirm the figures that have been given by its internal surveyors, is there any reason for the Government to behave differently? Should they not seek to emulate the Church Commissioners?

Mr. Chope: My hon. Friend speaks with great knowledge and experience of these matters, and he is absolutely right. Many firms with in-house staff choose, for particular purposes, to employ outside valuers and estate surveyors.

As I said, the problem with Whitehall is that so few buildings are not in Government use, yet it is the one area above all in which Departments would wish to have their central headquarters. We considered the possibility of introducing a premium additional to market rents to reflect the benefit to Departments of a Whitehall location, but we concluded that such an artificial arrangement would not necessarily reflect the most cost-effective use of Government buildings in the area. We have settled instead for arrangements that allow Departments to argue their case for accommodation in Whitehall on operational grounds, while at the same time ensuring that they are fully conscious of the true economic costs of their decisions.

The latter point is crucial, but in the circumstances of the Whitehall market the true commercial rent is especially difficult to establish. The problems were compounded, in the case of Richmond Yard, by the fact that it was the first new freehold building to have been designed and built in Whitehall since the war. In that sense, the building was unique and there were no other properties with which it could be compared directly. Therefore, we needed a valuation that would carry conviction in the unusual, indeed unique, circumstances of this case. There was no absolute answer without putting the building on the open market, and any assessment short of that is a matter for informed professional judgment.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: How does the Minister justify paying to Cluttons 25 times the amount that he would have paid if the job had been done in-house by his officials? That is what everyone wants to know.

Mr. Chope: That is a difficult point, but it is worthy of answer and I am coming on to answer it.

In view of the importance of the case and the fact that we were dealing with a major new development costing more than £40 million, we needed an independent assessment that would stand up to criticism as to its validity, both on the methodology to be used and the figure arrived at on the basis of that methodology. My professional advisers in the PSA decided that Cluttons should be used to carry out the valuation. Cluttons has considerable experience of public interest matters. It is familiar with the type of buildings that the Government own and occupy and the constraints that can apply in the open market.

With that in mind, the PSA initially consulted one of Cluttons' senior partners informally on the general issue of valuations in the Whitehall area. That was done on a personal basis, and his advice was given on the same basis and without charge. That preliminary informal advice showed that Cluttons fully understood the issues, and officials decided not to approach other firms when it came to a formal contract specifically for a valuation of Richmond Yard, but to negotiate terms.

Initially, Cluttons proposed a fee of 1·5 per cent. The figure was negotiated down to 1 per cent., and that was accepted by my professional advisers as being reasonable in terms of fees generally prevailing in the market place. It represented no more than the going rate for the job. They did not regard 1 per cent. of one year's rent as excessive in relation to the total rent at issue. It is smaller still in relation to total accommodation charges in Whitehall, for which the valuation now provides a useful bench mark.

Mr. Butterfill: Does my hon. Friend agree that a 1 per cent. valuation fee is common in the market, especially in areas where there is some uncertainty about the valuation? There is then a high risk that the valuers could be sued on their valuation, and the cost of insuring against that risk is extraordinarily high.

Mr. Chope: My hon. Friend has great knowledge of these matters. In this case, the PSA was able to negotiate a one third reduction of the fee that was originally quoted by Cluttons.

The hon. Member for Workington has laboured the point that the cost of using Cluttons was substantially higher than the cost of undertaking the work in-house. I have explained why we decided, on policy grounds, to use the private sector. The additional cost is justified on those grounds alone, but I should also comment on the comparison that has been made between Cluttons' fee of £35,000 plus VAT and the estimated in-house cost of £1,500 plus VAT.

The simple fact is that the two figures are incapable of direct comparison. The profession operates on a fee basis, and always has done. In practice the consultant makes money on a few large cases, but losses on many others,

[Mr. Chope]

with no charge at all for the considerable proportion of work that goes into cases that subsequently do not proceed. The client pays no more than the value of the advice, irrespective of the cost to the adviser. The standard RICS scale fee for valuations, before these scales were abolished, was 2 per cent. The fee covers all the running costs and overheads of enabling the firm to take on one-off commissions with no regard to the possibility of further work from that source. It also covers the costs of insuring against professional negligence and includes a profit element. The PSA in-house figure is based on hourly charges for staff time. It includes overheads, but, because all the staff concerned are employed on a permanent basis, makes no allowance for risk or for the peaks and troughs in work load for which any firm in the private sector has to budget.

Nevertheless, I well understand the desirability of achieving true comparisons between in-house and private sector costs, and when we have commercial accounts in PSA, with a bottom line figure, it will be far easier to make those comparisons. We are now well on the way to achieving that objective following my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State's announcement on 25 May that the PSA should become a fully commercial organisation equipped to compete in the open market.

My right hon. Friend said that from 1 April this year a new relationship had been established between Government Departments and the PSA on major civil projects. Civil departments now have financial responsibility for their own requirements and can choose between using the PSA and outside agents. From 1 April 1990 that arrangement will be extended to all civil and defence services. At that time the PSA will be reorganised into three businesses. Two of them will be service businesses providing project and estate services.

Mr. Hoyle *rose*——

Mr. Chope: I shall not give way again. I have only about five minutes and I want to answer the points made by the hon. Member for Workington.

The third business, ownership of civil property, will involve the PSA in continuing to manage the common user element of the civil estate, but a substantial amount of property will become the responsibility of individual Departments.

The principle of these reforms is that the PSA is no longer to be the sole provider and maintainer of all Government accommodation. It will offer a service to Departments, but the Departments as clients will have financial responsibility, and there will be a move to a position in which the PSA is in competition with outside suppliers of design——

Mr. Hoyle: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Chope: No, I shall not.

Mr. Hoyle: The hon. Gentleman is frightened to give way.

Mr. Chope: I must rise to that. The hon. Gentleman was able to participate in the debate without having spoken to me beforehand, and I readily agreed that he could do that. Now he is ungracious enough to suggest that I am frightened of him.

Our policy on the use of consultants is quite clear. We use them whenever we can demonstrate that they provide value for money. We use them if staff shortages, particularly in London at the present time, mean that we have no alternative. We use them if by so doing we enable in-house resources to be redeployed more cost-effectively to other work, thus improving our overall quality of service. Finally, we use them if they possess a particular expertise not available within the PSA. The agency is not staffed to cope with every foreseeable or conceivable demand on resources, nor has it ever been.

If the hon. Member for Workington is in any doubt about the present position, I can tell him that there are 31 estate surveyors and 14 graduate trainees and students in post in the London region of the PSA, and there are about 11 vacancies.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Chope: No.

Finally, let me make it absolutely clear that there was never any intention on my part to mislead the House, as hon. Members have suggested. The decision in principle to use a private sector valuer to value Richmond Yard was taken by Ministers. I stand by that decision and I believe that it was right in the circumstances. My only regret is that Opposition Members apparently failed to understand my replies in answer to questions from the hon. Member for Warrington, North in March. They were intended to make clear, first, that no in-house assessment of the rental valuation had been undertaken and, secondly, that an assessment of the cost of undertaking the valuation in-house would serve no useful purpose, as far as I was concerned. The answers were simply a statement of fact.

The hon. Gentleman is persistent and repetitious in his accusations, but that does not make him right. He has sought throughout to put an interpretation on my answers that is wrong. Rather than accept the correct interpretation, he persists in an endeavour to make party political points. The House will see those for what they are and no doubt put them alongside other obsessions for which the hon. Gentleman is so renowned.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at twenty-nine minutes past Two o'clock.

House of Commons

Tuesday 5 July 1988

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

BRITISH RAILWAYS (NO. 2) BILL

Order for consideration read.
To be considered on Thursday.

Oral Answers to Questions

EMPLOYMENT

Legionnaire's Disease

1. **Mr. Janner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what estimate he has made of how many additional Health and Safety Executive inspectors will be needed to enforce the rules designed to eliminate Legionnaire's disease.

The Secretary of State for Employment (Mr. Norman Fowler): The Health and Safety Executive does not consider that additional inspectors are needed specifically for the enforcement of precautions against Legionnaire's disease.

Mr. Janner: Does the Minister accept that the recent disaster at the BBC, which caused the death of at least two employees and grave danger within the corporation and to passers-by, could easily be repeated? Is he aware that the executive has not enough inspectors to pay proper, regular visits to vast establishments, including those which, like the BBC, have cooling towers? What steps does he propose to take to minimise the likelihood of the spread of what could be a devastating disease?

Mr. Fowler: As I have already said, the Health and Safety Executive does not consider that additional inspectors are needed in that kind of case. The investigation into the BBC by the Health and Safety Executive is still under way and we have to await the outcome. Obviously, any lessons learnt will be acted upon. The prime responsibility in such cases rests with the employers. There has been new HSE guidance on Legionnaire's disease, and I understand that the BBC was aware of it. That, of course, is one of the matters that we shall need to examine.

Single European Market

2. **Mr. Alfred Morris:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what representations he has received concerning the impact of the single European market on health and safety.

The Minister of State, Department of Employment (Mr. John Cope): I have not received any direct representations. However, the Health and Safety Commission and Executive consult very widely on matters concerning health and safety at work.

Mr. Morris: When the Secretary of State meets his counterparts in the EEC, will he insist that British machinery guard standards must become the norm and will not be reduced to the lower levels found in other European countries? If he fails to do that, are not machinery guarding accidents likely to increase after 1992?

Mr. Cope: The general arrangement is that European Commission directives lay down minimum standards, but national Governments may have higher ones. Generally speaking our health and safety standards are higher than those in many other European countries, and our national regulations set levels that are higher than the minimum laid down. Of course, that can apply to machinery guard standards as well, but it is important that, as far as possible, there are equal standards across the Common Market so as to have proper competition between the countries.

Sir John Farr: I am satisfied to a certain extent with what my hon. Friend has said, but, because we have higher standards, is there not the risk that after 1992 they may be eroded?

Mr. Cope: Our standards cannot be eroded below the level on which the House may decide in legislation. As far as possible, we are anxious that there should be high standards throughout the Community.

Mr. Meacher: Is the Minister aware that there is widespread concern that the Government will use the excuse of the single European market for further health and safety deregulation? Already, the major and fatal accident rate has risen by 12 per cent. during the past six years, not least because the Government have cut the Factory Inspectorate by no less than 20 per cent. during the same period. Will he, for once, use the European legislation to level up standards and give a commitment that he will introduce the mandatory occupational health provision that Britain—alone among its European competitors—still lacks?

Mr. Cope: The hon. Gentleman will be aware of the Control of Substances Harzardous to Health Regulations which are coming forward and go some way to do what he suggests. The hon. Gentleman is wrong about fatalities. The number of fatalities in 1986-87, the latest year for which we have figures, is the lowest on record.

TUC

3. **Mr. Bowis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment when he last met the Trades Union Congress; and what matters were discussed.

Mr. Fowler: I last met representatives of the Trades Union Congress on Wednesday 18 May, when we discussed the new programme, employment training, which will be launched on 5 September. As a result of that meeting, the general council of the TUC decided to give the employment training programme its support.

Mr. Bowis: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for that answer. Was he able to commiserate with the TUC at the failure of the TGWU, NALGO and NUPE to support the TUC on that line? Does not the attitude of those unions show a callous disregard for the interests of the unemployed who need to be trained for tomorrow's job world?

Mr. Fowler: I certainly believe that the opposition to employment training which came from one or two unions is wholly disreputable and contrary to the interests of long-term unemployed people. Employment training will provide training for about 600,000 people a year at a cost of about £1·5 billion. The programme will go ahead in September and I very much hope that the Opposition will stop wobbling on this issue and give it their backing.

Mr. Allen: When the Secretary of State meets the TUC, will he discuss its document relating to 1992 and the changes regarding the EEC? He will be more aware than anybody that the Government have dragged their feet on implementing previous EEC employment directives on health and safety, discrimination at work, workers' rights in multinational companies and a host of other subjects. Will he give the TUC guarantees that he will implement the current six draft EEC health and safety directives?

Mr. Fowler: I am happy to talk to the TUC on any subject that it wants to discuss, including 1992, but it seems to me that we in Britain will gain from a deregulated market in which job creation and opportunities for business are greatest, not which are the kind of provisions that the hon. Gentleman is talking about.

Mr. Madel: Is it the Government's view that existing trade union legislation is perfectly adequate to deal with industrial relations problems and has contributed to an improvement in industrial relations? If so, does my right hon. Friend agree that, apart from possible changes in the dock labour scheme, further trade union legislation is not necessary?

Mr. Fowler: We obviously keep trade union legislation and trade union law reform under consideration. There is no doubt that the Acts that the House has passed have contributed substantially to the improvement in industrial relations in Britain. We have taken a step-by-step approach, but we shall continue to keep trade union legislation under review.

Ms. Short: When the Secretary of State met the TUC, did he discuss the current consultation on the possible abolition of wages councils? Can he tell the House what is going on? We had legislation in the previous Parliament. After consultation, it was decided to weaken protection for the lowest-paid workers in Britain. We understand that there is now consultation with employers and a threat to the remaining protection for 2 million of the poorest-paid people in Britain. May we know what is planned?

Mr. Fowler: We certainly did not discuss the wages councils. They are kept under review, as the hon. Lady knows. I think that what she has in mind is a review which has been carried out, not by the Government, but by the Confederation of British Industry.

Mr. Bevan: Will my right hon. Friend confirm the severity of the damage that will be felt if the TGWU and NUPE do not come in and discuss these matters and join the approval situation and how it will particularly have a very adverse effect on the opportunities offered by the tourism industry?

Mr. Fowler: I deplore what the TGWU and one or two other unions are doing in this respect. It seems to me that it is in no one's interests that unions should come out and oppose what is——

Ms. Short: A rotten scheme.

Mr. Fowler: —by any standards a major programme for the long-term unemployed. Those who, like the hon. Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short), egg the unions on carry a disreputable and heavy responsibility. The employment training programme will go on because the Government are not prepared to turn their back on the long-term unemployed.

Lead (Code of Practice)

4. **Mr. Patchett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he will extend to men the approved code of practice for the Control of Lead at Work Regulations 1980.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary for Employment (Mr. Patrick Nicholls): The approved code of practice for the Control of Lead at Work Regulations 1980 already applies to both men and women.

Mr. Patchett: Is the Minister aware that recent studies in the United States and the United Kingdom have shown that lead can damage the fertility of men as well as of women workers?

Mr. Nicholls: I appreciate that there has been speculation along those lines. Obviously, we keep those matters under review, but our best information at present is that men are properly protected on the basis of 70 microgrammes per 100 ml of blood. If there were proper evidence to the contrary, we would consider it.

Ms. Richardson: Does not the Minister always hide under the cloak of equality when lowering standards of health and safety at work? He removes protective legislation from women, whereas he should be leaving that legislation for women and ensuring, across the board, that it is extended to men. We are in favour of equality for both the sexes, not just one.

Mr. Nicholls: The short answer to the hon. Lady's question is no, but obviously there is a biological difference between men and women and those factors are taken into account when deciding what the correct lead levels should be. Women of reproductive capacity have to be protected, and that poses different medical and biological implications from those posed by the protection of men.

YTS

5. **Mr. Hardy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what proportion of young people completing YTS in 1987 in the Rotherham-Mexborough travel-to-work area secured full-time employment.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Employment (Mr. John Lee): The information is not available in the form requested. However, the latest results from the Training Commission's complete, 100 per cent.

follow-up survey of YTS leavers show that, of those young people who completed their YTS schemes in the Sheffield, Rotherham and Doncaster local authority districts, between April 1986 and December 1987, just over half —54 per cent.—were in full-time employment.

Mr. Hardy: That is bad enough, but it seems better than the reality on the ground. Does the Minister accept that the lack of opportunity for the young people in our travel-to-work area, particularly in the Dearne valley, is deplorable and utterly disgraceful? Does he accept that in the second half of 1988 it is outrageous that three quarters of our YTS leavers of 1987 still lack full-time employment?

Mr. Lee: I certainly accept that the employment situation in the hon. Gentleman's constituency and surrounding areas is more difficult than in other parts of the country, but, even in that area, unemployment has come down from 21·2 per cent. in May 1987 to 18·8 per cent. in May 1988. As the hon. Gentleman knows, my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister recently set out a whole range of measures to help employment in the area, including urban programme grants, derelict land grants and funding from the European Community. The regional directors of the Departments of Employment, of the Environment and of Trade and Industry are working closely together to try to improve the situation. It is improving.

Mr. Patnick: Is my hon. Friend aware of Sheffield city council's decision not to implement the adult training scheme? What effect will that have on young people, and what can be done to ensure that those who want training obtain it, despite Sheffield city council's inaction?

Mr. Lee: The decision by the Sheffield authority is deplorable and can only harm those who need training to give them employment opportunities.

Mr. Hardy: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. In view of the grossly unsatisfactory answer from the Minister, I beg to give notice that I shall seek to raise the matter on the Adjournment at the earliest opportunity.

TUC

6. **Mr. Robert G. Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he has any plans to meet the general secretary of the Trades Union Congress to discuss industrial relations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Fowler: I have no present plans to have such a meeting. Over the last three years there has been a substantial improvement in industrial relations, with both fewer working days lost and fewer strikes.

Mr. Hughes: When my right hon. Friend has a further meeting with the TUC general secretary, will he point out to him the importance of single union agreements in attracting inward investment to Britain, as Ford in Dundee has found? Will he stress to the TUC that British jobs are more important than the petty inter-union squabbles that are going on at present?

Mr. Fowler: I entirely agree with my hon. Friend. Such deals recognise that it is in everyone's interest that the business should be run profitably and free of strikes. I hope that the TUC will campaign so that we never see a repeat of the action which took place at Dundee, which deprived hundreds of unemployed people of jobs, rather than campaign against single union deals.

Mr. Heffer: Is it not clear that our anti-trade union legislation is worse than any such legislation in any other European country, and is in line with what happens in Poland under General Jaruzelski? Is it not clear also that it is even worse than the legislation in the United States? Is it not about time that the Government stopped putting their foot on the neck of the ordinary working class and the trade union movement and began to accept that freedom of association, freedom to strike and freedom to have independent trade unions are as important in this country as is in Poland?

Mr. Fowler: What the hon. Gentleman has said is absurd. We have turned our back on the disastrous years of the 1970s when bad industrial relations and strikes exported British job after British job. That is the record of the previous Labour Government. Under this Government the number of strikes has reduced. The number of days lost through industrial action have also reduced dramatically.

Mr. Ian Taylor: When my right hon. Friend has an opportunity to meet the general secretary of the TUC, will he discuss with him the excellent training that the EETPU provides for its members? One of its schools is in my constituency. Will he tell the general secretary that that is one of the responsible roles that trade unions should be pursuing?

Mr. Fowler: I entirely agree with my hon. Friend. A number of unions, such as the electricians and the engineers, have excellent training facilities. It is one of the areas in which trade unions should concentrate their efforts if they want to win members.

Single European Market

7. **Dr. Thomas:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what studies are being made by his Department on the implications for the levels of employment in the regions of the United Kingdom of the completion of the European single market in 1992.

Mr. Cope: We are assessing the impact of the single European market on a continuing basis. It will provide great opportunities for business throughout the United Kingdom and should therefore have a beneficial effect on jobs. The impact in different regions in the United Kingdom cannot be predicted at this stage. It depends among other things on how well companies respond to the opportunities that are there.

Dr. Thomas: I accept that the Minister has no responsibility for what Lord Cockfield may say in his capacity as a European Commissioner, but is he aware that during a visit to north Wales over the weekend Lord Cockfield stated that 60,000 new jobs would be created in Wales as a result of the single market? Is it not about time that the United Kingdom Government and other member state Governments quantified the regional impact of the single market? Will the right hon. Gentleman accept that most of the studies that have been prepared relate to sectoral changes or changes in specific areas of the economy, and that the overall regional impact has not been assessed properly in any member state?

Mr. Cope: With respect to the noble Lord, it seems extremely difficult to make accurate predictions for individual regions. We can all guess what it might be. The Cecchini report, which was produced for the Common Market as a whole, suggests that there might be an extra 1·25 million to 2·25 million jobs over five to six years. That is vague enough for a report that covers the entire Community, let alone individual regions.

Mr. Batiste: Does my hon. Friend agree that European and other investors seeking to make green field investments in Britain will be interested primarily in the availability of single-union, no-strike agreements? Given the persecution of the electricians by the dinosaurs of the TUC, what assurance can my hon. Friend offer to European investors in future?

Mr. Cope: Assurance comes from individual unions that are far-sighted enough to see what is required.

Mr. Ron Brown: Is it the case that in 1992 the poll tax will be imposed uniformly throughout the Common Market? Of course it will not, but such ideas are floated, and it is a tax which will benefit the rich at the expense of the poor. Will the Minister leave this special Chamber and come to Scotland for a change, and meet the working class, who are organising, through the anti-poll tax unions, to fight back on the basis of non-payment? Will the Minister come to see reality for a change? Does he understand that on a Scottish, European and Socialist basis, there is a fight-back taking place, and I hope that the parliamentary Labour party will participate in it as well?

Mr. Cope: Just because I have the name of Johnny Cope, that does not mean that I am frightened to come to Scotland. I was there a few weeks ago.

Mr. Forth: Will my hon. Friend confirm that the aims and objectives of the free market, which will be of great benefit throughout, are completely inimical to the nonsenses of regional policy, which are long since discredited? Will he reiterate that the best hope for employment throughout the United Kingdom and Europe is the truly free movement of goods and capital, when Governments will no longer try to force goods and capital to go to regions or anywhere else?

Mr. Cope: Yes, we want the free movement of goods and capital, as my hon. Friend said.

Health and Safety Executive

8. **Mr. Bradley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what steps he has taken to ensure that the research and laboratory services division of the Health and Safety Executive is able to carry out its responsibilities adequately.

Mr. Nicholls: I am satisfied that the Health and Safety Executive's research and laboratories division is able to carry out its responsibilities effectively. The management of the division is a matter for the executive.

Mr. Bradley: In the light of the Minister's amazingly complacent answer, will he confirm that over the past six years the number of the division's scientific and technical officers has been reduced from 390 to 300, and that none of the £6·7 million announced last December will be used by the Government to rectify that appalling situation?

Mr. Nicholls: As I said, the way in which the Health and Safety Executive uses the moneys allocated to it is a matter for the executive, and it is for the executive to carry out its day-to-day responsibilities. If the hon. Gentleman is referring to the provision in its entirety, I am bound to tell him that the provision made by this Government certainly matches in real terms that made by our predecessors.

Mr. Meacher: How can the Minister justify a 24 per cent. cut in the Health and Safety Executive's scientific and technical staff over the past six years? How can he justify the fact that, as was said by my hon. Friend, as a result of the cut of 90 members of staff there is almost no research being undertaken into regulating low-output radiation from VDUs, which can cause foetal damage in pregnant women; that almost no research is being undertaken into establishing the known relationship between leukaemia and living near electricity power lines; and that, almost a year after the Zeebrugge disaster, almost no research is being undertaken into preventing the capsizing of cross-Channel ferries, when it is already known that Government tests show that 80 per cent. of those ferries are unsafe and do not meet international safety standards?

Mr. Nicholls: I remind the hon. Gentleman that we are dealing with employment questions rather than with transport questions. The mistake that he makes is the same as that which he made on radio this morning. He assumes that he can judge safety simply by looking at the number of people who may be employed. He does not seem to be able to get to grips with the fact that there are other dimensions to the argument, including proper, efficient working practices. There is no doubt in our minds that the research and laboratories division is able to carry out its responsibilities effectively.

I should like to think that the hon. Gentleman approaches the subject of power lines on the basis of research that is a little deeper than simply watching the last "Panorama" programme and then framing his opinions accordingly. If his research had been a little deeper, he would know that the CEGB is already carrying out research into that subject.

Industrial Action

9. **Mr. David Martin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many working days were lost due to industrial action in 1987-88; what trend this figure shows in relation to 1986-87; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Fowler: Two and a half million working days were lost through strikes in the year to March 1988. This compares with 3·3 million and 2·5 million in the previous two financial years. These are the best results since 1967. A major reason for this improvement has been the Government's reform of trade union law.

Mr. Martin: Does my right hon. Friend agree that those figures provide yet more evidence of the success of the Government's industrial relations policy, which has brought about benefits not only for ordinary trade unionists but for members of the public, to whom the disruption of a decade ago is like a dark age to which no one wishes to return?

Mr. Fowler: I entirely agree with my hon. Friend. Last year 2·5 million working days were lost compared with an average of 13 million days a year in the 1970s, and in the manufacturing industry the average number of working days lost per employee in 1987 was almost one tenth of its 1970s average. Again, that shows the justification for and result of the Government's reform of trade union legislation.

Mrs. Fyfe: Has the Minister made any estimates of the number of working people who should be on strike but are putting up with intolerable conditions because of the repressive measures passed four times over by the Tory Government?

Mr. Fowler: Not only have industrial relations in Britain improved radically, but, fortunately, employment has, with unemployment coming down in every region. The only people who talk against that are the Labour Front-Bench spokesmen.

YTS

10. **Mr. Ground:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a further statement on the progress of the two-year YTS.

Mr. Cope: At the end of May 1988 there were 371,400 young people training on two-year YTS. Fifty-four per cent. of trainees entering their second year on the scheme have already gained a vocational qualification. The latest survey results show that when young people leave YTS, 75 per cent. go into jobs or into further education and training.

Mr. Ground: How does the figure of 75 per cent. of YTS trainees going into jobs or education compare with the figures for the Hounslow area and for Feltham and Heston?

Mr. Cope: For the Hounslow local authority district, which includes the Feltham constituency, the YTS follow-up survey results show that of those who left the youth training scheme between April 1986 and December 1987, 80 per cent. went into employment and a further 8 per cent. went into further education or training.

Mr. Steinberg: Is the Minister aware that in the northern region 40 per cent. of youngsters are on YTS and yet only 10 per cent. obtain full-time work when they leave? The northern region has the highest number of youngsters going back on to the dole with—the Minister can shake his head but these are true facts—more than 30 per cent. going back on to the dole compared with 12 per cent. in the south-east. Does the Minister think that the training that the youngsters are getting is worth while, or is YTS a complete and utter waste of time?

Mr. Cope: Most of the young people who go on the training say that it is worth while when we ask them at the end of their training, and that applies in all parts of the country. I cannot confirm the figures that the hon. Gentleman gave at the beginning of his question, but they did not sound correct to me.

Mr. Burns: Is my hon. Friend aware that the figures that he has given the House today will be warmly welcomed in Chelmsford, where employers are suffering from a worker famine and they see this as a commitment to investment in the future? Is he also aware that one of the major employers in Chelmsford, the English Electric Valve company, is having great difficulty in finding employees for 300 places because there are not enough skilled people to take on? The Government's programme will not help that company in the immediate future, but it lays the foundations that will ensure that there is no recurrence of the problem in the future.

Mr. Cope: I am interested to hear the position in Chelmsford and I am glad to know that YTS is making a contribution. It sounds as though the employment training programe will too.

Mr. Sheerman: The Government know that the Labour party supports all training measures that meet national training needs in a serious way, but we find today's statement on youth training amazingly complacent, when Sainsburys are pulling out of YTS in many parts of the country and the youth training board points out that 100,000 youngsters—16 to 17-year-olds—a year go into dead-end jobs with no training at all. What are the youth training board and the Government doing about that?

Mr. Cope: An increasing number of youngsters are going into youth training and getting qualifications on the youth training scheme. Sainsburys is organising its own scheme. That is fair enough; it is entitled to do so. I am not quite sure what the hon. Gentleman meant by the remarks at the beginning of his question. If he was saying that he, and Labour Front-Bench Members are in favour of employment training, I am glad to hear it.

Mr. Wells: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the antagonism displayed by various Opposition Members to the YTS scheme explains, to a large extent, why in the northern areas that they represent YTS has not gained such acceptance or met with such success in bringing people full-time or even part-time employment? Are they not responsible for the fact that people are not properly employed in their areas?

Mr. Cope: I am sure that they bear a proportion of the responsibility.

Agricultural and Factory Inspectorates

11. **Mr. O'Brien:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment by what date he expects to fulfil his commitment to increase the agricultural and factory inspectors by 40 inspectors additional to those in place on 2 December 1987.

Mr. Nicholls: The Health and Safety Executive plans to increase the number of factory inspectors in the inspectorate to around 588 by 31 March 1989 and to increase the number of agricultural inspectors in the inspectorate to around 160 by 31 March 1989.

Mr. O'Brien: Since his statement on 2 December last year, is the Minister aware that instead of progress being made, there are already 15·5 per cent. fewer agricultural and factory inspectors in the inspectorate, and that resignations are greater than recruitments? Is the Minister not disappointed with the abysmal policies that he is bringing before the House? Is he not aware that those policies will add to the accidents and injuries if something is not done to speed up the recruitment of inspectors?

Mr. Nicholls: I can well understand the hon. Gentleman's concern. Although the figures announced at the end of last year worked on the assumption that there would not be the wastage that has occurred since in terms of inspectors leaving the inspectorate, the figures that I gave show precisely the same net increase, so the position is as it was announced last year.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Does not a successful record of health and safety at work depend first and foremost on the determination of operators to abide by safety rules, which exist in the great majority of companies because of Government vigilance? Most accidents occur because safety rules are ignored, not because they do not exist, or because machine guards are not available.

Mr. Nicholls: My hon. Friend is entirely right. When talking about resources and inspector numbers, it is all too easy to forget that the prime responsibility for health and safety must lie with employers and employees. I am sure that my hon. Friend is entirely right to remind us of that.

Mr. Strang: When will the Government recognise that there are now many more, smaller, dangerous workplaces to be inspected, there are many more self-employed people, for whom the inspectorate has responsibility, and above all, that under this Government, the inspectorate has been given many more responsibilities, including responsibility for gas appliances, the implementation of the new pesticide regulations and the transportation of hazardous substances? Is not Government behaviour the height of complacency when, against that background, a considerable number of inspectors are continuing to resign? There is some doubt about the Government achieving even the increase of 40 in the factory and agricultural inspectorates. When will the Government give the Health and Safety Executive the money it needs to halt the rate of resignations among inspectors?

Mr. Nicholls: I more than appreciate the hon. Gentleman's concern, but it is not complacency to make the point that one cannot say that there is a direct trade-off between the number of inspectors employed and the number of accidents that occur. As my hon. Friend the Member for Bexhill and Battle (Mr. Wardle) said a moment ago, the problem is wider than that. However, if the hon. Gentleman wishes to debate on that level, if he considers inspectors as a percentage of the employees they cover he will discover that under this Government the position has remained precisely constant with the position under the Labour Government. The hon. Gentleman knows that those are the facts, but I again tell him that that is not the whole picture.

Mr. Bill Walker: Does my hon. Friend agree that many of the accidents that occur in agriculture would not be influenced by additional inspectors, because as often as not they are caused by the miscalculations of operatives, often working in isolation?

Mr. Nicholls: My hon. Friend is entirely right to draw attention to the fact that in agriculture the rate of accidents is troubling. Today, figures were announced showing that the deaths in agriculture amounted to one more than last year, but last year was the lowest on record. That is not a reason for complacency but it is a reason for putting the problem into perspective.

Health and Safety

12. **Mr. McTaggart:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he has plans to seek to increase the penalties available where health and safety law has been contravened.

25. **Mr. Eadie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what consultations he has had on reviewing the penalties available for contraventions of health and safety legislation.

Mr. Nicholls: It has been suggested that the maximum fines available to magistrates' courts for breaches of health and safety legislation are not high enough. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has sought the views of the Health and Safety Commission and is now considering with colleagues whether there is a case to be made for reviewing those penalties.

Mr. McTaggart: Does the Minister agree with the statement made by the chair of the Health and Safety Commission earlier this year to the Select Committee on Employment when he said that it was morally unacceptable that management could be fined just £200 for a death that occurs at work? Will he approach the Lord Chancellor for stiffer penalties and consider increasing the £2,000 limit that can be imposed by magistrates' courts?

Mr. Nicholls: As a reflection of the concern expressed by the chairman of the commission we started the exercise of approaching colleagues to see whether the maximum fines available to magistrates' courts could be increased. A point that is sometimes not appreciated is that the limits on fines that can be imposed relates only to the magistrates' courts. For offences tried on indictment, fines are unlimited. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will have taken heart from two recent decisions where fines of £250,000 and £500,000 were imposed. If the magistrates feel that their powers of punishment are insufficient, they can commit to the Crown court anyway.

Mr. Eadie: I thank the Minister for his reply about consultation and investigation. However, does he accept that, since his Government believe in deterrence, one could come to the conclusion from the statistics that there is a case for extending penalties for people who contravene the health and safety regulations.

Mr. Nicholls: Again I understand the sentiments that prompt that question. I ask the hon. Gentleman to take account of the fact that before a Crown court the fines are unlimited. The problem we are discussing is whether the penalties available to a magistrate should be greater. As I have said, a consultation exercise is taking place precisely because the concerns expressed by the hon. Gentleman and his hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Central (Mr. McTaggart) are shared by us.

Mr. Rowe: Is it not manifest that many accidents cause enormous distress not only to the person injured but to the employer, and that in many cases a financial penalty may be much less effective than insisting on some form of retraining and re-education of both workers and employer? Is my hon. Friend confident that the list of penalties available includes such re-education?

Mr. Nicholls: I am sure that my hon. Friend is entirely right to make the point that financial penalties are one thing, but that the degree of shame and opprobrium that particular cases can bring on employers is something of which many are conscious.

Mr. Holt: Will my hon. Friend consider the penalties and the case against employees, who often hurt themselves by refusing to use the appropriate methods laid down by their employer? There are insufficient charges brought against employees who deliberately break the rules of their employers.

Mr. Nicholls: I suspect that my hon. Friend speaks from experience. It is a fair point to make. In civil proceedings, contributory negligence can play a part. In the criminal law, there is clearly an obligation on employers and that obligation has to be met.

Health and Safety Executive

14. **Mr. Cousins:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the additional funding sought by the Health and Safety Executive for the executive during the year 1988-89.

Mr. Nicholls: The Health and Safety Executive did not seek any additional funding at the time of the 1988-89 Supply Estimates.

Mr. Cousins: Is the Minister aware that, for example, the Hospital Physicists' Association has stated that the equivalent of one Chernobyl a year is being delivered to patients in Britain from old and poorly maintained radiation equipment? Will he therefore state clearly what the Health and Safety Executive asked for in 1989-90 to deal with this and many other pressing problems?

Mr. Nicholls: I had hoped that my initial reply to the hon. Gentleman would make it clear that the Health and Safety Executive did not seek any additional funding at the time of the 1988-89 Supply Estimates. Certainly, as far as the PESC round was concerned, it made its bid there for resources and as a result of the points that it made an extra £6·7 million was introduced—something that was very much welcomed by the chairman of the commission.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mrs. Clwyd:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 5 July.

The Prime Minister (Mrs. Margaret Thatcher): This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House I shall be having further meetings later today.

Mrs. Clwyd: Does the Prime Minister recall that 40 years ago Aneurin Bevan described her party as being "lower than vermin" and its policies as organised spivvery? In the light of her verminous attack on the National Health Service and her patronage of spivs in the private sector, has anything changed?

The Prime Minister: A great deal has changed for the better in the National Health Service under a Conservative Government: more resources, more doctors, more nurses, more patients treated and more success. Yes, a great deal has changed for the better under a Conservative Government.

Q2. **Mr. Cash:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 5 July.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Cash: In connection with the 40th anniversary of the National Health Service, does my right hon. Friend agree that it was a Conservative Minister of Health who, in a White Paper in 1944, introduced the basis of the Health Service; that, furthermore, it was a Labour Government who introduced prescription charges in the 1940s; and that this Government, conducting their present review, have, since 1979, increased spending on the Health Service by 39 per cent., even after inflation?

The Prime Minister: Yes, the National Health Service should be congratulated on its 40 years of achievement, the greater part of which has been conducted under a Conservative Government. Successive Conservative Governments have provided a standard of resources for the professions to deliver a standard of service undreamed of many years ago.

Mr. Kinnock: Is the Prime Minister aware that Mr. Nigel Harris, the distinguished surgeon who shared a general election press conference with her last year, asked me this morning to give her a direct personal message? Mr. Harris asked me to tell the Prime Minister—[HON. MEMBERS: "Question."]

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am sure that the Leader of the Opposition is asking a question.

Mr. Kinnock: Mr. Harris asked me to tell her—[HON. MEMBERS: "Question."]

Mr. Speaker: Order. A question at Question Time, please.

Mr. Kinnock: It will be well within your recall, Mr. Speaker, that I began this question "Is the Prime Minister aware". Dodges such as we are getting from the Tories do not count except to scar them in the eyes of the public.

Is the Prime Minister aware that Mr. Harris asked me to tell her that dependence on private provision is the worst possible system? It means the poor do not get the treatment they need and the rich get treatment they do not need. Last year the Prime Minister wanted people to heed Mr. Harris. Will she heed him now?

The Prime Minister: Perhaps the right hon. Gentleman will convey to everyone who asks him the fact that the Government are entirely committed to the principle of the National Health Service—that all people should have access to the best possible medical treatment, regardless of their ability to pay. Perhaps the right hon. Gentleman will point out to Mr. Harris that the Conservative party's record in government is the clearest possible evidence of that commitment.

Mr. Kinnock: Patently, neither Mr. Harris nor others in whole areas of the medical profession will believe a word of what the Prime Minister has just said. Given the record and philosophy of her Government, is it not obvious to everyone that her intention is to create a two-tier Health Service, with a superior level for sale and an inferior level that remains free? Why does she not heed the advice of the British Medical Association, the Select Committee on Social Services and people like Mr. Harris and provide £1 billion to £1½ billion now to avert crisis this year? If she is really committed to the Health Service, will she give that money now?

The Prime Minister: Last year the right hon. Gentleman asked for an extra £2 billion, which was to sort out all the problems of the National Health Service. An extra £2 billion has been provided this year. In fact, we are dedicating more resources than any previous Government to the Health Service. The doctors know that there are more doctors and that they are better paid; the nurses know that there are more nurses and that they are better paid and the doctors and the nurses know that they look after more patients in better hospitals than ever before. I take it that the right hon. Gentleman still accepts, like his predecessors, that people are free to spend their own money as they choose. Or is he denying that now?

Mr. Kinnock: If the Prime Minister believes that people are free to spend their money as they choose, will she tell us why she and the Chancellor did not respond to the repeated demands from the huge majority of people in this country to spend money on the Health Service instead of giving £2½ billion to the richest people in the land? If the Prime Minister has provided that extra money for the Health Service, why does she think that it was necessary for the BMA and the Select Committee this week to call for an extra £1 billion to £1½ billion to avert a crisis? I ask her again: will she provide the money now to avert a crisis this year?

The Prime Minister: The people of this country are providing more money for the Health Service out of a growing economy. The right hon. Gentleman seems to think that people have no right at all to have any money available to spend. I know that arithmetic is not the right hon. Gentleman's strong subject, but in 1978 expenditure on the National Health Service was £8 billion, whereas this year it is £23 billion. Even the right hon. Gentleman should know that that is a lot more.

Q3. **Mr. Marlow:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 5 July.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Marlow *rose—[Interruption.]——*

Mr. Speaker: Order. I ask the House to calm down.

Mr. Marlow: Perhaps I may change the subject, Mr. Speaker. Is it not time that we tried a more imaginative and radical approach to the problems of yobbish hooliganism and drunken violence—*[Interruption.]* Could we not try a little pain and humiliation—the birch and perhaps a modern version of the stocks? Would not those tried and tested punishments appeal to the liberals, the wets and the worthies as being less barbaric than the failed alternative of imprisonment——

Mr. Speaker: Briefly.

Mr. Marlow: Could we not proceed in that more enlightened and progressive direction?

The Prime Minister: Increased sentences have been provided and are available to magistrates. Many people are now considering different forms of sentences to deal with very bad hooliganism. As part of their sentence, people should have to report to specific places under the offices of the probation service or undertake some form of community service. They should do this regularly, at weekends or at times when they might otherwise be out engaging in the hooliganism that my hon. Friend condemns. My right hon. Friend the Home Secretary has that very much in mind. I do not believe that the route that my hon. Friend proposes would meet with sufficient support to enable such measures to get through the House or with sufficient support from the whole country.

Mr. Steel: On the question of the Iranian Airbus disaster, would it not have been more prudent for the Prime Minister to confine her comments to expressions of regret and sympathy until the inquiry result was known? Why have the Government taken no initiative to bring the peace-keeping forces in the Gulf under the international legitimacy of the United Nations organisation?

The Prime Minister: The first sentence of the statement said that the British Government profoundly regretted the loss of life on the Iranian airliner and extended their deep sympathy to the bereaved. The statement went on to point out that this had been a tragedy for all concerned. One cannot put navies into the Gulf to defend shipping from attack by either side to the conflict without giving them the right to defend themselves. No one would do that.

Q4. **Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 5 July.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: Is my right hon. Friend aware of the great efforts that have been made to devise a form of voluntary no-fault visitors' personal accident insurance? That would have saved my constituents who were injured at Abbeystead a great deal of heartache had it been in force four years ago. When the scheme is launched this coming Monday, will my right hon. Friend read it and consider giving it her backing and encouraging its widespread use?

The Prime Minister: I congratulate my hon. Friend on everything that she, like a number of others, has done to get such a voluntary scheme launched. Proposals for a statutory scheme have been argued for a long time. A voluntary scheme is an excellent idea and certainly would have helped the people at Abbeystead. I shall look carefully at the scheme once it is published.

Q5. **Mr. Wareing:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 5 July.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Wareing: Is the Prime Minister aware that today there are many nurses in this building who will have listened with interest and disgust to some of her answers? They will deliver a petition to my hon. Friend the Member for Kirkcaldy (Dr. Moonie), which he will present to the House. Among its demands is a call for full implementation and funding by the Government of the recommendations of the review body for Health Service staff in the current year. Does the right hon. Lady realise that those nurses are here not only on their behalf but on behalf of their patients and the people who make up the health teams? Does she realise that they have come to the House looking for the first time—I fear that it will be in vain—for a spark of humanity from her?

The Prime Minister: The nurses, doctors, dentists and allied medical professions have review bodies. Wages for other groups are negotiated through other bodies. The total cost of the review body for nurses, which is funded by the people, is some £803 million this year. I remind the hon. Gentleman, and perhaps he will remind the nurses, that the last Labour Government cut nurses' pay by 21 per cent. We have increased it by 43 per cent. in real terms. The money comes from the same place from which it always comes—people's earnings.

Q6 **Mr. Arbuthnot:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 5 July.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Arbuthnot: Will my right hon. Friend find time to congratulate Mr. Gorbachev on his political tour de force last week and on his struggle to bring Russia into the 20th century? Does she agree that until we see a real reduction in spending on defence by the Warsaw pact countries it would be unwise to relax our guard?

The Prime Minister: I gladly congratulate Mr. Gorbachev on the boldness of his vision and the resolve with which he and those who are with him are carrying it out. As far as defence is concerned, we see no evidence of any reduction in the effort to modernise the Soviet armed forces. One of the reasons why we can so readily encourage Mr. Gorbachev's effort on internal reform is that we are staunch members of NATO and we keep our own conventional and nuclear forces fully up to date.

Q7. **Ms. Armstrong:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 5 July.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Lady to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Ms. Armstrong: Will the Prime Minister take this opportunity to scotch rumours that she will change the basic funding method of the National Health Service? The country and the medical profession are saying that insurance and other methods will be more expensive and much less efficient. Will she give her support to a National Health Service that is free at the point of need?

The Prime Minister: Yes, I thought that I had made it perfectly clear in answer to another question that the National Health Service will continue to be available. It is financed in two ways now: the direct taxation, and the part that is conributed together with the national insurance contributions. That is a very small part of the total finance, the rest of which comes direct from taxation.

Belfast City Council (Meeting)

3.32 pm

Rev. Ian Paisley (Antrim, North): I beg to ask leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 20, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the physical assaults mounted in the Belfast city council last night by IRA Sinn Fein members on Unionist councillors, resulting in the break-up of the council meeting and some five Unionist councillors having to receive hospital treatment."

Last night in the Belfast city council IRA Sinn Fein councillors yet again showed their true colours when they loosed their thuggery on Loyalist members. One woman councillor was thrown to the ground; an attempt was made to beat her head in with a chair. Another alderman, who had previously been shot and seriously wounded by the IRA, was viciously punched. Altogether, according to police reports, five members had to be taken to hospital —*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am listening to this application.

Rev. Ian Paisley: The first blow was struck by IRA Sinn Fein member O'Mullior, and his party members McKnight, Lavery, McCann, Holland, Fitzimmons, McGuigan and Maskey all joined in. Loyalist members had been provoked by them throughout the proceedings and when violence was used against them they had no option but to defend themselves. The Alliance party spokesman in the corporation confirmed that—of course, he is not a member of either of the Unionist parties.

For the past three years Loyalist members throughout Ulster have been expected by the Government to tolerate gunmen in the council chambers. While the Government will not talk to Sinn Fein gunmen, they expect Unionist members whose friends have been murdered and whose homes have been burnt by these thugs to conduct local government business.

I call on the Government today to proscribe Sinn Fein and keep violence out of the council chambers.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Gentleman asks leave to move the Adjournment of the House for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that he believes should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the physical assaults mounted in Belfast council last night by IRA Sinn Fein members on Unionist councillors, resulting in the break-up of the council meeting and some five Unionist councillors having to receive hospital treatment."

I am sure that the whole House has listened with deep concern to what the hon. Gentleman has said about what went on in Belfast last night, but I regret that I do not consider the matter that he has raised as being appropriate for discussion under Standing Order No. 20, and I cannot therefore submit his application to the House.

Girobank (Privatisation)

Mr. Allan Roberts (Bootle): I beg to ask leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 20, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the privatisation of Girobank in the light of the Government's recent refusal to allow parliamentary scrutiny of the proposals and the circumstances of purchase."

This is a specific matter, because on 7 June the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster announced that Girobank would be privatised by tender, and I raised on a point of order the fact that to privatise Girobank no legislation or parliamentary scrutiny was necessarily required. You pointed out, Mr. Speaker, that it was not for you to advise on tactics, but went on to say that there were ways of raising these matters.

We took your advice, Mr. Speaker, and sought at the request of the Bootle work force a meeting with the Secretary of State or the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster. We were refused a meeting with the Ministers. We were able to secure agreement from the Trade and Industry Select Committee that it would inquire into Girobank's future, but today Ministers have made it clear that they intend to privatise Girobank before the Select Committee reports.

It was in the light of assurances about the Select Committee inquiry and parliamentary scrutiny of the privatisation proposals that the work force voted against strike action but wished to obtain through Parliament assurances about their job security and the safeguarding of Girobank's separate and continuing entity. The Government's refusal to debate or discuss the issues and the details of their privatisation proposals is an insult to Parliament, and gives credence to the belief that Ministers have already earmarked a specific financial institution to take over the bank. Why else will they not give assurances that the bank will not be sold and then asset-stripped?

The matter is urgent because it is not just about the future of 6,000 jobs on Merseyside. Giro is a national employer with regional centres. This is a national issue. It is also about the future of the nation's network of post office counters, which depend on Girobank business and are also at risk.

It seems, Mr. Speaker, that the only chance of parliamentary scrutiny is for you to grant a debate. The Government are playing Wall street roulette with 6,000 jobs on Merseyside by the way in which they are dealing with Girobank's privatisation, and they should be called to account.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Gentleman asks leave to move the Adjournment of the House for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that he believes should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the privatisation of Girobank in the light of the Government's recent refusal to allow parliamentary scrutiny of the proposals and the circumstances of purchase."

Once again I have to say that I have listened with great care to what the hon. Gentleman has had to say, but I do not consider the matter that he has raised as being appropriate for discussion under Standing Order No. 20, and I cannot therefore submit his application to the House.

Points of Order

3.39 pm

Mr. Dennis Howell (Birmingham, Small Heath): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I wish to ask for your help or advice on the growing discourtesy of the Minister with responsibility for sport in replying to vital questions by means of written answers, and not consulting or presenting himself to the House.

You will recall, Mr. Speaker, that we had to complain about this last week in respect of the sale of local authority sports facilities. On the same day, the Minister issued another answer announcing fundamental changes in the structure of the Sports Council which not only go back on the White Paper that I presented to the House in 1975, but, in my judgment, affect the independence of the Sports Council and the right of governing bodies of the Central Council of Physical Recreation to elect their own membership, which may well be a breach of the royal charter. In this instance, the Minister concerned briefed journalists on Friday and gave a written answer on Friday, which was printed in *Hansard* only today. In other words, for four days hon. Members who are entitled to be consulted or informed did not receive either courtesy. Was this a breach of order, and how should we proceed in the matter?

Mr. Speaker I can answer only about those matters for which I have responsibility. The House knows that it is in order for a Minister to reply to a written question; I have no responsibility for that. I regret that the reply that the right hon. Gentleman has in mind was not printed in Friday's *Official Report*. I have made inquiries about this. There have been some delays in printing answers in recent weeks, but the problems are being overcome. The answer is printed in the *Official Report* today. It has been available in the Library since noon on Friday last.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Anyone in your position has a great problem in the sense that, in the morning, when you come to make the decisions that we all know you have to make, you cannot know what questions the Prime Minister will be asked. You will recollect that in 1982 there were frequent statements from the Government on the rules of engagement in the war of the south Atlantic. Ought there not to be a statement on the rules of engagement in the Gulf? At Question Time the Prime Minister properly said that British forces have a right to defend themselves.

My point of order is this. Should not the House of Commons, and others, be told precisely under what rules of engagement the Armilla patrol is operating?

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Gentleman's best course is to table a question and obtain an answer to it. Perhaps I can help him further by saying that it is likely that this matter could arise at Question Time tomorrow.

Mr. Barry Porter (Wirral, South): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker, relating to the matter raised by the hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley). It is difficult for me, or for the House, to avoid the conclusion that had last night's events in Belfast occurred in Tottenham, Islington or Toxteth they would have been treated as a matter of national importance. Is it right that the city of Belfast and the Province of Ulster should be treated as somehow being different from the rest of the United Kingdom?

Mr. Speaker: I can say only that I have to base my judgment on Standing Order No. 20 applications on whether they meet the criteria and involve the responsibility of Her Majesty's Government. I have already given my view on that.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I want genuinely to ask for your advice. Many Members of the Labour party, and I note also a Member of the Liberal party, have been wearing sticky bits of paper on their lapels. The proceedings of the House are not currently being televised, but, as we all know, a Select Committee is considering the possibility of televising the House. Will it be addressing this particular issue, because obviously it could lead to great abuse? Hon. Members could come in with little slips saying "Mars bars" on them, and be paid by an outside organisation. That sort of thing clearly should be looked at closely. I wonder whether you could tell the House whether anything is being done about this matter.

Mr. Speaker: I think that the hon. Gentleman's best course is to raise that matter himself with the Committee.

Mr. Richard Holt (Langbaurgh): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. You will recall that last week, on a point of order, I was, to say the least, rude to you when I said that you might have been in collusion with the hon. Member for Stockton, North (Mr. Cook). I should have realised that nobody would be in collusion with the hon. Member for Stockton, North—anybody who was would be out of his mind. I wish to withdraw my remark and apologise to you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: I thank the hon. Gentleman for his generosity.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

Mr. Speaker: By leave of the House, I shall put together the Questions on the two motions relating to statutory instruments.

Ordered,

That the draft Pesticides (Maximum Residue Levels in Food) Regulations 1988 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the draft Farm Woodland Scheme 1988 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.—*[Mr. Lightbown.]*

Gazumping (Abolition)

3.44 pm

Mr. David Martin (Portsmouth, South): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to prevent gazumping in connection with buying and selling homes.

The disgraceful practice of gazumping has been raised in the House on several occasions over the years, notably by my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Staffordshire (Mr. Heddle). It has also been the object of attention by the Law Commission and, from time to time, by the legal profession's magazines and the press. A remarkable number of right hon. and hon. Members have shared with me the experiences of their constituents, and I have been helped by them.

The word "gazump" is based on "gazoomph," which is a graphic Yiddish word meaning to swindle or to cheat. It applies when the purchaser and the vendor of a home have agreed on a definite price and then, before contracts are exchanged, the vendor raises the price to that purchaser or sells at a higher price to someone else. It does not apply to the converse case of the purchaser withdrawing before exchange of contracts. That is a nuisance and the breaking of an agreement, but it is not gazumping. I have some ideas on that, too, but I have only 10 minutes in which to speak, so they must be developed at another time.

Gazumping has been described as a method of parting rich men from their money—and it certainly does that. The greater problem is that it also parts the relatively less well off from theirs, especially young people and first-time buyers.

Scottish law and practice is far nearer to what I would like to see happen in England and Wales. It has been said that nothing stops us operating the same system. That may theoretically be true, but it will never happen without legislation.

First, my main aim it to give 14 days to a purchaser to exchange after the price has been agreed. During those 14 days, if the vendor backs out, the vendor would have to pay the purchaser 5 per cent. of the agreed price, plus any specific and reasonable costs incurred by the purchaser during that time. Any sum less than 5 per cent. would not be a deterrent, because gazumping is in multiples of thousands of pounds these days, even on less expensive property. Therefore, as in Scotland, the price would be fixed at the outset. In England and Wales exchange would follow in a short time and certainly would exist at an earlier stage. The parties could then agree either a long or short period for completion, depending significantly on the need for the purchaser to sell his or her home in the meantime.

Secondly, considerations of time would be more important. My Bill would promote a speeding up of the all too ponderous and needlessly mystifying processes of conveyancing. For all the welcome increases in home ownership in recent years, in many respects we are still in the age of the quill pen when it comes to law and practice. Solicitors, in particular, must grow more used to the idea that they are in a commercial world. Their negative attitude to advertising is revealing. The advent of licensed conveyancers has helped to bring the profession face to face with commercial reality. Many have recognised and seized the opportunities to co-operate with or to operate property shops, but more needs to be done.

Thirdly, home purchase would be helped by insisting on more, and more accurate, information in the agents' particulars. That is a subject in itself. I have seen particulars offering me

"a modern system of central hating",

"gilt" spelt "guilt" and even

"rent and rat free accommodation".

Fourthly, the vendor would be required to provide far more information to a purchaser when he puts his property on the market. He would be required to provide a survey from a surveyor with proper professional qualifications. No honest vendor should object to that. If the purchaser wished to be more thorough, he could obtain a further survey on his own. At the same time, the vendor would also be required to provide the usual standard searches and inquiries.

Local authorities should be able to produce all the relevant information quickly and efficiently. This week, Portsmouth city council is pioneering a new computer system, as too is Wigan. The system will be part of a national network, where solicitors, estate agents, banks and others will be able to obtain direct answers to the usual searches and inquiries. One third of Portsmouth property is now held on computer, and the aim is for complete coverage by the end of 1989. We have tolerated for far too long too many expectations of delay in what ought to be a quick and simple process.

I understand that the current ministerial response is that law reform should stay out of this area, that the remedy lies in the hands of those involved in house buying rather than in the law, and that there is nothing to stop people in England and Wales using the Scottish system if they want to. The trouble with that line is that it is far too complacent. Unless we have legislation, ordinary house buyers will never be able to bring about any significant change in the practices and customs of professionals, just as they could not tackle the scandal of the conveyancing monopoly without legislative help.

All that is lacking is the political will to legislate. I hope that my effort today, added to those of many others of all parties, will have its effect. My system is not perfect, but it would make things better. That is no more or less than most legislation can hope to achieve.

A gazumper is a swindler, a cheat and a racketeer. The present state of the law and practice allows him or her to operate without sanction of any kind and regardless of the damage caused to innocent parties. That is neither ethical nor just. It cannot be right. My Bill would provide some redress. I commend its introduction to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill ordered to be brought in by Mr. David Martin, Mr. Matthew Carrington, Mr. Barry Field, Mr. Ian Gow, Mr. John Heddle, Mr. George Howarth, Mr. Richard Livsey, Mr. Ian McCartney, Mr. Keith Mans, Mr. Rhodri Morgan and Miss Ann Widdecombe.

GAZUMPING (ABOLITION)

Mr. David Martin accordingly presented a Bill to prevent gazumping in connection with buying and selling homes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 8 July and to be printed. [Bill 189.]

OPPOSITION DAY

[16TH ALLOTTED DAY]

National Health Service

[Relevant documents: The First Report from the Social Services Committee, Session 1987-88, on Resourcing the National Health Service: Short term issues, HC 264-I, the Government Response to that Report, Cm. 405 and the Third Report from the Social Services Committee, Session 1987-88, on Resourcing the National Health Service: Prospects for 1988-89, HC 547.]

3.52 pm

Mr. Robin Cook (Livingston): I beg to move,

That this House congratulates present and past staff of the National Health Service on forty years service to the public; reaffirms its support for a comprehensive health service, free at the point of use to all citizens and funded out of general taxation, and rejects proposals to end its universal character by subsidising the better off to opt out; welcomes the recent conversion of ministers to the fundamental principles of the National Health Service, and invites them to demonstrate their commitment to it by tackling the serious underfunding confirmed by the latest report of the Social Services Committee (House of Commons Paper No. 547 of Session 1987-88), in order to raise the quality of patient treatment, medical research and community care and to assure development of the best principles and practice of the National Health Service in the future.

Mr. Speaker: I have selected the amendment in the name of the Prime Minister.

No fewer than 30 Back Benchers wish to take part in the debate. I make a plea for brief speeches from the Back Benches and the Front Benches so that we may avoid the distress that was caused in the foreign affairs debate last week.

Mr. Cook: Forty years ago today, the National Health Service came into being. With its birth, there was swept away the system of charity hospitals dependent on lotteries and flag days to stay open—a system in which few went to the dentist for preventive care because they were charged even for a dental examination and a system of two-tier health care in which panel patients went round the back to the waiting room while private patients came through the front door to go into the doctor's parlour.

It was a bad health system. It was bad for the nation's health. It was bad for the dignity and self-respect of the individual who could not afford health care treatment. That is why Opposition Members will fight any attempt not to take the NHS forward but to take it back half a century to the divided health system which it replaced.

During the past 40 years, the NHS has served us well. It has provided universal cover, and, because nearly everyone uses it, there is no stigma attached to those who do. It provides comprehensive cover through a network of district general hospitals which have brought nearly every specialty into every neighbourhood in Britain. It has also sustained centres of excellence that can hold their own with the medical schools of any other country, whether it be on quality of training, or research or innovation. It has done that while also supplying a unique system of primary care barely paralleled throughout the western world in which even after nine years of this Government three quarters of all consultations take place within 24 hours of the approach. However, most important of all, the NHS has separated the anxiety of paying the bill from the stress and pain of being ill.

I presume that those points are common ground between Members on the Front Benches, although they may be controversial according to some voices from the Back Benches. I presume that it is common ground between myself and the Secretary of State that the NHS has served us well and made those achievements because I note that, in recent weeks, the Secretary of State has been claiming credit for the Conservatives in having created the NHS.

I was somewhat surprised to be woken up the other morning by the Secretary of State informing us on the radio that it was not Bevan who formed the NHS in 1948 but Churchill in 1944. There is, of course, one inconvenient historical fact in that reconstruction of history, which is that every Conservative Member voted against the creation of the NHS on the Third Reading of the Bill.

Mr. Michael Fallon (Darlington): The hon. Gentleman has just said that the NHS has served this country well. Did it serve this country well during the period of the last Labour Government when the hospital building programme was cut, nurses' wages were reduced in real terms, there was severe industrial action and waiting lists increased?

Mr. Cook: If the hon. Gentleman will wait while I go through my speech—I shall respond to his point in a moment—he will see how the present situation compares with that left by the last Labour Government. If he speaks to the nurses from the Royal College of Nursing who have been speaking to many of my hon. Friends and to members of the minority parties and asks them whether they would rather go back to the administration of the NHS in the 1970s or continue with the Government's policies, I have not the slightest doubt about the reply he will receive. If he cares to ask them about pay, they will remind him of something that he has obviously forgotten, that it was not a Conservative Government but a Labour Government who appointed the Clegg commission.

I was recalling to the House the fact that every Conservative Member available voted against the NHS on the Third Reading of the Bill. However, I accept the Secretary of State's assurances that that was just a roundabout way of expressing their support for it. What is at issue is not what they thought about the NHS in 1948, but what they think about it in 1988.

Yesterday the Secretary of State addressed the Centre for Policy Studies, and in the course of his speech he said:

> "We must tackle the deep-seated tendency within the NHS to self-denigration."

I am sorry, therefore, that the Secretary of State did not take the opportunity to rebut the insulting observation about the NHS in one of the recent submissions from the Centre for Policy Studies to the review. In one of its recent submissions, it wrote:

> "It is doubtful whether long stay prisoners in maximum security gaols fare much worse than NHS patients."

That is the kind of sentence that leaves one doubtful whether the authors have ever seen inside an NHS ward and absolutely certain that they have never visited a maximum-security gaol. It is unfair to the NHS, half of whose patients are in wards of five or fewer beds. It is even unfair—that is saying something—to the Government's

[Mr. Cook]

stewardship of the NHS, and it is grossly unfair to the dedicated, committed nursing staff whom most patients do not remember as gaolers.

The co-author of that sentence was the hon. Member for Wokingham (Mr. Redwood), who I am pleased to see is in his place. Until the last general election, he was head of the Prime Minister's policy unit at No. 10. There is little point in lecturing the NHS on self-denigration when working at No. 10 breeds such prejudice and contempt for the NHS and those who work in it.

That brings me to the review currently being conducted from No. 10, not from the Department of Health and Social Security. I and all my hon. Friends would welcome a review of the NHS, if it were an open review, if it were accessible to those working in the Health Service and if the submissions were being weighed by open and independent minds. We do not have that. Instead, we have review by Cabinet sub-committee. Every member of it is a Minister —the Secretary of State and the Minister of State, Department of Health and Social Security, the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Chief Secretary, and the Prime Minister. I would not be so provocative as to suggest that there is not an open mind among them, but not one of them works in the NHS. Indeed, not one of them is known to use the NHS. This is not merely a closed review; it is a hermetically sealed review.

My colleagues and I have tabled more than 50 parliamentary questions about the review since it was formed, and we are none the wiser now than when we started. Our attempts to ascertain the remit have been met with the formula that it is wide-ranging and fundamental. Publication of the evidence has been refused on the ground that some of it may have been confidential. It is not said that it was confidential. Instead it is said that it may have been confidential. We have been refused a list of those who submitted evidence on the ground that it is impossible for Ministers to distinguish between those who formally submitted evidence and those who just popped into the post general advice which Ministers found came in handy.

I put to the Secretary of State a request that, if met, will help to persuade us that a genuine review is taking place, not an exercise in party politics.

Mr. Eric Forth (Mid-Worcestershire): If the NHS was in the state of crisis that was regularly claimed by Labour Members and the media during the period of hysteria earlier this year, was not that an indictment of all those responsible within the Health Service for managing it, they being unable to make suggestions for reforms to improve it? To invite them to contribute to a meaningful review would be to commit a mistake which has been made before, which is to ask the producers effectively to review their own production.

Mr. Cook: I am delighted that the hon. Gentleman is in his place for the debate. We look forward to his contribution to it. Only a fortnight ago Worcester district health authority resolved permanently to close 25 beds. I have no doubt that that will be presented to us as not being an example of crisis in the NHS. I remember a succession of Health Service employees who went to Downing street and then to the Secretary of State to voice their constructive views on the future of the Health Service. I remember also that not a blind bit of notice was taken of any of them.

The origins of the review were a constitutional novelty. It was announced by David Dimbleby on television, not in a ministerial statement in this place. But let us look forward to the conclusion of the review. Will the Secretary of State give the House an undertaking that when the sub-committee has ended its labours and has arrived at its prescription for the NHS he will do the House the courtesy of announcing that news first in Parliament and not, as it has been widely suggested, from the rostrum at the Conservative party conference? I warn the right hon. Gentleman that if he chooses the second course he will convince every health worker that the review is part of an exercise to improve the image of the Tory party and not the quality of the NHS.

There has been a remarkable and fascinating shift in ministerial comments on the NHS review over the period of the review. Initially, we were told that the review would lead to a fundamental rethink. The Secretary of State, in addressing that well-known fixture in the medical calendar, the annual dinner of the Aldershot Conservative Association, said:

> "The impact on the nation's health could be as dramatic as the discovery of penicillin."

He said also that he was looking at any and every idea. How did the ideas tumble out? In a succession of background briefings we heard about opting out, health stamps, vouchers and health maintenance organisations. That was in February. In the past month the Lobby briefings about everything being up for grabs have dried up. Last month, the Secretary of State told us that there will be no big bang in the NHS. The buzz phrase now is that the result of the review will be evolutionary, not revolutionary.

Mr. Jerry Hayes (Harlow): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Cook: As I have not yet given way to any Opposition Member, I shall do the next best thing and give way to the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Hayes: I hate to destroy a good story with the facts. However, has the hon. Gentleman read the public expenditure White Paper, which was published in January 1988, which was after the review was announced and before the various speeches of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services? The White Paper stated:

> "The Government remain committed to the principle that the NHS should be financed largely from taxation."

Mr. Cook: The "largely" started to disappear. I shall come to that.

Why has there been a retreat? The retreat is quite easy to explain. The polling data for the review have been telling the members of the review team exactly what they tell anyone else after the public have been consulted, that is, that the British public are overwhelmingly attached to the Health Service. That was admitted the other month by the Secretary of State's most junior Minister, the Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security, the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie). The hon. Lady said:

> "We do seem to have a hang up in Britain that somehow it is wrong to pay for aspects of health care."

The hon. Lady is right: the British public do have that hang up, as she so elegantly expressed it. If I may rephrase what the hon. Lady said, the British people have a deep attachment to the principle that health care should depend on how ill someone is and not on how well off he is. They know that the health care system that best gives effect to that principle is a publicly funded system that is free at the point of use—in other words, the NHS. That is why the Secretary of State is now so anxious to assure us that he fully supports the principle of a universal comprehensive service that is free at the point of use. The Government's amendment deletes those words from the motion, but the Secretary of State keeps assuring us that he supports the meaning of those words.

If the Secretary of State means that, let us hear from him what he proposes to do in the light of his conversion to undo all the measures that he and his predecessors have taken to undermine that principle. Under a Government who are committed to the principle of health care that is free at the point of use, prescription charges have increased by 1,200 per cent. since they took office. It is cheaper now to buy over the counter many of the more common drugs. Under a Government who are committed to a free Health Service, what is happening to eye tests? They are leaving that vital preventive service to be provided at whatever price the market will bear.

There has been privatisation of services in the NHS. The Government, who are committed to a publicly funded and publicly managed Health Service, are punting out to those who measure health care against profits the ancillary services within our hospitals. The Select Committee on Social Services discovered yesterday that 40 per cent. of nurses' time is taken up in performing non-nursing duties because of the shortage of support staff. The Select Committe urged the Government to consider how it might be possible to put more domestic staff into the wards. It would not be necessary for the Government to consider that if they had not shed 70,000 domestic posts in the wards in the process of competitive tendering. Let us hear from the Secretary of State how he squares all the steps to put health care in the market place with a commitment to keeping the NHS out of the market place.

If the members of the sub-committee who are reviewing the NHS have come to the conclusion that the NHS is a fine British institution, let us hear from the Secretary of State how the review will tackle the real challenges of health care in Britain. I ask him, when he speaks, to deal with community care. It is an area of common ground between the occupants of the two Front Benches. There is common ground that the sooner we close the large crumbling institutions that hold the mentally handicapped and the psychiatric ill, the better if will be for those patients.

It is ironic that those who stay the longest in our hospitals are frequently to be found in the oldest buildings, including the old workhouses which were in place a century before the NHS was established. That is why both this Government and the last committed themselves to housing those patients in a more normal environment in the community. However, I must say that, under this Government, care in the community is becoming a cynical deceit, a slogan used to conceal a programme for shedding expenditure on the mentally ill by closing their hospitals and dumping those people on a community that has no facilities to cater for them.

Twenty-five thousand hospital beds for the mentally handicapped have gone under this Government. The appalling truth is that there is no official idea of where those patients are.

Mr. Tim Yeo (Suffolk, South) *rose*——

Mr. Cook: No, I shall not give way.

Mr. Yeo: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) is not giving way.

Mr. Cook: I am grateful for your protection, Mr. Speaker. I am conscious of your instruction at the beginning of this debate. I have already given way on three occasions to Conservative Members.

Mr. Yeo: Will the hon. Gentleman give way on this point?

Mr. Cook: No. With great respect to the hon. Member for Suffolk, South (Mr. Yeo), it is open to any hon. Member to cry, "On this point" when they wish to interrupt.

We have an unofficial idea of where those mentally handicapped people have gone.

Mr. Neil Hamilton (Tatton): They have gone to the Labour party.

Mr. Cook: If I may say so, I regard that as being a most insulting remark to the discharged patients of hospitals for the mentally handicapped. [HON. MEMBERS: "Withdraw".] I echo my hon. Friends' request to the hon. Member to withdraw his remark—not because we are insulted by it but because he insults the patients of the NHS.

Mr. Hamilton: I certainly withdraw my remark. They are probably too intelligent to go into the Labour party.

Mr. Cook: I only hope that the relatives of those former patients of hospitals for the mentally handicapped and the people who worked in them will be aware of that exchange and of the contempt that the hon. Member has shown for them, as a butt for his humour, rather than as people who ought to receive health care assistance.

We have an idea of where some of those patients are. They fill our lodging hostels. They can be found sleeping rough in half a dozen places within two miles of this Chamber. They are turning up in our courts. Hon. Members who saw the reports of the disturbances at Risley remand centre will have noted that staff commented that one of the problems was the increasing number of mentally handicapped people being admitted there.

Those local authorities that try to expand their social services to match the need find themselves penalised with rate penalties. Those individuals who give up work to look after a relative find themselves penalised by the latest round of social security cuts, which give no premium to carers. They are now threatened with a poll tax demand for the extra resident in their household.

The Secretary of State is well aware of those problems.

Mr. Yeo *rose*——

Mr. Cook: I shall not give way to the hon. Gentleman.

The Secretary of State has seen those problems spelt out in several reports, of which the latest——

Mr. Yeo *rose*——

Mr. Cook: I have clearly said that I shall not give way to the hon. Gentleman. I have already been obliged to give way on four occasions to Conservative Members.

The Secretary of State has seen the problems spelt out in several reports, the latest of which was that of Sir Roy Griffiths, who had the bad taste to point out that community care will work only if we give a much wider role and much greater resources to local authorities. That view was so unpopular in Downing street that Sir Roy's report was smuggled out with no statement being made to the House and with no press conference for the media, and it was published on the day on which Sir Roy was under an anaesthetic in an operating theatre. The Secretary of State may have buried the report, but he cannot bury the issue.

If the Secretary of State takes community care seriously, he must spell out how the Government intend to make a reality of their rhetoric about community care. I am sorry to say that, judging by the leaks trickling out, it does not look as though that is what the review will tackle, but rather that it will fit neatly with the Government's social priorities. Press reports suggest that the only help provided will not be for the poor or for those in need of health care, but will take the form of tax concessions and subsidies in respect of private medical insurance. Not many of the mentally handicapped will pick much out of that.

The Secretary of State, wearing his social security hat, is fond of advising us that an important aspect of Government policy is to target health. Tax concessions are an odd form of targeting. They target help on the wealthy, who will benefit most because of the higher taxes they pay, and on the healthy, because the private insurance companies claim the right to screen and to reject the unhealthy. I saw that principle defended last week by the managing director of WPA, which is Britain's third largest medical insurance company, on the ground that it enables essentially healthy people to avoid being penalised by unhealthy people. That statement at least has the originality of identifying the healthy as the vulnerable group, to be protected against the unreasonable costs of the unhealthy. The truth is that any sum spent on indirectly subsidising private health insurance will achieve a much larger and more immediate impact on health resources than if it is spent directly on the NHS.

That returns us to the origins of the review, because it was not undertaken because the Government are anxious to set about improving the NHS. Only a fortnight before the Secretary of State announced in a letter to me that there would not be a review of the NHS. The review was born out of panic, as the Government reeled from the publicity last winter about the underfunding crisis in our hospitals. That crisis remains.

Last week Bloomsbury district health authority approved a package of cuts that will shed another 80 beds at University College hospital. The Secretary of State will be aware that he has received an internal report from the DHSS pointing out that, in the last three years alone, London has lost acute beds equivalent to six entire district general hospitals.

Mr. Jeremy Hanley (Richmond and Barnes): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Cook: No, I shall not give way. I am anxious to make progress.

Nor have those closures taken place only in deprived areas——

Mr. Hanley *rose*——

Mr. Cook: I shall not give way. I must proceed with my speech. I have been on my feet for 25 minutes and I am anxious to move to a conclusion.

Those closures have not taken place only in deprived inner city areas. Conservative Members know that they are occurring also in their constituencies. This month, Solihull has announced the closure of 37 beds, and Yarmouth proposes to close 60 beds on 17 July unless it receives a cheque in the post by then.

Mr. Hanley *rose*——

Mr. Cook: You have invited us to keep our remarks as brief as possible, Mr. Speaker, and I am endeavouring to do so. Plainly it puts me in a difficult position when hon. Members unreasonably interrupt. I have already given way to four Conservative Members.

Gloucester district health authority has gone for the whole fist of closing one hospital, two maternity units and two operating theatres. Most piquant of all are the continuing financial pressures in Barnet, which contains the Finchley constituency. Last April, we were assured that one reason why the Government back-pedalled on housing benefits was that the Prime Minister was also a constituency MP, and as such had been experiencing some difficulty—as had her Back Benchers—in answering awkward letters.

Therefore, I hope that the right hon. Lady read the letter in the *Hendon Times* from the local obstetric consultant, pointing out that the closure of the Victoria maternity hospital in Barnet had reduced maternity services there to crisis point. He wrote:

> "It would be unfortunate if the Barnet public were deceived into believing that all is well with the NHS . . . Only a commitment to health care and a readiness to provide resources at all levels will produce a realistic remedy."

That must be the test of the review. Having quietly buried all the loopy ideas for alternative funding, the Secretary of State is left with no alibi. If there are to be adequate resources, he must supply them. Without them, he will be left presiding over the steady erosion of the NHS.

Mr. Peter Thurnham (Bolton, North-East) *rose*——

Mr. Cook: No, I shall not give way.

I conclude with a striking example of how far that erosion has gone. Today, on the 40th anniversary of the NHS, a pensioner in Birmingham will be entering the Nuffield hospital for a hip operation donated by the magazine *Retirement World* as part of a promotion drive in which it is paying for an operation to a lucky reader. The company, with no hint of irony over the date, has described the operation as the country's first sponsored surgery.

I have seen too many patients in pain and frustration awaiting a hip operation not to understand the relief, even the gratitude, that that pensioner will feel now that her waiting time is over. But I find it wholly repugnant that she should depend for her operation on a company intent on a sales drive. The fact that a Minister has welcomed that operation makes a mockery of the Government's commitment to a universal Health Service free at the point of use.

I invite all hon. Members, some of whom may be hiding on the Conservative Back Benches, some of whom may well be genuine in their commitment to the principle of a free Health Service, those who share my sense of repugnance at that commercialised operation, to vote with the Opposition tonight to reaffirm those principles on which the NHS was founded and to call for the resources to make it a reality.

4.20 pm

The Secretary of State for Social Services (Mr. John Moore): I beg to move to leave out from "House" to the end of the Question and to add instead thereof:

'warmly congratulates present and past staff of the National Health Service on forty years service to the public; recognises the achievement of Her Majesty's Government, firmly based on a strong economy, in devoting record resources to the Service to enable both hospitals and community services to provide more care than ever before; and welcomes the current review to ensure that the Service is even better in the years ahead.'

Before I start my main points, I want to illustrate to the House the bizarre nature of the last point that the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) has just made. I have never doubted his passion and his commitment, as I have never doubted that on both sides of the House, to patient care. The hon. Gentleman did me the good fortune to use the same illustration in a speech that he made on 28 June. Therefore, it might be useful if I remind the House that, quite apart from the one decent pensioner, to whom he rightly drew attention, who is having a hip joint operation today, there are now 14,000 extra such operations per year —40 per day—compared with when Labour left office, care of the NHS. If Opposition Members are so purblind about their interest in patients that they decide not to welcome additional funds for an additional operation, they are interested only in politics, not patients.

Let me start by saying that the anniversary—*[Interruption.]* I have used the NHS all my life. I have also, unlike some Opposition Members, found it sensible, since I am lucky enough to have sufficient money as a consequence of the income that I now have, to supplement that health care.

All anniversaries are important, especially the 40th. The 40th anniversary is an unusual opportunity, as those who pass through it know. It is a time not only for congratulation but for reflection. I hope that the House will give a subject as important as the NHS the benefit of the quiet sensible reflection that it merits.

I start—I am sure that the hon. Member for Livingston will join me—by congratulating all the staff, not just those who are currently in the NHS, but those who have served the service for the past 40 years. They have enormous achievements to their credit: achievements that merit congratulation from all of us. Not only have enormous achievements been made, but throughout the joint stewardship of both major parties represented in the House—a stewardship that means that for 26 out of the 40 years a Conservative Government have sought, as the majority partner in that stewardship, to sustain the NHS. —*[Interruption.]* If interruptions from a sedentary position continue, I shall have to take a little longer, Mr. Speaker, than you would like me to and draw hon. Members' attention to the kind of press coverage that surrounded the 30th anniversary of the NHS in 1978, when the British Medical Association could not even sign a congratulatory note. However, I shall not be trapped into doing that.

In the 40 years that we are talking about there has been a consistent commitment to the initial underlying aim that access should not be dependent on means. I find it bizarre that Opposition Members, including the hon. Member for Livingston, have the temerity constantly to attempt to rewrite history. Therefore, I thought that it might be helpful if I brought before the House again the White Paper presented to the House in February 1944. That was a White Paper of a coalition, not a Conservative, Government. It started with a basic endorsement that has been unchallenged by both major parties in the House—*[Interruption.]* The hon. Gentleman has obviously not studied the issue as carefully as he might.

Let me remind the House what was said on that occasion. The first paragraph of the White Paper says:

"The Government have announced that they intend to establish a comprehensive health service for everybody in this country. They want to ensure that in future every man and woman and child can rely on getting all the advice and treatment and care which they may need in matters of personal health; that what they get shall be the best medical and other facilities available; that their getting these"—

[Interruption.] It is interesting to note at what point in a serious debate the sans-culottes on the Opposition Benches decide to intervene. I shall try to continue—

"shall not depend on whether they can pay for them".

I shall continue by reminding people of the amendment to the motion debated in the House on 30 April 1946 in the name of Mr. Churchill and certain other hon. Members. It started by saying—*[Interruption.]* It is extraordinary how, as soon as one starts to remind people of the truth, the Opposition simply are not interested. It started by saying:

"That this House, while wishing to establish a comprehensive health service"—

what was debated at the time was not the basic aim: that has never been in doubt and is not in doubt—

"with access to it free of the ability to pay"—

that is not in doubt and will not be in doubt while the Government remain in office.

However, the degree to which we can effectively deliver that goal should always be constantly under examination, whatever party is in office.

Dr. John Reid (Motherwell, North): Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Moore: No, I wish to carry on for a short while.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): Order. The Secretary of State has said that he does not wish to give way at this stage.

Mr. Moore: Before I look at the position today and try to relate the relative records of the Opposition and the Government, I want briefly to review one or two aspects of the past 40 years as it is the 40th anniversary.

I accept, and we all should, that since 1948 there have been major and phenomenal achievements in the health of our country and in what the NHS can offer. Since 1948 there have been extraordinary changes in the kind of diseases that then dominated debates in the House. TB, diptheria and polio, all key issues at the time, have now been virtually wiped out. It is extraordinary to think that in 1948 alone, when the Health Service began, there were

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48,000 deaths from TB and only 145 deaths last year. In those years, there were about 18,000 cases of polio a year. Happily, last year there were only three or four cases.

The change in the character of the procedures that the NHS can undertake have been equally radical. In 1948 there were no hip or knee replacements, no coronary artery bypasses and no heart or heart-lung transplants. Yet as recently as 1986, the latest full year for which we have figures, there were 44,000 hip replacements, 12,000 coronary artery bypasses, 243 heart transplants and 72 heart-lung transplants. That illustrates the extraordinary nature of the change that has occurred in the NHS.

Dr. Reid: I am grateful to the Minister for giving way. In his historic summary he explained to the nation why, at a time of war and a coalition Government, the Conservatives were supporting a National Health Service. Since it is the anniversary of 1948, a year when there were 48,000 deaths from diptheria and 18,000 cases of polio, will he explain why the Conservative party voted against the legislation to establish the National Health Service?

Mr. Moore: As I have said already, the Conservative party agreed entirely with a comprehensive National Health Service. It tabled a reasoned amendment that disagreed with two features of the then proposal, one of which was utterly changed before 1948—the method of paying salaries to GPs. Opposition Members do not seem to have very much knowledge of their own party's history, let alone that of the Government. There have been an enormous number of changes not only in the character of operations, but in number of patients treated.

The second feature was the way in which it was proposed that the charity and local authority hospitals were to be taken over by the then National Health Service. It was the means that were in debate, not the aim, the thrust or the concept of the National Health Service.

Mr. Winnick: Will the Secretary of State give way?

Mr. Moore: No.

In 1948, 2·8 million patients were treated by the National Health Service. By 1986, that number had increased massively and 6·5 million patients were treated in our hospitals—an astonishing change in 40 years.

As Opposition Members do not appreciate my point, I should stress that I am not claiming that that is a record of this Government or only of previous successive Tory Governments. It is a record of both sides of the House when in office during a 40-year period. I shall illustrate that with some examples of the most significant changes that have occurred in the Health Service under the joint stewardship of the past 40 years.

Which party began the largest ever NHS hospital-building programme in the 1960s? It was not the Labour party. In 1962 the Conservative Government initiated the huge hospital-building programme. Equally, touching on a point made by the hon. Member for Livingston, which party started the critical move away from long-stay institutions to community care? Again, it was not the Labour party; it was the Conservative party in 1961 under the then Minister of Health Mr. Enoch Powell. Which party gave the biggest-ever boost to private hospitals in this country? It was not the Conservative party; it was the Labour party, with its vendetta against NHS pay beds in the 1970s. [HON. MEMBERS: "Nonsense".] I hear suggestions of nonsense from the Opposition. Hon. Members should listen to the answer.

In *The Health Service Journal* of 30 June, the adviser to three Secretaries of State for Health and Social Security, Professor Brian Abel-Smith, said:

> "The actual effect was to stimulate the largest growth of private hospitals since the NHS began."

That was a triumph for the Labour party. Which party introduced charges into the NHS? Again, it was not the Conservative party; it was the Labour party in 1951 facing its then spending crisis. As Opposition Members know, the Labour Government did not want to introduce such charges. They did so in the face of their economic crisis, as they did in 1976. That reminds me of the crucial point that brings our debates up to date.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing (Moray): Although I am reticent to involve myself in a dispute between the two major parties, will the Secretary of State tell us of the Government's commitment to the Griffiths report, which is an agenda for action, which has widespread support? Or is there to be a continuation of the development of private nursing homes for the elderly, without adequate training or assessment of the people employed in those homes?

Mr. Moore: I am grateful to the hon. Lady for raising the same point as the hon. Member for Livingston. We shall discuss that matter another time.

I stress that I found quite distasteful one point which was raised by the hon. Member for Livingston. I would not normally regard his comments in that light, but when Sir Roy Griffiths unfortunately was taken ill I was under enormous pressure, quite properly, from the House and from outside, to publish the Griffiths report as soon as possible. I thought it proper to do so, although Sir Roy was not able to present the initial publication, because I wanted a period of consultation. We shall be considering the report because, as the hon. Lady rightly said, it is extremely important and we shall bring forward our advice when we are ready to do so.

My crucial point is illustrated quite classically by the problems the Labour party faced when in office when it discovered that one cannot fund good causes such as the NHS from tea and sympathy; one cannot fund the NHS on rhetoric. It needs resources. If there is anything that has amazed me about the recent debates, and if there is anything that I find extraordinary, it is the sheer temerity of the Opposition in trying to re-write history in regard to the resources of the National Health Service. I simply cannot believe the nature of this debate. The Labour party's record was one of its more appalling records on any single issue. I accept entirely that the Labour party would not have liked to have been as incompetent as it was when in office and did not wish to make such a radical reduction in the resources which it was able to supply. It is extraordinary that Opposition Members can associate themselves with an issue, when in office they chose to reduce the percentage of GDP they committed to the NHS from 5 per cent. to 4·7 per cent.

Contrast that with our own record. As a consequence of our extraordinary economic success, we have been able massively and rightly to increase the resources to the NHS. These are not things that the Opposition like to hear, but we have been able to increase the resources by 39 per cent. in real terms. More than that, unlike the Labour party which chose to reduce the percentage of expenditure as a percentage of GDP, we have taken it back from 4·7 per cent. to 5·4 per cent. Many may argue that the NHS needs more resources, but the contrast in the two records is unbelievable, and the temerity of the Opposition is extraordinary. Not only have we been able to increase massively the resources, but we have initiated other major changes of great significance in the past decade.

Mr. Hanley: For a major part of his speech the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) concentrated on the number of beds lost. He has a strange preoccupation with beds. What about the patients for a change? Will my right hon. Friend tell the House that we have increased the number of patients treated, both in-patients and out-patients—and that is more important than the number of beds.

Mr. Moore: My hon. Friend is exactly right. I did not wish to delay the House unnecessarily, but I happen to have the figures to hand. It is very interesting, as the political period from 1966 to 1986 covers both parties in office. During that time the beds available declined from 434,000 to 316,000. During the same time the number of in-patients treated rose from 4·5 million to 6·5 million. That clearly demonstrates the point that my hon. Friend the Member for Richmond and Barnes (Mr. Hanley) rightly sought to make.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover) *rose*——

Mr. William O'Brien (Normanton) *rose*——

Mr. Moore: I was trying to illustrate the fact that enormous additional resources have been put into the NHS, which have allowed us to look after more patients.

There have been many other important changes in the past nine years. Since 1984 we have introduced a much more dynamic management style with a general management system that is recognised and appreciated on both sides of the House. We have introduced an information revolution with Koerner reforms and performance indicators. That has been a spur to much greater efficiency. The cost improvement programme is showing significant additional moneys going into the NHS. Since 1984-85 and by the end of this year we shall have put about £750 million in cash into the NHS. Competitive tendering has sharpened up management and staff and has saved £106 million, which has been used for patient care.

Perhaps the biggest and most welcome of the recent changes are those affecting nurses. The Labour party and others have talked a great deal about nurses. In comparison with the Labour party's cut in real terms in nurses' pay we first created a review body to reflect their professional status and commitment. Secondly—hon. Members on both sides have welcomed this—with the implementation of this year's pay award and its funding we have added over 15 per cent. to the pay bill this year and improved nurses' pay in real terms by 43 per cent. since 1979. We have now put nurses' pay at its highest level ever in real and cash terms. Because of our economic success we have been able to do other things. We have backed management and staff in the introduction of a radical new grading structure to reward extra skills and responsibilities and to help keep staff at the bedside. We have agreed in principle to something that has been dreamed of and debated in the Health Service for generations. We have agreed in principle to the educational reforms in nursing—Project 2000.

Since 1979 all those changes in management, information and nursing have not been easy. We have not shirked them. We have laid the foundations for the future but, as the hon. Member for Livingston said, there is still a lot to do. I have looked briefly at some of the history and at the current position.

Mr. Tim Smith (Beaconsfield): Is my right hon. Friend aware that the National Audit Office reported recently that £300 million could be saved by the more efficient use of land and buildings, enough to employ an extra 30,000 nurses? Does that not illustrate the scope that is still available for value for money savings in the NHS?

Mr. Moore: I was about to come to those points but my hon. Friend is absolutely right. There is scope for improvement.

The hon. Member for Livingston asked about the future. Further measures will be taken and they will be linked to the outcome of the present review. Unlike the hon. Member for Livingston, I have been interested in what the *Financial Times* today referred to as the "flood" of papers that have come forward. They are not papers from the think tanks that the hon. Gentleman seems to decry but from all parts of the Health Service. There are papers that have been published and papers that are being seen and debated. There are papers from the Institute of Health Services Management, papers from the National Association of Health Authorities and papers from the King's Fund which will be published this week. They all argue rationally, although with different views, for the need to concentrate on change to improve the system.

I have read with care the hon. Member for Livingston's speech of 28 June. On page 21 I was interested to see that we shall not have the benefit of the Labour party's internal review, which I understand will be published in the autumn. It is an internal review that he suggests will coincide with the Government's. I hope that we shall see that review when it is published, unlike the review on social security, which has never seen the light of day.

The Labour party has made it clear that the one thing it wishes to see for the NHS is more cash. We are back to the same old oft-repeated cry. I genuinely like the hon. Member for Livingston and I can only hope, for my party's prospects in office, that his right hon. Friend the Leader of the Labour party will give as much credence to his views on health as he has to his views on defence. It will be a great help to my party.

On the matter of the Government's review, no decisions have yet been taken. The hon. Member for Livingston knows that. However, the outlines of some of the areas of major interest——

Dr. Lewis Moonie (Kirkcaldy): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Moore: I have already given way on more than enough occasions.

Mr. Skinner *rose*——

Mr. Moore: The outlines of the major areas of public interest are becoming clear. The first area, on which I would expect there to be common ground across the Floor of the House, is that we all recognise that we must

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strengthen consumer power and choice. That will require much more information about the services and offers and, for example, about the choice of doctors.—*[Interruption.]* I can take as much time as the House would like. I would like to continue if possible. There are people outside the House who are interested in this subject and understand, as do one or two Opposition Members, including the hon. Member for Livingston, the seriousness and importance of the debate.

As opposed to the Government's clear view about the need to improve the role of consumers, I was delighted to see that the present deputy leader of the Labour party, as was shown in Glasgow this morning according to the tapes, is following similar lines in his arguments about user-friendly blueprints. It is an area in which we shall be arguing on similar lines. We both want to see much greater emphasis on the quality of care in both the personal and medical sense. We have to pursue the growth of peer review and clinical audit.

We have to look at ways in which we can involve the doctors much more fully in the management process. Alongside their clinical freedom, they must be able to participate in the overall decisions about priority resources.—*[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Livingston is nodding because he had the patience to listen to the end of my sentence as well as the beginning. That is obviously difficult for other Opposition Members.

The hon. Member for Livingston and others will be as interested in and as committed to the serious experiments at places such as Guy's hospital in the resource management initiative. We are seeing great improvements in patient care as a consequence of greater involvement in resource management by the doctors.

There may not be such a close agreement about our belief that we need to break down the barriers between private and public provision. There are many examples of that. The National Health Service contracts could be with private hospitals and vice versa. We have to use much more private capital to help fund joint facilities of the bioplan examples. In my diligent reading of the hon. Member for Livingston's speech I was fascinated to see on page 8 that he finds quite acceptable the suggestions of the Institute of Health Services Management about charging for a la carte as opposed to table d'hote. However, he did make other references to that.

Another area in which we are on reasonably common ground, although the semantics of the debate have become difficult, is the belief that we need to create a better mechanism to recognise the efficient and stimulate the inefficient. As the Select Committee on Social Services rightly said, we have a perverse system where the most efficient and the best hospitals in many ways are in difficulty over resources as a consequence. Many words are used to describe that. The quaint phrase used in the Health Service is "cross-boundary flows". The hon. Member for Livingston's speech contained serious references to that.

There are many areas beyond those I have mentioned where, from the review, I expect to see rational and sensible progress made. The 1944 White Paper laid the foundations for the NHS. It said:

> "Reform in this field is not a matter of making good what is bad, but of making better what is good already".

That was the vision that fired the then Conservative Minister responsible for health, who happened to represent part of Croydon. It is the same vision that fires the Government today. But we must not confuse ends with means. We must stay true to the fundamental principle of the Health Service while equipping it for the fundamental challenges of the next century. That principle—this is a very critical point—is that access to good quality health care should be determined by medical need and not by ability to pay. This was of crucial significance at the creation of the NHS and I believe that it should and will remain the key to its future. But an institution that fails to adapt to new situations and new demands will never satisfy the hopes placed in it.

We must never forget that it is those on the Opposition Benches who pose the greatest threat to our Health Service. They are a threat because they could not produce the resources; they are a threat because they would not keep faith with the staff; and they are a threat because they would always duck the decisions necessary to ensure that the next 40 years of the NHS are as successful as the first 40 years. They may want to shirk their duty to the people of this country. We shall not. We shall face up to our responsibilities and in doing so enable the Health Service and all who work in it to look to the future with confidence.

4.50 pm

Mr. Michael Foot (Blaenau Gwent): I am glad to have the opportunity to speak immediately after the Minister as I believe that I am the only Member who was here when the 1946 debate took place and the 1948 measure was carried into effect.

But before I come to the speech of the right hon. Gentleman—and I certainly want to deal with many of the matters that he has raised—I must congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) and, indeed, the leader of my party, my right hon. Friend the Member for Islwyn (Mr. Kinnock), because it is they principally, with backing from the whole Labour movement, who have kept the National Health Service at the front of the political debate in this country over many months and years.

During the general election, my right hon. Friend the Member for Islwyn time and again returned to this theme. If he had been heeded then, and if the Government had been prepared to act on the appeals that he and my hon. Friend the Member for Livingston were making, we could have had the kind of debate that the Minister said that we should have. If the Government had provided the £2 billion extra money for the Health Service, I believe that the debate would have been much more profitable and useful, because the immediate strain could have been relieved. At some stage, if the Government are to do their duty, they will have to provide that kind of increase to the present funding of the NHS. That will be conceding what the Labour leadership and the Labour party have been demanding throughout.

Mr. Edward Leigh (Gainsborough and Horncastle): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Foot: I have been on my feet for only a minute or two. I would prefer to get on.

I come now to the Secretary of State. I listened to his speech on the radio the other day about the origins of the National Health Service and I listened even more carefully to him today. He must find some difficulty in pronouncing the name "Aneurin Bevan". Perhaps he has some speech impediment, as Aneurin Bevan himself had, because he finds very great difficulty, when talking about the founding of the NHS, in ever mentioning Aneurin Bevan's name. That seems to me to be a most ungracious way for the right hon. Gentleman to talk, particularly when he gives such a misleading record of what happened.

I was in the House when the Bill was introduced and carried through by Aneurin Bevan in the teeth of opposition from the Conservative party. The Tories voted against the Bill not only on Second Reading—the right hon. Gentleman quoted a part of the motion, but I could quote it all because I have it here—but on Third Reading, which, in those days at least, was a strange thing for a party to do unless it was bitterly and absolutely opposed to the principle of a measure. Then the Conservatives were given a third opportunity by Aneurin Bevan, a few weeks before the introduction of the NHS—when the British Medical Association said that it would not co-operate—to say whether they would give some support to the introduction of the service.

In the face of all that, the Secretary of State should not waste time rewriting history. He should devote himself more to the things for which he has such a gift—presenting us with his half-cooked theories and his cooked figures. He is much better at that than at rewriting history.

When I was writing about these matters I interviewed all the leaders of the profession who had negotiated with Aneurin Bevan at the time of the introduction of the scheme. Not one failed to acknowledge the unique part that Aneurin Bevan played in shaping the service and bringing it into operation. I suggest that the Government should listen to what they had to say. So concerned was I that the credit, honour and glory for having introduced the National Health Service should not be taken away from Aneurin Bevan and the Labour party, which carried it through, that I wrote many years ago that it was possible that somebody would come forward and rewrite history, and that the archives would be ransacked to produce the forgotten name of Sir Henry Willink to mesmerise the House on such an occasion as this. Now we are told that he was the great author of the Health Service.

I prophesied this earlier and perhaps I may be permitted to quote myself. I said:

> "Future generations may learn that Aneurin Bevan did not make the National Health Service; he inherited it from that much underrated social visionary Sir Henry Willink. After all, did not Jesuit scholars in the nineteenth century teach children in their schools that Napoleon was a general employed by Louis XVII?"

The right hon. Gentleman is even more successful in his attempts to erase the name of Aneurin Bevan from the history books, like some Stalinite censor trying to erase the name of Trotsky.

Mr. Moore: I do not know if I can be of any help at all to the right hon. Gentleman. I respect history. The right hon. Gentleman is quite right; I have sought throughout the past year and in this debate to acknowledge both sides of the issue. I would not for one moment deny the very critical, key role of Nye Bevan in 1946. I left a lot of other names out. I was trying—I know that the right hon. Gentleman will recognise this—to differentiate between the concept of a comprehensive national health service, free at the point of delivery to those who cannot afford to pay, which I ask him to admit was acknowledged by the Opposition at the time, and the method of delivering that dream.

Mr. Foot: The right hon. Gentleman must be congratulated. I have extracted the name of Aneurin Bevan from him. It seemed to me to be quite a fierce and surgical operation. It is a pity that, having got the name out, he should have spoilt it by referring to what happened in the Churchill Cabinet. I have read quite a lot about these matters too and I can assure the right hon. Gentleman that Churchill had very little interest in the National Health Service. The right hon. Gentleman implied on the radio the other day that everything was decided by Churchill. Perhaps in some Cabinets things do operate like that; perhaps the right hon. Gentleman thought that it must have come from the Prime Minister because that is where these things come from now. That is why we have some qualifications about the committee that he talked about. I am told that the right hon. Gentleman is a member, although I am not quite sure what his qualifications are.

I should be quite happy to quote the amendments which Sir Winston Churchill, leading his party—not all its members willingly—put down against the introduction of the National Health Service. That distortion cannot be permitted. On both Second and Third Reading an amendment was put down saying that the Conservatives would like a national health service but did not want it introduced at that time and would vote against it. If their votes had been effective, we should not be celebrating the introduction of the National Health Service this year. It would not have been introduced in 1948: the whole proposition would have been wrecked. Indeed, many people in the medical profession at the time thought that it should be wrecked. They were prophesying until two or three days before its introduction that it would be wrecked.

Those views were shared by a considerable number of Conservative Members, with Sir Winston Churchill backing them, because Churchill was more interested in wrecking and ruining the career of Aneurin Bevan than in the introduction of the National Health Service. I am sorry to say that attempts by a section of the medical profession to wreck the introduction of the measure were backed by all the raucous Conservative Members. I can remember that, and nobody can contest it because I am the only one who remains.

Now that the Secretary of State can pronounce the name of Aneurin Bevan, perhaps he will be able to learn a little more from him. I wonder that he dares to talk to us about what has happened to the nurses. One of the first things that Aneurin Bevan did—even before he decided on the framework for the Health Service—was to introduce a charter for the nurses. It did not go all that far. It was primitive compared with the legitimate demands of the nurses and the nursing profession today. A matter of months before he had decided on a framework for the National Health Service he had concluded that we needed a much better deal for the nurses. He talked to the nurses and the charter was the product of those discussions.

The Secretary of State talked about his dealings with the nurses and about the acceptance of the RCN's Project 2000. I am glad that he intends to accept it. He must

[Mr. Foot]

provide all the money for that and for the comparable improvements that need to be made throughout the nursing profession if the job is to be done properly.

If the right hon. Gentleman thinks that the last wage settlement has dealt with all the nurses' problems, he is making a big mistake. I have talked to nurses in my constituency and around Wales, and plenty of them come here in deputations and on lobbies. Morale among the nurses is still very low indeed and much more needs to be done to put it right. If the Secretary of State wants an illustration of what needs to be done, he should read the document that he was applauding only a few minutes ago. It reveals what has really happened in the Health Service, which has so far been concealed by some of the phoney figures that his master, or his mistress, the Prime Minister, flaunts before the House. Many of those figures deserve to be subjected to fierce scrutiny.

The right hon. Gentleman talks about what the last Labour Government did but says nothing about the Halsbury report, which was much the biggest inquiry into the nurses' profession and their wages. The findings of that report were put into effect and backdated by that Government. When it was discovered that the value of the high awards recommended in the Halsbury report was being lost because of the huge inflation, we had to do something about it. The Clegg commission and other arrangements were put in place to ensure that nurses' salaries were increased. They were not increased enough, but they were increased. The present Government try to claim credit.

If the Secretary of State wants a few facts from the nurses——

Mr. Ray Whitney (Wycombe): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Foot: No. I am dealing with the Secretary of State.

The Secretary of State referred to Project 2000. I hope that he will listen to the words at the end of the briefing which provide the answer to what is happening to nursing training. When nurses come to see me, they often refer to their training. They used to be encouraged to take part in study circles and courses to keep up with their profession. That was a fine aspiration in the National Health Service. Over the past few years, the pressures and the absence of money have prevented nurses from embarking on those study courses as they did in the past. Until the Secretary of State restores such facilities in the Health Service, he had better not boast about what the Government have done.

The contents of a reply given by the Minister for Health about nursing training appear in the nurses' report, which says:

> "spending on nursing education has gone down in real terms by 18 per cent. since 1979. And over 4 per cent. of nurse teaching posts are now vacant for three months or longer, but no further information is said to be available. Numbers entering nurse training dropped from 33,370 in 1979 to 22,825 in 1987."

Those figures are part of the record of which the Secretary of State boasted. Those are the figures that we rarely hear from the Prime Minister when she parades her statistics at Question Time.

The Secretary of State could take another lesson from Aneurin Bevan—the lesson of talking to those who do the main jobs throughout the service. The right hon. Gentleman ought to be doing that instead of conducting a phoney inquiry from No. 10 Downing street. If he really has the National Health Service at heart, he ought also to talk to some of the people at the top—the presidents of the royal colleges. That is what Aneurin Bevan did. One reason why the Health Service introduced by Aneurin Bevan and the Labour Government was so different from the one that Sir Henry Willink or Sir Winston Churchill favoured was that it introduced the idea of engaging consultants all over the country.

Before 1945, most of the consultants were congregated in the great teaching hospitals in London. The idea of people throughout the country having access to consultants did not exist before 1945. How was it put into effect? If the Secretary of State wants to know the facts, they are all recorded, not only in my books but in the reports of Lord Moran who was the president of the Royal College of Physicians. He carried out some of the main negotiations with Aneurin Bevan. They asked, "How will we spread the consultants throughout the country so that people in Wales and Scotland have access to them, rather than just a few in London?"

They decided that that could be done only by having a nationalised service and by taking all the hospitals into that one service. Lord Moran described how that happened. The Secretary of State does not seem to know anything about that aspect of the National Health Service, which is one of its most important aspects. It is partly because he knows so little about it that he was apparently prepared to offend and insult the presidents of the royal colleges a few months ago. The presidents of the royal colleges wanted to put their case—*[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Wycombe (Mr. Whitney) should learn to keep quiet occasionally; it is all part of the way of this House. The Secretary of State should have the courtesy and intelligence to renew those conversations with the presidents of the royal colleges. That is the second thing that the Government should be doing.

There is a third way in which the Secretary of State can learn from what Aneurin Bevan had to say. Aneurin Bevan had to fight the Treasury to get a National Health Service. It was not easy and there were many objections from the Treasury, just as there are now. Aneurin Bevan went to the Treasury and argued his case. He put his case to the House. No one ever believed more strongly in the supremacy of the House. If the Secretary of State had had the intelligence to listen eight and 12 months ago when the case was being put by my right hon. and hon. Friends the Government could have avoided some of the problems.

Ministers should ask Health Service managers how they have been treated by the Government in terms of money. The Government failed to make good the full wage awards one year and said that the money would be taken out of the rest of the finances of the Health Service. They then said that they would not perform that filthy trick next year, but they have not made good the amounts that they took from the Health Service. The Government's refusal to fund wage awards fully has gone on year after year in many parts of the country and is one of the main reasons for the cut in the amounts available for work in the NHS. The Secretary of State should listen to what other people say.

My hon. Friend the Member for Livingston has exposed the shoddy nature of the so-called inquiry. Why should we believe that a secret Cabinet committee presided over by the Prime Minister is the way to deal with these matters? The right hon. Lady will produce an avalanche of statistics, although we have heard most before, in an attempt to suggest that everything is fine, whereas people can see that it is not. That is all that the Prime Minister is capable of doing. She does not have the imagination, or perhaps the courage, to say to the House that she was wrong in denying the Health Service that £2 billion. I do not believe that there is a Minister among those selected to be on the Cabinet committee who has the nerve to stand up to the right hon. Lady.

Why should the House have any faith in such a committee? All the worst Government errors, many of which have had grievous consequences for our people, have been the result of such committees presided over by the Prime Minister. They are remote from any critical attitude that may prevail—it may be optimistic to think that it does prevail—in a full Cabinet discussion. The most recent example, which has appalling consequences for this country's honour, is the way in which tens of thousands of the poorest people are being persecuted through cuts in housing benefits and alterations in their social security benefits. Many of the poorest people have had their lives shattered. They are persecuted because of the Government's pursuit of small amounts of money—this from a Government who, a few months before, gave away billions of pounds to the richest people. I have no doubt that that was all done through a committee presided over by the Prime Minister.

The famous Westland case perhaps involved a one-man, or one-woman, committee, but perhaps we should not inquire too closely lest it implicate others. As for the Falklands, no Cabinet committee ever discussed the evidence that Lord Carrington from the Foreign Office wished to present to the Cabinet. Everything was done by committees presided over by the Prime Minister.

In the light of experience over many years and the deductions that can be drawn from the way in which the Minister looks on the Health Service, no one can have any confidence in the outcome of the new committee. Perhaps the committee will send the Secretary of State along to repeat today's speech. We want the £2 billion to be presented to the Health Service so that it can deal with the immediate problems. Then we should restore the NHS with all the imagination and courage that Aneurin Bevan showed 40 years ago.

5.14 pm

Mr. Timothy Raison (Aylesbury): Part of the House has enjoyed listening to the right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot). As Aneurin Bevan's biographer, the right hon. Gentleman is entitled to say certain things about the past, but when he diagnoses the present and future his arguments become thinner. We must think about what will happen next.

It was particularly odd that the right hon. Gentleman inveighed against the fact that a Cabinet committee would discuss this matter. He implied that there should be a great royal commission and massive amounts of evidence published. My recollection of history, which may be less good than the right hon. Gentleman's, is that when the Labour Government came to power in 1945 they did not set up a royal commission into the proposed structure of the Health Service. They got on with the job of Government, made up their mind, came forward with their proposals, put them to Parliament and, as it happened, carried them, and ever since we have had the Health Service. I see nothing wrong in the Government's approach. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will listen to those who make representations. Today's debate gives Parliament a chance to chip in its pennyworth, and I hope that that is how it will be seen.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State was right to table an amendment making it clear that we congratulate the staff of the NHS on their 40 years of work. It has always been a difficult job. It is easy for morale to slip. Whatever our complaints about the Health Service, overall there has been a notable record of achievement. As my right hon. Friend made clear, that achievement has taken place largely under Conservative Governments. It is important to remember that we cannot have a good Health Service unless the morale of those who work in it is high, just as there cannot be a good Army regiment unless the soldiers' morale is high. We should not do anything to undermine the morale of the staff, although we must talk about some of the problems and weaknesses in the NHS.

Mr. Julian Amery (Brighton, Pavilion): The Labour Government did not have to appoint a royal commission. A perfectly good White Paper had been produced by Conservative Health Ministers in the coalition Government, and the Labour Government built their plan on it.

Mr. Raison: That is true. There were, however, substantial differences from the Conservative approach, which favoured a closer link with local government and the retention of the voluntary hospitals.

One aspect of the structure adopted by Aneurin Bevan that I would question was the decision to make the whole hospital service have a uniform pattern. That may have seemed right at the time, but there are good arguments for saying that we have inherited a system that is too inflexible.

The Government's amendment refers to the review and the need to think hard about what is going on. Few objective observers would deny the importance of doing that. Obviously, we are not looking for change for change's sake. There is no point in making changes unless one is pretty sure that they will result in an improvement. I suspect that, because my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has thought about these matters, that message has occurred to him often. We must come to grips with the fundamental issue of funding and the weaknesses of the NHS. To what extent are the weaknesses a result of funding and to what extent do they relate to some other factor?

There is no need to stress what has been familiar from the early days of the Health Service—that the open-ended nature of the demand and high costs of new medical developments impose enormous burdens on the Health Service. Whatever system of funding we choose, we cannot get away from that fact. The system will always be expensive and, to a great extent, the argument is based on whether it is better to produce the necessary money from taxation or constantly to seek new forms of revenue.

We must accept that more money must be spent. The Select Committee on Social Services went into this matter and came up with views, although I do not know whether they are exactly right.

Although there has been a substantial improvement, I do not think that the present level of spending will last for all time. To be realistic, before long we shall have to think again about whether there must be an additional injection. The Treasury may not like that, but it will be hard to escape, given the background facts to which I have referred.

The funding problem is only a part of what we must face. There are other weaknesses, too. One is that the structure of the Health Service, in essence, was too monopolistic. That has proved a real weakness. In some ways the service has been too provider-oriented; I apply that to consultants at the higher end of the pile and porters and others at the lower end. For a long time the service was too much in the grip of those who were providing it. As I have stressed, they did many good things, but we must think hard about this aspect. What seems to come across from people who go to hospital—my constituents and friends, for instance—is that too often there is muddle at the point at which one comes into contact with the service, either in the ward or in the way in which a person is received into casualty or hospital reception. It is distressing to hear about people having to sit, apparently forgotten, in waiting rooms. Although much of what happens in hospital is splendid, too often one gets the impression that everything is such a rush that no one knows what is going on. That must be tackled. Fundamentally, it is not a matter of resources.

Of course, it is more difficult now. A greatly increased throughput of patients means that the management of a ward is much more difficult than it was in the days when patients were in for a long time and the process was more leisurely. The administration of drugs is another complication. So there are reasons for the apparently hectic climate, but those who run the service must get to grips with the problem. It is causing much disappointment —or worse.

Patients have responsibilities, too. It is distressing to read of the number of occasions when they fail to turn up for appointments. There was a long fight to achieve appointment services, and rightly so. But the statistics are appalling. I have been worried by a case of which I have heard. In the drive to cut waiting lists, and with the additional money that the Government have provided for that purpose, it has proved remarkably difficult to reduce their length because patients who are allegedly part of the lists somehow vanish into thin air. They do not seem to exist, even though the additional facilities are provided, and I can give chapter and verse on that if necessary.

What should we be doing about the present system in a more fundamental sense? The introduction of general managers has been for the good. The fashion for something called consensus management of a decade or so ago was a disaster. It is not the way to manage any organisation. At the national level, there is not much mileage in the arguments for an independent corporation which are often put forward—the attempt to find a Health Service management board that will operate like an industrial board. That will get nowhere for the simple reason that we in this Chamber do not want it. We shall not allow the job of management to be handed over to a management board in such a way that we cannot take up our constituency cases. We shall insist on defending our cottage hospitals, and so on. We shall insist that my right hon. Friend and his Ministers answer all our questions in debates like this, in Adjournment debates and so on. As long as that is so, it is pie in the sky to believe that we can have the sort of true management that is to be found in industry.

I do not believe that the insurance-based approach will provide the solution, either. It has been discussed for years; it has always been the favoured alternative. It is the alternative that other countries have adopted, and some of them are not doing badly with it, but there are certain substantial problems. One is that insurance inately tends to put up costs. Patient and consultant, knowing that they are part of an insurance scheme, have no incentive to keep costs down. There will, therefore, be upward pressure that will be difficult to control.

Then, as we all know, there is a peculiar problem with insurance. It is that a high proportion of the patients of the Health Service are old people who are almost certainly less well off. There is also the psychiatric and chronic cases —exactly the sort of cases from which the insurance companies shy away as fast as they can. Perhaps they will do a little more to try to support such cases. Perhaps it will be possible in the medical insurance schemes to pay more when young for more benefit when old—but that will not really provide the answers that we want.

At the same time, I do not support the idea that we should give tax rebates to those who opt for private insurance. Whether that would be beneficial from the Treasury's angle is a matter of argument. Some of my hon. Friends have argued that it would, but others will say that the loss of revenue will outweigh anything that is likely to be gained by more people moving into the private sector——

Mr. Forth: Has my right hon. Friend considered a compromise that is an immediate possibility? Tax relief could be offered in the first place to those of retirement age only, on the basis that not only would that provide a specific target group on which the effect could be assessed, and limit the cost to the Treasury, but, importantly, it would offset the increased cost of health care and insurance for that age group, thereby providing an important balancing factor.

Mr. Raison: I have thought about that. My hon. Friend is right to raise the point. We are faced with the fact that some old people who are insured with the assistance of tax relief will still suffer incurable long-term illness, for which insurance will not provide the answer. The risks of some form of psychiatric illness will still be present, too. So although I see my hon. Friend's point, I do not think it gives the necessary certainty.

Other ideas have been canvassed. One is to convert the national insurance scheme into a national health insurance scheme and transfer pensions and so on to the tax system. That is worth considering, but it does not contain the answers that we seek. It may create greater transparency for health, but the problem will be transferred directly to the pension system, and I am not sure that people will benefit from that.

Although I may seem to have been negative so far, the one area in which I believe there is real scope for significant change is that first opened up by Professor Enthoven, which is generally called the internal market approach. Enthoven is much the best of all who have studied and written on these problems. I only wish that he was based in the United Kingdom and not the United States. I shall not go into the internal market arguments, as my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State knows them well, but they offer the chance of the sort of choice, variety and a little competition that has been lacking in the monolithic structure of the Health Service until now—but they do so in a way that does not land us with the fundamental difficulties that lie in the adoption of insurance as the overall answer.

Mr. Whitney: Does my right hon. Friend agree that Enthoven made his proposals on the assumption that there was not the political courage in this country to effect significant changes in the structure, so the proposals that he made were within a tight parameter?

Mr. Raison: There is something in that, but one of Enthoven's merits is that he approached the Health Service in a sympathetic way. He did not say that the whole thing was a shambles and we should tear it apart. He made a good judgment of the realities and feelings of the service, for which I respect him. So I align myself with him. The only other thing inherent in what he has to say is that we should think about whether it is possible to do more to separate the management of the hospitals from the general strategic provision of the service.

I am not particularly persuaded by the health maintenance unit arguments in full, but I think that we might be better off if the health authorities were concerned with co-ordination, planning and ensuring that the provision is there, but the management of hospitals was separated. Perhaps we could see again the existence of voluntary hospitals, private hospitals—as we know them —and National Health hospitals as well. We need more diversification, and a greater spread of accountability and responsibility.

It is a difficult job, but an extremely important one. We will get nowhere if we start from the premise of deciding to tear the whole thing apart: the service is far too important for that. If, on the other hand, we simply say that things are fine, we shall have failed our constituents. I believe that, when the Government come up with their answers, they will be able to put forward proposals that make sense and breathe new life into this distinguished service.

5.30 pm

Dr. David Owen (Plymouth, Devonport): The right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot) was right to remind the House of the true history of the National Health Service, and it would be a calumny not to pay tribute to the immense role that Aneurin Bevan played in its creation. As for the 1944 White Paper, it is worth recalling that Winston Churchill tried to delay its publication, and had to be persuaded to publish it by Lord Woolton, the Minister of Reconstruction, on the basis that most of the compromises had been made by Labour Ministers in the coalition Cabinet.

Of course, many parties and people have contributed to the Health Service over the past 40 years. The genius of Aneurin Bevan, however, was that he understood that it was more than just a sickness service: that it was contributing to the unity of the country and to its values. In "In place of fear", he wrote:

> "Society becomes more wholesome, more serene and spiritually healthier if it knows that its citizens have at the back of their consciousness the knowledge that not only themselves but also their fellows have access, when ill, to the best that medical skill can provide."

It is that wider dimension of the Health Service, which has crossed party political divides, that has made it impossible for the Government to dismantle the structure, the fabric, the values, the morality and the ethical principles of the NHS. What is important about this debate is that it is not a great ideological discussion about the virtues and deficiencies of the Health Service. We all know that there is now no possibility that the Government will break it up. The danger is that of benign neglect. That is why we must look to the future, and grapple with the problem of the financing of the service.

I am one of those who believe that there is no point in putting money into the Health Service until we are certain that the money will go towards providing a better quality of service, higher standards and, above all, the eradication of the substantial waiting lists, which must be one of the biggest deficiencies of the NHS.

I have no doubt, however, that we are all responsible for a serious underfunding of the service. We are now celebrating its 40th anniversary. Twenty years ago we were spending 4 per cent. of our gross national wealth on it, while the United States was spending a little over 5 per cent. Today, we are spending about 6 per cent., with the recently announced increases in nurses' pay and other expenditure, while the United States is spending well over 11·5 per cent. That discrepancy of investment in health care can be paralleled in most other European countries. We have not kept pace with their investment in health care, which is our most serious problem.

Mr. Forth: How much money?

Dr. Owen: The hon. Gentleman asks, "How much money?" Over a period of three years or so, we should be aiming to increase the percentage of our national wealth that we spend on the Health Service by a full 1 to 1·5 per cent. to 7·5 per cent., which will bring us nearer the average figure for Western industrialised democracies.

Even so, I believe that the NHS gives better value for money than any other health service in the world. The trouble is underinvestment. How can that be dealt with? The more that I have studied the Health Service, particularly over the past six months, the more I have become convinced that people in this country must be made more conscious of how much it costs. There is an extraordinary lack of understanding of how much we spend on it. Not many people realise that this year we will pay from our income tax—excluding the national insurance contribution—14p out of 25p in the pound. I would like the service to be transparent, with everyone knowing how much they paid for it.

The more that I considered the matter, the more I rejected moving towards an insurance scheme, for reasons that have already been cited. The service must be funded from taxation. Yet the more that I thought about it, the more convinced I became that we should have a declared, hypothecated health tax. Furthermore, because income tax is a buoyant tax, it would to some extent keep pace with the ever-increasing demographic and technological demands on health care.

Even more important, a specific health tax would allow the Department to operate a health budget. It is very difficult to run such a massive organisation—the largest single employer in Europe—on the basis of Treasury subventions on a month-to-month basis. Treasurers of district health authorities in February this year were living

[Dr. Owen]

in total apprehension, unable to know whether what would obviously be a substantial pay increase for nursing staff would be funded fully or only in part by the Government. It is an impossible managerial task to run a health service on such grounds. It has also allowed for a very artificial distinction between capital and revenue, and a grossly undercapitalised hospital building programme —which, to be blunt, all of us at various times have used as a manipulator of the economy, cutting back on the construction industry for wider economic reasons.

I come out decisively in favour of a specific health tax, a specific health fund and a considerable freedom from Treasury controls. But how can we meet the other criteria that I have laid down? If more money is to be invested in the Health Service, how can we ensure that it will be wisely spent, and that it will produce a Health Service based on the demands of the consumer rather than putting money into the hands of the providers?

The first problem with which we must grapple is waiting lists. We must give patients the right to move to another health district if they are faced with a long wait. That right must be exercised in conjunction with their GPs, but preferably in a way that will cause the least possible distortion. I also believe that the cost of not providing for such a patient when the waiting list reaches a certain level should be met by the district health authority in which they live. That would be a useful financial discipline. However, if a private health clinic can provide the necessary treatment or operation at no extra cost to the Health Service other than would be the cost of going to another health district, I believe that the patient should have the right to go to such a clinic. Such measures would provide immensely important financial pressures on Health Service managers and consultants to grapple with the resources available within their districts.

To be effective, the family practitioner must be part of the district health authority. The separation of the family practitioner committees from the budget of the district health authorities is a massive mistake: the two must be brought together. It is impossible to bring about even an embryo health maintenance organisation—let alone health maintenance attitudes, which are even more important—until the family doctors see themselves in the same financial basket as the hospital consultant. That is particularly important now that the Government are clearly bent on cash-limiting the family practitioner budget. I understand their reasons, but the day that that is done it will be in the interests of the BMA negotiators to put the family practitioners into the wider pool of the Health Service budget, the hospital budget and family medicine.

The advantage of giving the patient the right to seek treatment elsewhere if there is a long waiting list is that——

Ms. Harriet Harman (Peckham): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Dr. Owen: The hon. Lady will have an opportunity to make her own speech later. I am trying to keep my speech brief.

The advantage of this system is that it is a most significant initial step towards an internal market. An internal market will take time to develop. I agree with the right hon. Member for Aylesbury (Mr. Raison). Alan Enthoven's writings are by far the most important writings on the Health Service. He took as his remit that it was no good coming in as an American academic and transposing American medicine on to the National Health Service. He had to live with the history, traditions and customs of the Health Service, and the love and affection that many people have for its basis. Therefore, he did not try to challenge the ethos of it. He talked about the districts being like small nationalised industries, so that does not raise ideological issues between the two sides of the House. People may be against the internal market for other reasons, but there is no ideological issue to divide us.

Another matter that causes me great concern is AIDS. We are dealing with a pandemic in this country and in the world. The projections are difficult, but we may be facing as many as 25,000 deaths in the year 1992. Some people say that it may be less, perhaps 20,000, but that is still substantial. What are we doing about it? The answer is, not enough. First, we must face this as a public health issue. We have been down this route before and faced other public health hazards of great epidemic proportions —tuberculosis, syphilis, smallpox, yellow fever, cholera and others. Therefore, we have a corpus of knowledge of how to deal with epidemics.

The first and fundamental point is that what is said to a doctor, and what tests are undertaken by doctors, must be completely confidential. That is the hallmark of the system that we have operated. I find odd this reluctance to face the need for routine testing for the HIV virus. We have never asked people whether their blood should be tested by the Wassermann test for syphilis over many decades. We have got to know more about the HIV virus and to be frank about it. Since October 1985, all blood donations have been routinely tested—over 6 million of them. About 92 HIV-positive people were found and only three were not traced and counselled. We must not be afraid of this knowledge. It is difficult to handle when it happens. Doctors have to be able to advise people confidentially about the situation, but the only way to get control of this epidemic in our midst is to use the tried and tested techniques of public health. It must be made clear that this information is confidential. I can understand why certain groups of people, such as homosexuals, are anxious that this will lead to persecution. It must not, and it will not, because it will help us to control this epidemic.

The Government have not taken the drugs problem and the links between drugs and AIDS seriously enough. This is the bridge into the heterosexual community. In Edinburgh, the problem is immense. I know it is a difficult problem, but I believe that syringes should be provided free to addicts and that there should be a much bigger investment in the drug abuse programme. We have to face the problem of condoms in prisons. Because we pack people into prisons, we must face the fact that there is now a growing epidemic there. These are unpleasant and difficult subjects, and if we are to grapple with this epidemic we have to be braver. The Government led well with their television advertising, but they must go into some of these even more sensitive and difficult questions.

It has at long last been realised that alcohol is a social evil. The Royal College of Physicians wrote a report in 1987 called "A great and growing evil". It had first used those words in 1726. The statistics show that well over 6,000 deaths a year, 62 per cent. of serious head injuries, 66 per cent of suicides, and 50 per cent. of murders are all linked to alcohol. Child abuse, baby battering and wife battering all have their roots in alcoholism. We must do something about it.

We are not taxing alcohol enough, partly because we fear the discrepancy between our VAT levels and those in the rest of the European Community. The way to grapple with that is to have a specific levy put on the drinks industry to help to meet the cost of the treatment of alcohol-related problems within the NHS. I suggest that the Minister for Health uses his existing powers to create a special alcohol service authority, under the Health Service, which will take over all the different alcoholic services, and try to give solving this problem a new dimension and thrust. It would be funded specifically from a new levy on the industry. That levy could allow us safely to reduce VAT, because the burden on the industry would be the same as the present levels of VAT. We must increase this burden as the spending power, particularly of young people, grows. It is clear that hooliganism is related to alcohol and the easy access to alcohol. It is a killer. It is the cause of more misery and violence in our society than anything else. We have been worried about advocating strong action on this for fear of being thought to be killjoys or somehow interfering with people's fundamental freedom. This is a delicate and sensitive issue, but it must be tackled.

I would have liked to talk about many other issues in the NHS. It is not about to collapse. It has many great attributes. It has a strength that goes way beyond what is said or done in the House of Commons. In my judgment, it could never have reached the point that it has reached now, 40 years on, without the dedication of millions of people who contribute to the NHS because they believe in it and think that it is fundamentally a good thing. They are not always looking for extra money or remuneration. They work far longer hours than they are scheduled to work and are paid to work. It is to them that we should be saying, "Thank you for 40 years of service" and it is to them to whom we should look when we assess the future. The Health Service needs change, but it needs change on the basis of a common understanding of all that is good within it. Many of us, in our personal and private lives, owe an immense debt to the Health Service. Let us hope, 40 years on, when the House debates the Health Service again, that people can pay tribute to what will happen between then and now.

5.47 pm

Mr. Tim Yeo (Suffolk, South): I pay a warm tribute to the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen) for making one of the best contributions to the on-going discussions on the Health Service that I have heard for a considerable time. I think that I speak for quite a number of my hon. Friends, and a number of my constituency supporters, when I say that he is welcome on the Conservative Benches any time that he chooses to come over.

This is intended as a birthday celebration for the Health Service. We have, quite rightly, heard a lot about the history of the service, but I see this as a chance also to celebrate the present and look into the future. The Opposition are often keen to tell us about the bad case histories that they have come across, but I believe that almost all of us are aware that in an emergency the NHS is unbeatable.

Earlier this year, my daughter Emily suffered a brain haemorrhage. I cannot imagine any other system—private insurance or any other public health service—that could have worked so smoothly and satisfactorily as the NHS did in her case. I pay tribute to Mr. Robin Illingworth, at the neurosurgical department at Charing Cross hospital, and Dr. Mark Glaser, of the radiotherapy department, and also to the nursing and other staff, especially those in ward 10 south. Without their skill and care, and without the existence of the NHS, I have no doubt that my daughter would not be alive today. Although I have the good fortune to serve in the House, I am sure that there are millions of others who have had the same experience and the same reason to be grateful to the NHS.

Of course, we could examine many matters in this debate, but in the interests of brevity I want to make four suggestions about the subject that I hope the Prime Minister's review will deal with.

First, we need to pay attention to what the Health Service is for. It continually surprises me that there appear to be no clear definitions of the boundaries of Health Service activity. I remember before Christmas that my right hon. Friend the Minister for Health told a meeting that the third most common reason for admission to hospital in one health district was vasectomy. He added that many of the people admitted for that purpose had already had one vasectomy on the NHS, had had it reversed, but had changed their minds and were having their second vasectomy. Although the cost of a vasectomy may be relatively small, when we were being told that—allegedly because of lack of funds—people with life-threatening conditions were unable to obtain urgent treatment, that any taxpayers' money should be spent on providing second vasectomies was utterly absurd.

It is high time that we defined what functions the Health Service will provide at taxpayers' expense and what functions it will not. That argument is also relevant to the debate about the relative responsibilities of local authority social services departments and those of health authorities, where there still appears to be a considerable blurring of the dividing line.

I believe that the presidents of the three royal colleges would be willing to lead the medical profession in contributing to a discussion about where the boundaries should be drawn. In the evidence that they gave to the Social Services Select Committee earlier this year, they appeared to be happy to help my right hon. Friend if he wanted to define the role of the Health Service.

Having decided what the service should do, we should then find a better way of measuring how well it does it. I welcome the fact that some progress has been made towards better measurements of performance. We have progressed a little from the rather sterile, political debates that used to take place, with people trading statistics about how much was spent by whom in which year.

No person running a business would think of measuring the success of his business exclusively by reference to its turnover. As long as our arguments were confined to inputs, they told us remarkably little about the success of the service. More urgency needs to be applied to the development of better measurement of outcomes. Too many of the performance indicators that the NHS is developing are just activity measurements.

Obviously a necessary condition of good management is that we should know how much activity takes place in the different sections of the Health Service, but that is not

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a sufficient condition. We must measure more accurately the health of people who have used the service. Until we do that, it will not be possible to sustain any argument about whether spending is adequate, inadequate or excessive, because we simply do not know how well the existing job is being done. I hope that a major part of the review's conclusions will be about improved measurements of outcome.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett (Pembroke): Has my hon. Friend seen the work done by Professor Alan Maynard at the university of York health economics unit? Professor Maynard has proposed quality adjusted life years as one way of measuring outcome. Will he suggest to my right hon. Friend that that is a matter that should be progressed?

Mr. Yeo: I have seen that work, and I believe that quality adjusted life years are one way in which we can measure the relative importance of embarking upon one course of treatment as opposed to another. It is worth recognising—it is a fact, which, of course, many practitioners are understandably reluctant to recognise—that whatever the level of funding of the service, and even if present expenditure was doubled, there would still be marginal cases where someone would have to say no. They would have to say that there were insufficient resources to do a particular operation or to offer a particular treatment. It is in such cases that the concept of the quality adjusted life year would be most relevant.

Before leaving the question of performance measurement, we must be aware, as my right hon. Friend the Member for Aylesbury (Mr. Raison) said, that the Health Service has become rather a producer-dominated service, and some providers of health care might be less than enthusiastic about the development of accurate measurements of outcomes.

Having decided what the service is for and how its success should be measured, ways should be found to improve its operation. Many sensible ideas have already been canvassed and, indeed, some have been mentioned in this debate. First, there is the move towards internal markets. I agreed with the right hon. Member for Devonport when he said that the first step towards improving the internal market is to give patients the right—in consultation with their general practitioners—to request treatment in another health district if, within an agreed period, they are unable to obtain treatment in their own district.

Ms. Harman: Does the hon. Gentleman accept that patients already have that right and GPs already have the right to refer their patients to other health districts? The problem is that all the districts have waiting lists for the same specialties. For example, all of them have waiting lists for general surgery. That is the main obstacle. There is already a cross-boundary flow.

Mr. Yeo: I do not agree with the hon. Lady. It is certainly possible for a general practitioner to negotiate the admission of his patient in a neighbouring district. I do not believe that the principal obstacle is the length of the waiting list. My constituency is relatively well served in health care, but it has a problem with orthopaedic appointments. It takes a long time for someone to obtain an appointment with an orthopaedic surgeon. Other health districts have considerably shorter waiting lists. The problem is the funding of those patients. They do not cross district boundaries with accompanying funding. Therefore, the accepting health district is actually adding to its financial problems when it goes out of its way to solve a patient's problem. We need to ensure that patients cross district boundaries with the appropriate funding, which will open up the internal market.

My second suggestion for improving the way in which the service operates is to implement more whole-heartedly the Griffiths recommendations, many of which are extremely sensible, but have been implemented only in a half-hearted manner. We should start with the appointment of a high profile chief executive. I fear that very few users of the Health Service or, indeed, its employees could name the present chief executive.

On management structures, we should resolve the contradictions between the existence of a management board on one side and a group of regional health authority chairmen on the other, all of whom consider that they have direct access to the Secretary of State. I suggest—and I have reason to believe that this would not be unacceptable to some of the regional health authority chairmen—that those two structures should be consolidated in the management board, provided that the regional health authority chairmen are well represented.

My third suggestion is that we should treat nurses like policemen. In the police force, it has been a source of great satisfaction that many non-policing functions have been civilianised. The police authorities and the Home Office boast that they employ a large number of civilians, thus releasing expensively trained and highly paid policemen to carry out police work. The same should be true of nurses, who also are expensively trained and, at last, becoming better paid. We should make a virtue of ensuring that there are enough ancillary staff in hospitals to enable nurses to spend their time nursing. That would also improve job satisfaction.

My fourth suggestion is that we should consider the treatment of capital much more carefully. There are numerous irrationalities as between capital and revenue in the NHS's financial organisation, but the Health Service should be more careful about the use of its fixed assets. I acknowledge the efforts that have been made to release more surplus land, but many famous institutions in the City have ensured their future financial viability by moving three or four miles east to docklands. Why does St. Bartholomew's hospital not do the same? I dare say that the capital value of the real estate currently occupied by Barts, if sold and reinvested, would be sufficient to cover its revenue costs in perpetuity and that, apart from the consultants, very few people would be inconvenienced by such a move.

I commend to the House most warmly the proposals of Riverside health authority to consolidate its district general hospitals on two sites—one at St. Stephen's, Fulham road, and the other at Charing Cross. It is significant that closure of Westminster hospital has been supported by the consultants. They should be congratulated on that.

Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody (Crewe and Nantwich): Is the hon. Gentleman aware that it is widely thought in the NHS that the three hospitals will be closed and that the land attached to St. Stephen's hospital will be sold for a private hospital? That is not the way in which to consolidate health care in London or to provide cover for the population in the area.

Mr. Yeo: That is not the proposal which has been agreed by the district health authority. I have no doubt that my right hon. Friend the Minister will give his view on that in a few weeks' time.

I have left my final point until last deliberately as it is the least important. It is about money. The most important thing is to decide what the Health Service is for. We must then decide how well it is doing it, and then improve how it does it. Finally, we have the relatively minor matter of how it is financed.

There are many alternatives to the present basis of funding, but I have not seen much evidence to suggest that any of them will do much to improve patient care. The other things which we have discussed will, but I do not think that switching to an insurance-based system would make much difference. The taxpayer would pay less tax if we shifted more of the cost of health care on to the private sector, but my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer is doing pretty well at getting taxes down every year while putting more and more money into the Health Service.

I share the view that there should be a pluralist provision of health care. I want the private sector to grow, flourish and expand. There is every reason for us to support that—it reduces the burden on the taxpayer. I cannot see any great advantage, however, in offering taxation incentives to take out private medical insurance. Many people are already willing to take out such insurance without incentives, and I do not think that we need to promote private medicine in that way. If it is thought sensible to introduce some slight extension of charging, which is already accepted for prescriptions, to cover hotel services for better-off people, that would appear entirely inoffensive.

I hope that the Prime Minister's review will consider the four points that I have mentioned. Irrespective of whether it does, I believe that the message that will go out as a result of this debate is that we have a great deal to celebrate in the NHS, that we undermine its principles at our peril and that it is our job to improve a fundamentally sound structure.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Mr. Speaker has already appealed to the House for short speeches. I repeat that appeal. Unless speeches are shorter, a lot of hon. Members will be very disappointed by 10 o'clock.

6.4 pm

Dr. Lewis Moonie (Kirkcaldy): There has been a surprising degree of consensus about the basic philosophy which underlies the NHS, and acceptance that there will be little change to it. I am sure that that is gratifying to many Opposition Members and to many people outside who have had considerable doubts about the Government's intention during the past few months. A series of leaks have floated out from the review of the NHS.

Following publication this week of the report by the Social Services Select Committee, I shall be even more delighted if the Minister of State says that he will accept our conclusions. We could then carry the consensus to its logical conclusion. I have some doubt about that happening.

It is also generally agreed that the NHS is largely a sickness service. That is, after all, its role. It is the role which we have defined for it. Its role is to restore people to health if possible and to care for those whose health cannot be restored. It is scarcely surprising that the NHS does what we want it to do. It is also scarcely surprising that it does not do what some people think it ought to do, which is to promote health.

Health promotion is the role of Government, not of the NHS. It depends on many vague and general factors such as poverty, unemployment, damp, cold housing, overcrowding and environmental deprivation. Those are the true determinants of ill health. The right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen) mentioned the role of alcohol and said that it is a major cause of suffering, ill health and death. I propose to say no more about that important subject now.

I shall confine myself to two areas of major change in the NHS—the change in organisation and the change in the level of funding supplied to it. I shall not say much about the early organisation of the NHS. It is well known that, like Gaul, it was divided into three parts—the primary care service, hospital services and public health services. They were united in 1974-75. Like most other reorganisations since, that one improved the quality of management in the NHS. It was changed again in England and Wales in 1980 by the withdrawal of one tier of management which, on balance, I think was a good thing. Finally, three or four years ago, Griffiths-style management was introduced.

I agree that, by and large, the change has improved effectiveness and efficiency in the delivery of health care. The service has been constrained, however, by the limitation on resources. There are many reasons for that. They are well documented in reports by the Social Services Select Committee. There is the demographic change about which we all talk and the need for 1 per cent. growth, be it in overall resources, as many of us argue, or in efficiency, as the DHSS tends to argue.

There has also been the increase, which is supposedly inexorable, in medical technology, the increase in Government priorities in certain areas and the growth generated by the increase in efficiency which the Government tried to promote by bringing in Griffiths-style management. That alone is surely the most important reason for the present problems. The NHS is a victim not of its failure, but of its success. We must remedy that if we are to allow it to grow and prosper.

We all agree that most health care in Britain will be provided by the NHS. That is fine, but we must give it the resources that it needs to do the job properly. As a doctor, I do not agree with those who say that demands on health care are infinite in the sense that we must always respond to them. We could produce immeasurable benefits in the health experience of people in this country by a relatively limited injection of additional resources into the NHS. Of course, we must control growth at the margins. That is Government's job and we do it directly through the supply side of that service. We must not constrain the NHS's resources so much that we are presented with the spectacle, as we were last year and as I fear may happen later this

[Dr. Lewis Moonie]

year, of effective efficiency units being closed three months before the end of the financial year because there are no resources left to run them properly.

I am interested to know what the Government's review will produce. The leaks about which we have heard, as each scheme that has been touted has been discarded, suggest that the conclusion will be that we should perhaps give some people tax relief for their BUPA subscriptions, although that will scarcely make the earth move for most people in this country.

Many changes in organisation have been proposed for the NHS, as many hon. Members have mentioned. For example, everyone agrees that health maintenance organisations would be much better than the private system of care generally prevalent in the United States, but they would scarcely be a match for the best funded public health service in the world, as we have here. That would not be an improvement. Internal markets are all well and good, but the Minister has pointed to the lack of information, both financial and in respect of quality, required to enable an internal market system to work.

Although, if we take it to its logical conclusion, I can see the possibility of one hospital in central London providing one range of services and another hospital, fairly nearby, producing a different range, it would be a great deal different in the Highlands of Scotland if people had to travel 70 or 80 miles to have their ears examined because the ear, nose and throat department at one hospital had been closed down as it was supposedly less efficient than the one down the coast. I scarcely think that people will be enraptured when they see what the internal market leads to.

I do not believe that the NHS requires any fundamental change in its organisation at this time. We could probably consider some matters. For example, we could consider the role of its management board and its chairman and see how effective and efficient they are in promoting the wellbeing of the service for which they are responsible. We could look at the edifices that they run in London, full of civil servants, and work out how cost-effective they are and what they provide in the way of benefit to the people of this country. We could consider the role of regional authorities and see whether that needs to be changed.

We must certainly bring about the change for which the Select Committee has been asking for years, mentioned again by the right hon. Member for Devonport, to merge family practitioner committees with district health authorities. The only reason for maintaining a separate, parallel tier of management must be if we can prove that it is a more effective way of organising the service, and there is absolutely no evidence that that is the case. Those organisations must, therefore, become part of the same system and generate the savings that can be achieved by streamlining the management.

I do not propose to say anything else this evening other than to mention the fact that, this afternoon, I was given a petition which I intend to present to the House later. It bears over half a million signatures and was collected by the Royal College of Nursing. That is a sign of the true depth of feeling in this country about the NHS. That is one of the reasons why we are debating it today and why we tamper with it at our peril.

6.13 pm

Mr. Ray Whitney (Wycombe): The measured contribution of the hon. Member for Kirkcaldy (Dr. Moonie) was in marked and welcome contrast with the hyperbole to which we were treated by the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook).

I should like to join in the tribute paid by hon. Members on both sides of the House to the dedication and achievement of so many people, past and present, who have served in the National Health Service. However, we must take this 40th anniversary opportunity not only to look back briefly at its origins, but to see the problems that we face and to give what signals we can to my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and her colleagues in her review, as this is a fundamental juncture in the provision of a truly modern system of health care. Therefore, conscious of your entirely justified injunction, Madam Deputy Speaker, I shall return briefly to the events surrounding the birth of the NHS, to which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and the right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot) have already referred.

It is important, so that we can take the issue out of the political dog fight in which it has lain and suffered for so long, to put it firmly on the record that, for very many decades, parties of all persuasions in this country have been, and continue to be, dedicated to a comprehensive, universal system of health care for all our people. The only argument concerns the mechanics of how that can best be delivered. In 1948, there was an argument about the method of delivery. The chief issue of substance was in the phrase they used in those days about whether the hospitals should be "nationalised".

That was not a direct Conservative-Labour fight, as I hope the right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent will allow. It was largely a fight with the medical profession strongly in the lead. Historically, the contributions of the British Medical Association to medical advance in this country have not been glorious, starting with its opposition to Lloyd George's welcome reforms in 1911. The issue of the so-called nationalisation of hospitals went across the parties in 1945 and 1946. It was the published and authorised policy of the Labour party itself that the hospitals should be locally controlled and it was the firm advocacy of the then Lord President of the Council, Herbert Morrison, against Aneurin Bevan, who insisted that that was the way to go and warned and fought time and again in Labour Cabinets in 1945 and 1946 against the overcentralisation and bureaucracy that would be created by Bevan's structure. Bevan won and said, "No, we shall solve the problem. We shall find mechanisms in the future to cope with those fears."

In 40 years of trying, of Royal Commissions, of reviews, of committees and of changes of organisation, we have not solved those problems. We have not found the solution. That must give us pause, 40 years on, to consider whether there is a solution. The answer is that there is not. However, there is a way through because there is now another option for funding. Herbert Morrison was defeated at the time because no one could think of how to fund hospitals or organisations properly on a local basis.

Mrs. Dunwoody: With the greatest respect, that is a load of rubbish. Herbert Morrison wanted control of London hospitals because he said that he was in total control of local government here and could determine what went on in those hospitals. Many of us never accepted that argument and we pointed out to him that some local authorities were controlled by the Conservative party. That is why he was defeated then, that is why it was right that he was defeated then and the idea that he is still alive and living in Walworth road is a load of rubbish.

Mr. Whitney: I am grateful for the hon. Lady's elegant contribution. I am sorry that she does not know and understand the history of her party. If we go back to the resolution passed by the last Labour party conference before the Second Reading debate in 1946, she will know that the Labour party was in favour of locally funded and organised hospitals.

I return to the question of funding which has bedevilled the Health Service ever since 1948. The right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent did not bestow on the House another bit of history, the fact that his hero, Bevan, was complaining about the "cascades of medicine pouring down British throats", literally months after the Health Service started. So there have always been financial pressures and constraints on the Health Service. In real terms there has been a fourfold increase in spending over 40 years, but we still have problems. That is a sign that the financial structure as well as the organisational structure was fundamentally flawed when the NHS was established.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: I, too, have been reading the records of 40 years ago, including Cabinet minutes of 1948 and 1949. The right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot) did not mention that six months after the establishment of the National Health Service the right hon. Gentleman who preceded him in representing his constituency, Aneurin Bevan, had to ask the Cabinet for another £50 million. On 23 May 1949, the Attlee Cabinet discussed hotel charges for hospital services.

Mr. Whitney: I am grateful to my hon. Friend.

I hope that the House will accept that for 40 years we had had problems that have stemmed from flawed financial and organisational structures. It is only now that we have the opportunity of examining them afresh. I hope that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will bring courage and open-mindedness to this challenge.

The resources that are needed for health care are much greater than those that we currently devote to it, and there is a need for significant changes in the delivery system. The right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen) took up international comparisons, and I suggest that for the moment we forget the United States. It is a convention, when defending the Bevanite structure of the NHS, to say, "If we are not careful, we shall end up like the United States." Let us consider instead our continental neighbours, such as France, Germany, Italy perhaps, and the Netherlands. These are countries with which we tend to compare ourselves. On average, these countries spend about 9 per cent. of their gross domestic product on health care against our 6 per cent. Purchasing power parity is a more effective comparison, and if it is made we find that we are spending not much more than half of that which the Germans and the French spend.

I accept that in some respect the NHS is an efficient structure in terms of using resources effectively, but because of the absence of measurement controls it is most ineffective in many other areas. We cannot get away, however, with spending slightly more than half of what is spent by the French and the Germans and have the sort of standards of treatments that they enjoy. It is a sadness that there has been virtually a conspiracy of silence. Our people do not know what they are missing. As the NHS has become increasingly a political football, the parties when in government have to say, "This is wonderful and we are wonderful." The British people are beginning to learn, however, what they are missing in the delivery of health care and what is available in other countries.

Let us not say that we need to spend as much as the Germans or the French. Let us say instead that we need to go only halfway in closing the gap. That involves additional spending of £10 billion, £11 billion or £12 billion. That would mean spending half as much again. There is no conceivable way in which we could produce that from the public Exchequer, notwithstanding a dedicated health tax or any other scheme that has been suggested by my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Richmond, Yorks (Mr. Brittan) or by any Opposition Member. No other country has tried to spend that sort of sum through the public Exchequer. No other country would be silly enough to try it. There are ways, however, in which we could proceed.

Mr. Robin Cook: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Whitney: The hon. Gentleman gave way to me not once, but I happily give way to him immediately.

Mr. Cook: I was not aware that the hon. Gentleman tried to intervene in my speech.

I refer the hon. Gentleman to the German figures. He is making a comparison with Germany and saying that it would be impossible to increase our expenditure on health care. Why is it that the gap between public spending between the United Kingdom and Germany, in terms of percentage GNP, is precisely the same as the gap between private spending in the United Kingdom and in Germany? Why is he so desperately exercised about private spending and so desperately anxious to deny the case for increasing public expenditure?

Mr. Whitney: Because the funding structure in Germany is different from ours. The employers of those earning up to the equivalent of about £20,000 a year contribute about half of that which is paid to the German health care system. It is clear that the hon. Gentleman does not understand the funding structure in Germany, which is significantly different from that in the United Kingdom.

There is a solution to the dilemmas, but it is not to be found by dividing the nation by introducing public health cover and private health insurance. That is not the way to go, for various reasons, some of which have been referred to already. That approach would not help the Treasury and it would not remove the pressures from the public health structure. It would lead to the significant problems that would result from two nations, which we must avoid.

We need to take up the solution proposed by a committee that was established by the BMA, of all organisations, taking account of my earlier remarks. The committee worked for two and a half years and produced an excellent report. Sadly, the BMA, reverting true to historical form, proceeded to ignore the committee's recommendations and put its report on the shelf. It recommended that there should be a health voucher or health credit system.

We must recognise the wonderful achievements of our Health Service and forget the mistakes which were made.

[Mr. Whitney]

We must learn the positive lessons of foreign experience and apply them to our new structure. We can then provide a system that at last achieves what Herbert Morrison was unable to bring about but which the Labour party of 1945 wanted—autonomous local hospitals. That would enable us to do away with the superstructure of district health authorities, regional health authorities and all the other ineffective paraphernalia. I can assure the House, having been a junior Health Minister, that it is ineffective. Hospitals should become autonomous and funded by a health credit system on an insurance basis. That would put the consumer—the patient—in command with his doctor. The doctor and the patient would immediately have an incentive to turn to preventive medicine. That is what the Americans call wellness management, which is an asset that the NHS has never enjoyed. That would mean a significant change in the funding structure.

That change may seem to be radical, but the reality is that it would take us to what we have always wanted. With a well-funded basic level of health care, anyone who wanted to top up, as it were, for additional services—private rooms or special hospitals, for example—would be able to do so. We would have a truly national Health Service at a local level, and a well funded one. That would fulfil the objectives of the authors of the 1944 White Paper—they came from both parties and all the medical professions—and fulfil also the aspirations for the future.

The explosion of demand that will come is not generally understood. We have an aging population and economic pressures that come from technological advance, but more significant are the rising aspirations of our people—and they are justified in having them. The only way in which we can meet them and avoid the political Passchendaele that the NHS debate has become is to have radical rethinking now.

6.29 pm

Mr. Ronnie Fearn (Southport): On the occasion of the National Health Service's 40th anniversary, I start by acknowledging Aneurin Bevan's achievements. At the same time, I pay homage to the well-known liberal, William Beveridge, who first conceived the idea of a National Health Service. His report was presented to Parliament in November 1942, which is perhaps the earliest date we have heard tonight. That report was and remains the cornerstone of the welfare state. Underlying its conclusions were three basic assumptions, of which the second was

> "a comprehensive health and rehabilitation service for the prevention and cure of disease and restoration of capacity for work available to all members of the community."

On the day that that report was published, 70,000 people queued for a copy of it, but it was not until July 1948 that the National Health Service was introduced. That was made possible because there was universal recognition that the community was responsible for the welfare of its members. There was a pride in national unity and a sense of community, and—if I may dare use the term—a consensus, not only in Government but throughout the country, that the better standard of health and welfare that the individual enjoyed, the more benefit would accrue to the nation.

That sense of community seems to be missing today. The Government's policies are leading us into division and individualism of the worst kind. Survival of the fittest and the richest, obsession with individual responsibility, privatisation, and free market forces override consideration of any other matter. It worries me that, when it comes to our National Health Service, everyone seems to be playing into the Prime Minister's hands. We hear of this book and that book, and of this article and that article—all of them outlining new ways and methods of financing and organising health care in the belief that the country cannot afford a comprehensive National Health Service. That is nonsense. What we can afford is not an absolute; it is a matter of political choice and will. That is the crux of the matter. The Tory regime does not in its heart of hearts believe in an equitable health service, free at the point of delivery, because it has not committed itself to that principle and has not understood or committed itself to the need to fund the service properly.

Mr. John Maples (Lewisham, West): Can the hon. Gentleman give one piece of evidence to support his statement that Conservative Members do not believe in a National Health Service?

Mr. Fearn: The evidence is in the underfunding that has gone on throughout the whole of the regions and district health authorities, and I see that happening in my own health authority as well.

The Government's attitude is not the result of ignorance, because we know that they have estimated that the Health Service requires a 2 per cent. per annum increase above NHS price and pay inflation to meet demographic and medical changes. The service's underfunding has been a political decision. The Government have allowed the service to run into crisis—it is the Government's political ideology that poses a threat to a universal health service.

For 40 years, the NHS has served the nation well. Opinion polls show that the majority of the populace want it to continue and are willing to fund its recovery and growth from their taxes. For 40 years, our National Health Service has been the envy of the world. In terms of per unit cost, it is still the best value for money, and we should be building on that success and investing in it rather than considering any major changes.

Even in the present crisis, the hospital service is managing to meet most of the demands made upon it. That is being achieved through the dedication and skill of its staff. I am not denying that there is room for improvement in management, administration and efficiency—as has been mentioned before—or that there is a need for small structural changes. However, those can and should be achieved within the service's present framework and without losing the principle upon which it is based of equal availability at the time of need, free at the point of delivery.

It is that principle which has been threatened by the various schemes that have been thrown into the arena for discussion. I award full marks to the Prime Minister and to the Secretary of State for manipulating the situation and planting in the minds of the nation the seed that the Health Service is in need of massive surgery. We may consider, for example, the proposal to expand the internal market. That is seen as a way of enjoying the perceived advantages of the free market without altering the principle that the major part of funding should come from the public purse. There is already a small ad hoc internal market at work, which has arisen from the need to reduce waiting lists and overcome the poor implementation of the RAWP formula.

Districts that are now below their RAWP targets buy in services that they cannot at present afford to provide. Any expansion of that market would leave such districts at an even worse disadvantage because they would be unable to compete with the better-off districts. The result will be stagnation and deterioration. Needless to say, those areas of the country that will suffer will be the under-privileged, the inner cities and rural communities.

The market ethos that the Secretary of State believes is here to stay will not create freedom of choice for all patients. It will create problems of accessibility for both patients and relatives, in ambulance and transportation services, and in co-ordinating after-care services and referral authorisations. In short, it will be an administrative nightmare.

The internal market also contradicts the idea that a computerised information system will allow the general practitioner and consumer greater choice.

The Minister for Health (Mr. Tony Newton): The hon. Gentleman probably sensed my mounting bewilderment and puzzlement as he went on with his script. What is really puzzling me is that I thought that I read a manifesto from one half or the other—or possibly both—of the party that the hon. Gentleman now claims to represent, the content of which was about as different from what he is now saying as it could conceivably have been. It was preaching the internal market in what seemed to me then to be a very ill-considered way. May we know whether this is the SLD's first massive U-turn?

Mr. Fearn: I can answer the Minister's question very clearly. It is not a massive U-turn. The right hon. Gentleman must have been reading *The Independent*, which obviously got wrong the speeches which have been made lately and in the past. I believe that that is what he has been doing.

An internal market may be some use in the short term in helping to reduce waiting lists, but it should not be considered as the basis of providing a comprehensive health care system for the nation. Such a market would prevent many districts from improving their own situation because the money that they should be investing in building up their own services would be spent on services from another district. That would result in a reduction of local services and uneven distribution of health care throughout the country, and it would add to the hardship and stress suffered by many individual patients.

The RAWP formula was introduced to provide equal opportunity of health care access for people at equal risk. If that scheme had been properly implemented and funded, and if a levelling-up rather than a levelling-down process had taken place, there would not be the need to discuss the internal market on the scale that it is being discussed today.

A number of proposals have been put forward involving various schemes for the use of health care vouchers. Unfortunately, my parliamentary, constituency and local council duties make it virtually impossible for me to digest all of the proposals contained in books and articles that hon. Members and my hon. Friends find the time to write. However, the suggestion is that the individual be given a voucher enabling him or her to contract with an organisation or individual GP to provide the health care required, or at least some of it.

That arrangement raises a number of questions. How often will vouchers be provided? What will be their value? Will they be the same for everybody? How will they be distributed—possibly through the poll tax register? Who will be given vouchers to cover children's health care—mothers or fathers? Will the health organisation, private insurers or the individual GP be compelled to accept a voucher from any individual who approaches them, or will they be allowed to accept only those patients whom they consider to be a good risk, leaving those in most need of health care searching around for someone with whom they may contract?

As far as I can see, all such schemes leave the Government to provide insurance for the chronically sick, and the individual will be allowed to top up his or her voucher. That in itself tells us something about the schemes. The value of the vouchers will be such that organisations will not find it profitable to provide comprehensive cover and the chronically sick, who will have to rely on the Government to insure them, will get a raw deal.

Some of the voucher schemes, along with other proposals, envisage the setting up of some form of health maintenance organisation. In such systems, or those contained in other proposals, our NHS hospitals would be funded by those organisations or would become independent. All hospitals would compete for trade. That would result in hospitals specialising in the treatment that was most profitable. Emergency cases would be in danger of being turned away because the hospital did not have a contract with the patient's organisation—as happens in America—or because the patient was not covered for the treatment required. Health care in the nation would rely on cut-throat competition. A voucher system would seem to be a minefield.

It is reported that the Government are backing down from some of the more radical proposals that have been put to the review body. I can only hope that that is the case. Indeed, in his speech to the Centre for Policy Studies MSD foundation symposium on 17 May 1988, the Secretary of State implied just that. He said:

> "It means that we will not make access to decent health care dependent on the ability to pay for it. And we want to retain the comprehensive coverage provided by the NHS, so that the old and the sick are relieved from anxiety about obtaining the care and treatment they need."

I should like to believe those words in their entirety, but the recent changes in social security and housing benefit have shown us just how the Government relieve the anxiety of the old and sick.

Mr. John Redwood (Wokingham): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Fearn: No. I have given way twice.

The Government usually pull the rug from under the feet of such people. I put it to the Minister that the only way to achieve his stated objectives is to leave the NHS intact and to provide it with adequate funding.

Other less radical options are tax incentives and the choice to opt out of a national health tax to encourage more people to take out private health insurance. I am not opposed to the private sector per se——

Mr. David Evennett (Erith and Crayford): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Fearn: No.

I have no wish to deny the freedom of choice to enable those who have the desire and the means to pay separately for private treatment to do so, but that should not reduce the freedom of NHS patients to obtain good health care by reducing the resources available to the service. We are all aware that any expansion of the private sector, which to date does not offer a comprehensive service and tends to take the profitable cases only, will only result in depleted resources to the NHS and a two-tier health system will come into existence.

The private sector has been allowed to expand without consideration of the effect on the NHS. There should be more effective control and current and future plans should be compatible with the services of the district health authorities. The private sector should contribute to the training of health care staff at basic training and postgraduate levels. Perhaps the Minister will tell us more about that. It should be required to participate in studies of epidemics and similar research as required. The private sector should be seen in terms of a partnership with the NHS, not in competition with it, and should not be allowed to dictate the terms or reduce the capacity of the NHS to provide a free and universal health service.

An individual's right to choose private health care should not reduce his or her obligation to the community. People should not be allowed to opt out of their state contribution. Good or bad health is not something over which the individual has complete control. Many illnesses are the result of living in society, or, should I say the community, to prevent confusion on the Prime Minister's part. An individual does not live in isolation. The community as a whole has a duty to provide a health system that is equally available at the time of need, is of acceptable standard to all and free at the point of delivery. I am not suggesting stagnation. Let us look at the NHS to see what minor reforms can be carried out, but let us ensure that those reforms do not result in a depleted second-rate service, but rather in a revitalised, community and patient-oriented service.

Mr. Evennett: Will the hon. Gentleman give way on that point?

Mr. Fearn: No.

Such a service would benefit us all. The country cannot think otherwise.

6.45 pm

Sir David Price (Eastleigh): In the interests of many hon. Members who wish to speak, I shall be as brief as possible; so I shall not attempt to answer the hon. Member for Southport (Mr. Fearn), although I would be more than capable of doing so.

The hon. Member for Kirkcaldy (Dr. Moonie) is no longer in the Chamber, but he said that many of the problems facing the NHS at the moment arise from its very success. If one looks at the total expenditure, corrects it for inflation and applies it to the population—in other words, the expenditure in real terms per head of population—one will find that it has gone up three times since the foundation of the NHS. Yet most of us members of the Select Committee would say that that is still not enough.

In speech after speech on the Floor of the House, I have pointed out the various factors which lead me to the conclusion that we are going through a period where the increasing demand on the service should be measured in exponential terms. I shall not repeat any of them this evening. But we cannot get away from the fact of increasing demand. There are those representative bodies, such as the BMA, who have asked for a 2 per cent. growth rate, but that, in my opinion, will not be enough. I have stated my position and stick by it.

Let me come to what I believe to be one of the greatest successes of the NHS that has hardly been touched on today—the great advances made in primary health care. We in the Select Committee did our own study of primary health care. We were impressed with what we saw. In our report, we said:

> "We have been impressed by many examples of good practice and innovative schemes for improving service to particular client groups—for example, children, or elderly, or mentally handicapped people."

We went on later to say:

> "We doubt whether any major new legislation is called for and hope that the government will not seek to impose blanket plans for changes in services indiscriminately."

We stand by that.

It was interesting, too, that Sir Roy Griffiths, in his report on care in the community, drew attention particularly to the positive role of primary health care. Again, in the interest of everyone else, I shall not read out what he said, but it is all there on the record.

We are getting much better value for public money in primary health care than most people recognise. People do not recognise how good that value is. When, on the Select Committee, my colleagues were good enough to come to my patch in Hampshire to talk to our family practitioner committee, which is the largest in the country serving a population of 1·5 million, we found that the cost per patient of that service last year was £69. The service includes all the necessary drug therapy. I challenge anyone to find any other western country which provides primary health care of that standard at that price.

My advice to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State is to cherish what we have achieved in primary health care. Indeed, his White Paper led in that direction. Let us build on our success and develop the service further.

That takes us straight to the second aspect of the future of the NHS to which I wish to draw the House's attention, which is likely to be the biggest growth area of all, and that is what we loosely call care in the community. Let me give one illustration from my own Wessex health region. We have been told that during the next nine years the number of people aged 65 or over will increase by 11 per cent. Far more significantly, during the next nine years, the number of people aged over 85 will increase by 50 per cent. In absolute numbers, there will be 21,400 more people over the age of 85.

Let us now consider just one aspect of the aging process. We know that on average the prevalence of senile dementia in the elderly is between 5 per cent. and 10 per cent. in those over the age of 65, and about 20 per cent. in those over the age of 80. We also know that at present no treatment can prevent, arrest or reverse senile dementia.

I use those figures simply to illustrate the caring dimensions of the increasing number of very old people in our nation. There is no way that institutionalised care will be able to cope with that extra burden. It cannot cope with it now, although it makes a very important contribution in handling the more difficult cases. The responsibility in practice rests with families and relatives, supported in part by the community.

The response to how we are to handle more very old people seems clear—care in the community. It is also clear that as a nation we must put more resources into care in the community. I realise that such claims for extra resources have to be made against the background of other urgent claims for extra public expenditure for other equally worthy causes. I am confident that we will get extra expenditure. I am equally confident that whatever increase we get will be insufficient. Such is the nature of our problem.

Ultimately, the deficiencies in public provision will be made up, as they have always been, by individual families and individual people doing their personal best for their own people in need. In other words, the slack will be taken up by the private carers. There are far more private carers than all the professionals added together providing health care to our fellow citizens. There is nothing new about that, it has always been so, but it suggests that we should do more to help those private carers. There are between 1 million and 2 million of us—we do not really know how many. Therefore, services such as home helps, care attendants, meals on wheels and respite care are every bit as important as new acute beds in geriatric wards.

Finally, may I make a brief observation about the structure of the National Health Service. From what I have said it will be clear to the House that I have a preference for the localised rather than the centralised; for small over large and for local services over distant services. It is also clear from the history of the Health Service that its aims could have been fulfilled under a different structure. It is arguable whether a localised model would have worked better. However, it is clear to me that we cannot change basically our structure, for two very simple reasons.

First, as long as 83 per cent. of the income of the National Health Service, and all its capital, comes from the taxpayer through the Treasury, a centralised system of control and accountability inevitably follows. I hate to think what the Public Accounts Committee and the Audit Office would do if my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and his permanent secretary did not remain in their positions of direct accountability to those great offices. In fact, they would do their nut.

Secondly, as my right hon. Friend the Member for Aylesbury (Mr. Raison) reminded us, we expect the Secretary of State to be personally accountable to the House in detail for the manner in which the National Health Service delivers health care to each of our constituents. So long as that accountability remains, the system must be based on central political control. In my judgment, that is an inescapable political factor. I see the right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot) nodding his assent.

Like every other hon. Member in this debate, I believe that constructive changes should be made in the running of the Health Service. However, I do not think that there is any necessity to pull the National Health Service up by its roots and replant it differently. I would advocate a policy of gradualism based on a programme of persistent improvement. I would caution against a policy of revolution based on a programme of instant convulsions. I have never been keen on the general use of ECT, and certainly not for the NHS. I would remind hon. Members impatient for change of Aesop's famous race between the tortoise and the hare. It was the tortoise and not the yuppy hare who won.

6.55 pm

Mr. Frank Field (Birkenhead): Like other hon. Members, I salute those who have worked in the Health Service and those who currently do so. It is interesting that if one looks at the motion and the amendment—although from listening to the speeches so far it seems that we have not been paying much attention to the Order Paper—one sees that there is a considerable amount of agreement. Indeed, if I had not disgraced myself the other day by voting twice about whether freemasons should have to declare an interest when joining the police, perhaps there would be a case for voting on both sides tonight.

As well as saluting the people who have contributed to the state of the nation's health, let me begin with a personal comment to the Secretary of State. It is the first time that I have been in the House and witnessed him in much better health. I am pleased to see that. I also compliment him on his performance today and on the clever way in which he tried to build a consensus about the evolution of the Health Service during the past 40 years. For once, I disagree with my right hon. Friend the Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot). I want that consensus message to go out from the House. Should the Prime Minister's review suggest otherwise, we shall know the changes that have taken place and that it is not part of the pattern to which we are accustomed.

I further compliment the Secretary of State because he has to face my hon. Friend the Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook). I do not think that I do a disservice to my other colleagues on the Front Bench in saying that my hon. Friend the Member for Livingston has emerged as our most powerful spokesman in criticising the Government. It is no easy task for the Secretary of State, certainly when he has not been well, and I am pleased to see him in much better health.

I wish to make only two brief comments. First, I have to confess that when I became Chairman of the Social Services Select Committee I knew next to nothing about health. Therefore, I was fortunate enough to have an open and empty mind. There can be advantages in having an open and empty mind in that sometimes one asks questions that are not asked by those whose minds are cluttered with unnecessary facts. In coming new to the subject, I was struck by what we did not know about the performance of the Health Service. We can consider the national picture—the global GDP figures that hon. Members have rightly mentioned. We can look at our morbidity figures and we can draw the general conclusion that the National Health Service serves us exceptionally well. If we consider particular hospitals and forms of treatment, and we make comparisons between regions and localities, we would be hard pushed to provide any clear answers other than that we hope that the Health Service is doing us proud.

If we are interested in efficiency, and the Opposition are as keen to have efficiency in public service—or what is left of it—as the Government are, we certainly need information, and currently we do not have that. If this Government, or any other Government in the immediate future, are anxious to increase efficiency they must do it in a crude way and must apply cash ceilings. They hope that

[Mr. Frank Field]

by applying those cash ceilings people will scramble about with a bit more efficiency, perform more effectively and that the service will benefit. There is much to point at under the Government's stewardship to show that that has occurred.

To address myself directly to the Secretary of State, there is a danger that if there is only that crude method of controlling expenditure and trying to enforce efficiency, one can get it wrong. I can go further and say that one will inevitably get it wrong by the very nature of the exercise. Therefore, given the crudeness of the method of control, it is incumbent on the Secretary of State and the Government to look carefully at those points in the service that are showing pressure or may become flashpoints.

The Select Committee tried to highlight two of those flashpoints. We complimented the Government in a positive way—unlike some of the responses we receive for our reports—on the nurses' pay award. We also pointed to some of the difficulties in implementing that. If that is not to turn sour, if it looks as if the Government will not be able to fit their regrading reviews within the budget for which they are seeking approval, it will be necessary for them to come back to the House and ask for additional funds. I hope that all hon. Members will support the Government's request for any additional funds they need.

The other immediate flashpoint will be covering the pay award for the non-nursing and medical staff in the NHS. I know the argument well because one has heard it so often. I know that while negotiations are taking place the Government cannot say that they will meet the entire bill —as if the Whitley councils are somehow mysteriously independent of the Government. Surely the message is clear to the Government. When the Whitley councils report, the pay awards must be met in full if the Government are not to face the problems they faced last year where there were cuts in services and ward closures. I put that warning gently to the Government. When operating the crude policy of cash ceilings and trying to enforce efficiency—the only option open to us—the Government must be sensitive and quick on their feet when they see pressure points developing.

I disagree with my hon. Friend the Member for Suffolk, South (Mr. Yeo). I call him my hon. Friend because he is on the Select Committee with me. He said that we do not know whether the service is underfunded. That is partly true; we cannot come up with the exact figures. I know why he put his argument in the way he did. However, we can use our eyes and the evidence to see whether the service is being renewed in the way that we want and whether it has the resources to develop at the beginning of the next 40 years in the same way as it has developed over the past 40 years for which many of us are claiming credit. On that simple basis, it is clear that there is an underfunding.

Mr. Yeo: I will not damn the hon. Gentleman's career by calling him my hon. Friend, although he has probably damned mine. Whether or not we disagree about the evidence that the Health Service is currently underfunded, I hope that he will agree that if new funds are to be put in by the taxpayer, it would be useful to have a better measurement of how much value for money is achieved.

Mr. Field: I agree with that. I have not ruined my hon. Friend's career. His independence of mind and ability have finished his promotion chances. There is little I can do to match that. *[Laughter.]* I did not mean that to be funny. Sad to say, it was a serious point.

Although the Government have many things to say that are to their credit, they have difficulty in reading clearly Select Committee reports. When our committee talked about underfunding and a need for increased resources, we did not ask for money to be thrown at the Health Service. We asked for increases of resources to be specifically linked to certain projects, for those projects to be monitored and for resources to be withdrawn if we found that they were being misused or spent on other items of necessary expenditure. We did not ask the Government to throw money at the problem, although money has a part to play. We talked about four areas.

First, in so much of the debate, both sides seem to be speaking the truth. The Government's record on their hospital building programme is not a bad record to look at. However, the Government's programme on repairs to existing buildings is an area of considerable concern. During the visits that the Select Committee has made people have made their points plain to us. If one can obtain lump sums for large capital programmes, one is all right. However, there is great difficulty in obtaining the necessary capital to undertake a steady programme of repairs. Unless we are extraordinarily lucky, all of us who visit hospitals see that we are building up an enormous backlog in the repairs programme. That is part of the underfunding and we want funds to be specifically targeted to that.

Secondly, there has been mention already of community care. My hon. Friend the Member for Livingston talked about the cruel policy upon which we are embarked of throwing people out of institutions without any back-up because it was thought to be the thing to do. I saw that in my constituency recently where somebody left the Cheshire hospital after 34 years. He has been cut off by his family, except his sister. He sleeps for only an hour and a half at a time, he smokes and drops his cigarettes all over the place. His sister is almost at the point of breakdown. Until that man was returned to hospital, that woman was providing community care. To say that putting such people into bed and breakfast hostels or back on to the street is community care is using language in an obscene way. My hon. Friend the Member for Eastleigh (Sir D. Price) was right to say that the programme of community care is not to cut the bills but to change the direction of spending and probably to increase it. In the long run that is necessary. However, if we are to receive community care only on its current scale, many of us would prefer to see our constituents remain in those dreadful long-term hospitals than have to face life outside.

Thirdly, the Select Committee also made a plea about equipment. We talked about replacements and about taking the technology up market. We asked not for money to be thrown at that, but for areas to be specifically located.

Fourthly, we mentioned information technology. Although I have learnt a lot over the past six months and have been impressed by the skill of Select Committee members and people outside, it was the Secretary of State who made the most interesting point, if the *Sunday Times* reported him correctly. I am responding to what it said were his comments, which were that it is possible to develop markets that are not governed by profit and are in the public sector. That should be a starting point for the

Opposition's debate. For that to be effective, we require a range of information that we do not have at present so that we can build up a public ethos about service, the like of which we already have in the NHS. If we could get the ongoing capital programme to see that the information technology in the NHS is brought up to the standard in some of our businesses, we could approach the next 40 years of the Health Service in better heart than some of us are in at present.

I have tried to be fair to the Government's record but it is interesting to see a Government who have talked about cutting public expenditure cleverly claiming that they spend more on the public sector than we do when in office. All credit to them. The Government have been elected three times on a programme of cuts in the public sector, targeting help, moving away from universal provision in the Health Service and denying the basis of equal citizenship that everybody in Britain looks for from the NHS. So the Government cannot blame us Labour Members if we look sceptically at some of the statements they make.

I hope that in this short contribution I have not strayed into the Select Committee's next report, as have some members of the Committee, but have related our past report, which is mentioned on the Order Paper, to one of the current crises in the Health Service. It is a crisis that we are debating at a time of celebration of the massive success of the Health Service. I hope, too, that I have pointed one or two ways to the future so that, as the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen) said in his impressive contribution, we take measures to ensure that hon. Members 40 years hence may have grounds to celebrate the previous 80 years with as much gracefulness and joy as we are celebrating the past 40 years.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. I remind the House of the earlier appeal for brief speeches.

7.10 pm

Dame Jill Knight (Birmingham, Edgbaston): The financial memorandum part of the National Health Service Bill 1948—I have a copy of it here which I obtained from the Library—estimated the annual cost of the Health Service at £152 million. In the ensuing debate one hon. Member warned that the cost just might double in 20 years, but this contrasted with the view of various so-called experts, including Lord Beveridge, to whom reference has been made, that the cost per annum would fall. Lord Beveridge thought that as everyone became more and more healthy we would have to spend less and less, so it would be a case of diminishing need. How wrong he and others were.

In 1948 the cost was £152 million per annum; in 1988 it is £23,500 million. It might have shaken even Aneurin Bevan if he had been told that in 40 years it would have gone up that much, although I think that I should remind Opposition Members, because it adds an interesting footnote to some of the things they have accused us of today, that he said in the Second Reading debate:

> "it has been the firm conclusion of all parties that money ought not to be permitted to stand in the way of obtaining an efficient health service." [*Official Report*, 30 April 1946; Vol.422, c.43.]

He said "all parties". I would agree with that, but whose money are we talking about? It must be the Exchequer's and the taxpayers'. Where the sick person has no money, or only some, or wishes to use the Health Service that money must be made available and there must be no doubt in this House or elsewhere that I and my hon. Friends are totally committed to the continuance of the Health Service. Never would we tolerate, for instance, the American system. The one part of the speech of the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen) with which I did not agree was where he seemed to praise the American system because they spend more of their gross national product on health care. He did not mention the fact that it was more of their own money and not the American Government's money. That is a rather important point when one is making the comparison.

The truth is that for a lot more money the American health service is not as good as ours. In that country one member of the family can have a motor accident or a long illness which requires many months or even years of care and that family can be bankrupted by the costs to them. No hon. Member could possibly support that sort of system here. So of course there must be continuing care, free for all who need it and cannot pay.

It is fair to say that the situation has completely changed since 1948. We are a far more affluent country. In those days it was quite rare for a family to have one car, and a two-car family was extremely unusual. Now, it is very commonplace indeed. We see families in which the mother has a car, the father has a car and their two or three children each have a car. There is so much evidence of a very greatly increased standard of living. People did not take foreign holidays very often in 1948. Home ownership is now much wider, as is share ownership. One could go on and on. But with greater affluence there can be no real reason why those who can easily afford to do so should not pay a bit more towards their health care, and much more money is undoubtedly needed for the NHS.

I do not believe that we can tackle the situation by further efficiency drives, although I pay a tribute to those. I add my voice to the voices of others who have said that value for money in the Health Service must be ensured. We have very inadequate methods of defining performance in the Health Service. We have 400 performance indicators. They can tell us staff numbers, types of operations performed and the general costs, but not one of them can tell us the cost of an operation in hospital A as compared with the cost in hospital B. We need to know these things.

It is right to say, too, 40 years on that we have a better Health Service than ever before. To those who ramble on about the crumbling Health Service I can only suggest that they look at the facts. The extension of health care today is quite incredible. We have far more sophisticated medical techniques, much cleverer drugs and infinitely more complicated machines, such as lithotriptors and scanners of all kinds. There is vastly more detailed research and people are being treated and cured today who would have been sent home to die only two years ago. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State referred to the diseases that have been eradicated since 1948. Crumbling Health Service, my foot; it is a wonderful Health Service.

However, the financial implications of all this are incalculable. These much more sophisticated techniques take a lot more money, as do the very much cleverer drugs and the complicated machines. I gather that the cost of these has gone up far in excess of inflation. I believe that the financial implications are almost impossible to put together. And added to those we have the enormous

[Dame Jill Knight]

implications of acquired immune deficiency syndrome and the money that we have to spend on drug addicts. I would not add alcoholism, as the right hon. Member for Devonport did, because we spent money on alcoholism in 1948. I am talking about the new sums of money that we are having to find.

Of course it is right to refer to the tremendous amount of money that must go to caring for the elderly, and if it were not for private nursing homes we should be in terrible trouble.

I do not believe those who say that we can solve all the problems by tossing in a further £500 million or £1 billion per annum. It is not possible to say how much it will cost to meet all the needs of all the people as those needs arise. Nevertheless, I say most earnestly to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State that our aim should be to treat all seriously ill people at the time when they need treatment. That is more important than keeping to a budget. This is the great dilemma. Do we, with all the extra techniques that have been developed, treat the people who can be treated, or do we keep to the budget? There cannot be any answer other than that we treat sick people, and expand the budget. If we have to expand the budget, so be it and we have to accept that lesson. One of the doctors at the Queen Elizabeth hospital in Birmingham said that he could treat all his liver patients now in the renal department if he had not overridden the budget already. We have to expand the budget and that must be recognised.

Such problems are not ours alone. This week, the *British Medical Journal* referred to the fact that Norway, West Germany, France, the Netherlands and New Zealand are busily reviewing their health systems because of the problems to which I have alluded.

I want to make one or two suggestions. I believe that the public are prepared to pay more money for the Health Service, but they must see that what they pay goes to the Health Service and does not disappear into the maw of the Exchequer. They do not trust the Exchequer and believe that the money will disappear, but they will gladly pay for direct health care. There are many ways to raise money, such as the voucher system and lotteries. I had thought that lotteries made only a small amount of money, but I had evidence recently that £1 billion could be raised each year. It is money that is there to be taken and it is right that we should do it.

There should be charges for hospitals for those who can afford them. It is the right thing to do. It has been estimated that if a charge of only £25 a night was made for those who could afford it—in the old days the almoners could tell us which people could afford it—that would bring in about £2,000 million a year, minus what it would cost to collect. One could not find a hotel for £25 a night. That £2,000 million is an enormous sum and hospital charges should be considered further because people are ready to pay.

Local functions for local hospitals are a very good idea. Those functions may be held for special causes, such as a CAT scanner or for the Birmingham children's hospital. The generosity of local people for every single local cause is undoubted. They will dig deep into their pockets for any call made by the local hospital. We should consider that further. It is difficult for patients to give money to a hospital to thank it, except through the league of friends. They should be able to make a direct contribution to hospital needs.

People who wish to use private hospitals—and can afford to do so—should be encouraged. I disagreed with my hon. Friend the Member for Suffolk, South (Mr. Yeo) when he said that that would not take a burden off the Health Service. It would take a great burden off the Health Service. I have mentioned already what the private sector does for the elderly. There is a lot of co-operation between the public and private sectors, such as the presentation of a lithotriptor. In some areas, the Health Service is being helped a great deal by the private hospitals and that is a very good thing.

We should recognise how unpopular it is with the public that yet more administrators are employed. In Birmingham, we have been threatened with the closure of a women's hospital yet, at the same time as that closure was announced, the authority asked for £40,000 more a year for two extra administrators. It was very unfortunate that a hospital should be closed while two extra administrators were employed. I do not deny that there is a need for administrators, but more time should be spent in explaining to the public why administrators are needed and why they are not necessarily the big bad wolf. Some of them make the hopitals run more efficiently. However, people do not like the fact that we are spending money on administrators and we should recognise that.

We must have balance in all things. Medical secretaries have been underpaid for years and something should be done about that. No consultant could operate properly without his medical secretary. I suppose that they are administrators of a sort.

I should be letting my area down if I did not refer directly to two of our major worries in Birmingham. At the Queen Elizabeth hospital, the great teaching hospital in my constituency of which I am very proud, a quarter of the beds have been closed. Because it is a teaching hospital, there is another worry: one cannot teach medicine to students when there are not enough patients to show them. If something is not done, we face the prospect of an end to all medical teaching at the hospital in October.

Twenty cancer victims a week are being turned down for admission and that worries me deeply. I should explain that they receive examinations; it is treatment that they cannot get. I reiterate the major point that I wanted to make. If it has to be a choice between finding more money and denying desperately sick people treatment, we must find more money.

7.26 pm

Mrs. Margaret Ewing (Moray): Like all the other hon. Members who have spoken, I extend my warmest greetings to the National Health Service on its 40th birthday. On behalf of my colleagues in Plaid Cymru and the Scottish National party, I express the warmest wishes that it will enjoy another 40 successful years and thank all those who have worked, and all those who now work, in the Health Service.

We have heard some interesting historical analyses, and I have listened with interest as the debate has moved back and forward across the Chamber and attempts have been made to claim credit for the National Health Service. That has seemed to me in some way to detract from the debate. As someone who has never been a member of the Labour party and who has no intention of becoming a member of the Labour party, I believe that historically credit must go to the post-war Labour Government for the work that was done and for the single-mindedness and dedication of the men and women of that era who ensured that the legislation establishing a National Health Service as we understand the term reached the statute book.

Many hon. Members, myself included, come from the generation of peace babies and we grew up with the National Health Service. Part of the problem that we have faced over the past 40 years is that many of us have tended to take the National Health Service for granted. There has been an element of apathy in the assumption that what we expect of the National Health Service should be readily available.

I have great personal cause to be grateful to the Health Servious because in my early teens I contracted tuberculosis—a disease that would probably have killed me 20 years earlier. I was in hospital for 13 months and I was given expert treatment. As I lay in plaster from my neck to my toes, I had a whole series of very effective modern drugs administered, and here I am now—a fairly healthy specimen, I think. [HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."] My father was a farm worker, and if he had had to pay directly for that treatment it would not have been possible. In considering the National Health Service, we must think of people who are on such low incomes that they cannot possibly afford such essential treatment.

With my colleagues in Plaid Cymru and the SNP, I believe that the allocation of money to the National Health Service is part of the political decision-making process. There are political priorities. We have heard hon. Members suggest new ways in which to fund the National Health Service. The hon. Member for Birmingham, Edgbaston (Dame J. Knight) has just suggested that people would be prepared to pay more for the National Health Service if they knew where their taxes were going. We can take that to its logical conclusion and argue the Government's political priorities. We can ask people how much they are prepared to pay in taxes to ensure that the NHS exists on the level that we want. I believe that they are prepared to pay much more but would say that the Government's priorities are such that they have no guarantee that the taxation revenue will be spent on the NHS. I know where the Government's priorities lie on the funding of the NHS or of Trident or cruise.

Over the past year or so, NHS workers have asked for only £2 billion—a small sum in the context of the Government's overall budget—yet their request has been rejected. Because of the Government's lack of political priorities, they have denied the Health Service the funding that is its right. Central taxation is a method of funding the NHS which we happily endorse. That is the view of people generally and is not unique to the House. Instead of redistributing wealth and ensuring that money was available to cater for the needy, the Government in their Budget gave handouts to the 20 per cent. richest people and denied the NHS access to central taxation.

It is always interesting in debates on the NHS to note what happens when we talk about the Scottish dimension, because of the difference in administration between England and Wales and Scotland. I am pleased to see here the Under-Secretary of State for Scotland—the hon. Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth)—and pleased also to see the hon. Member for Mid-Worcestershire (Mr. Forth), because it always seems right when a Scot is speaking to have a Scot basher sitting opposite.

It is usually argued that the Health Service in Scotland has a higher budget than the Health Service in England and Wales. The level of underfunding in Scotland is less acute than in England. According to the British Medical Association, estimates of the difference vary between 9 and 25 per cent. The BMA's survey shows

> "that the NHS in Scotland is working hard to stand still"

and highlights a number of deficiences.

> "Cash limiting on equipment purchases has resulted in difficulties in replacing worn out and broken equipment."

The BMA refers to

> "poor building maintenance and consequent deterioration in the fabric of many buildings and difficulties in recruiting and retaining medical secretaries and medical laboratory and scientific officers."

As hon. Members have been keen to talk about value for money, it is worth pointing out how the money spent on the Health Service in Scotland benefits the rest of the community. In Scotland twice as many medical students are taught as in England and Wales; hospital rates bills are almost four times higher. There is less private medicine, hence a greater dependency on the Health Service. There are vast rural areas in Scotland where, obviously, expenditure must be higher to cater for the local communities. If Scotland needs to spend a great deal of additional money on the NHS, it is perhaps because it has high records in terms of unemployment, bad housing, lack of facilities and poor environment—the issues mentioned by the hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) as factors creating many of the problems that necessitate having a Health Service. The Health Service in Scotland is effective. We want it to be maintained. We have a commitment to ensure that taxation is raised centrally to ensure its continuance.

We are all worried about care for the elderly. Those of us who have read the Griffiths report recognise that it is one of the most significant documents on this issue produced in recent years. All of us are sons or daughters and have individual responsibilities towards our parents, but collectively we have a responsibility in society to ensure that a service is available to the elderly.

All of us believe in community care, to which much reference has been made. It is not enough to cast people out into the community and hope that they will survive somehow. It is important to ensure that a variety of facilities is available to cater for the individual needs of our constituents. The Voluntary Services agency in Aberdeen, which is an important agency in the Grampian region, has laid down a series of principles of community care. First, there are the client's individual rights. Elderly people should be supported in their homes for as long as possible and should not be forced to move away from their family environment. Secondly, the elderly person should be seen as part of the family, community and environment. Thirdly, there is the principle of service provision—comprehensiveness, accessibility, co-ordination, continuity, promptness of intervention and prevention. I should like to think that the Department will take account of those good principles when it finally gets round to responding to Sir Roy Griffiths' interesting report.

The hon. Member for Edgbaston referred to private homes, many of which are old hotels and buildings that have been taken over by private individuals. I do not want to go into all the principles involved, but my basic concern

[Mrs. Margaret Ewing]

is that this approach to care for the elderly may result in those homes having staff with no professional training to cater for the needs of the elderly. Catering for the needs of the elderly goes far beyond keeping them dry, warm and fed. It means stimulation, treating them as the individuals they have been all their lives and ensuring that they lead as full a life as possible to the end of their days. I am worried that there is no way of assessing at the point of entry whether individuals receive the correct treatment and no way of monitoring and evaluating the service in them.

I urge the Government to consider the issue carefully and ensure that there are professionally trained people in those homes. If we must have these places, let us ensure that they reach the standards that we would expect for ourselves and our parents. Let us not treat them as "granny farms" but ensure that they genuinely care for the elderly.

These matters highlight some of the problems that face the NHS. I have tried to emphasise that the NHS expects the House to give a clear lead on how funding will develop. I have not heard from Government Members any statement that encourages me to think that the review will be anything other than a cost-cutting exercise. I hope that at the end of the debate we shall hear positive suggestions which will ensure that central funding of the NHS continues in such a way that we can meet the challenges and aspirations presented to us by the people.

7.39 pm

Rev. Ian Paisley (Antrim, North): We came to the House today to celebrate a birthday. I am sure that those looking in will wonder what sort of birthday party it is. Some hon. Members have denied that they had anything to do with the birth; some want to claim that they had everything to do with it. Some have said they were responsible, others that they were not.

Then there has been the suggestion that we should all go down to the bookmakers and place some bets and, if we win some money, we might be able to clothe and feed the individual who is now 40 years of age. I am sure that as people watch the debate they will realise that we are a close-knit family. Families say wonderful things, make wonderful suggestions and pass wonderful comments.

Although my politics are poles apart from those of the right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot), we are honoured to have with us one who was at the birth. Having been interested in politics for a long time, I have read quite a lot about those days, and I salute and honour the memory of Aneurin Bevan. He was a man who delivered the goods in the end. While there may be much controversy about the how, when and where, there is no doubt that if it had not been for the push, energy and strength of argument that he supplied we would not be celebrating this birth today.

However, when the right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent chose to quote from one of his own writings he struck a resounding chord in my breast by mentioning the Jesuits.

As an Ulster Member of Parliament, certain matters concern me; and as the only hon. Member representing Ulster who will be able to take part in the debate I want to make the views that I am putting across as broad as possible. I am sorry to see that we are not graced with the presence of the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, who is in charge of health and social services there. He was in the Chamber a while ago, but he has now gone. Perhaps he will read my contribution.

The Government amendment states that the Government are

> "devoting record resources to the Service to enable both hospitals and community services to provide more care than ever before".

I just have to open my eyes to see what is happening to the Health Service in my area. But, first, it is only right that I should pay a warm tribute to all the workers in the Health Service in Northern Ireland, who work through great difficulties. I salute the consultants, doctors, nurses, ancillary workers, ambulance drivers and those who do the cleaning for all that they have done. I know that a small minority during the troubles have not co-operated, and when people who had been seriously wounded by bombs and shootings arrived at hospital they would not even wheel them into the operating theatre. But those were a small percentage. The vast majority merit our support, so I pay this tribute to them.

We have four health boards in Northern Ireland—the Eastern, Southern, Western and Northern. The Northern board covers the area that I and other hon. Members represent in the House. It starts at Antrim and goes right up the coast. It takes in part of Londonderry and stretches into the middle of mid-Ulster. In that area acute hospital services have been located in Coleraine, Ballymoney, Ballymena, mid-Ulster, Larne, Whiteabbey and Dalriada in Ballycastle. Now, under the cuts, all but two of these hospitals are to be axed. No hon. Member could be happy about that.

What are we being offered instead? We are being offered phase 1 of a new hospital at Antrim at the southern extremity of the whole Northern area. It will have only 300 beds. In the northern part of the area there will be an extension to the present Coleraine hospital which, when it is all fixed up, will give us possibly 450 acute beds—for a population of 380,000 people. That concerns the consultants, doctors, nurses, and all who are interested in the well-being of the people of the area. I trust that it will not go ahead.

We have tried in every way to stop the machine that dictates that this must happen. We are trying to get a public inquiry, but it has been refused. The Minister told us that even if the health board disagreed with him he would still go ahead with the scheme, which shows two things. First, there is not enough funding for the Health Service, and, secondly, there is terrible cost ineffectiveness. Phase 1 of the new hospital will cost £37 million, but it will cost £65 million to deal with the road works and all the other servicing of the hospital. Such a sum could be more effectively spent. Some of the people going to the hospital will have to travel, not on motorways, but through pointless winding country roads—27 miles of them in some cases—to get there. That is intolerable to the people of my constituency and of the whole board area.

Another point needs emphasising, too. We need home care for our people. We need the meals on wheels and more home helps. Now they are being cut back to such an extent that people who were able before to have a home help for two or three hours a day are being offered one for half an hour in the morning and half an hour in the evening. That is not good enough for elderly people. Like the hon. Member for Moray (Mrs. Ewing), I am worried about the new care centres for the elderly, which do not provide proper care or professional nursing staff. The Government need to examine carefully what is happening.

The Health Service is the envy of the world. Everywhere I have travelled in the world people have asked me about it and what is available through it. It is something that we should boast about and sell to the world. It is unique to our United Kingdom and it is worthy of all our support. I hope that we shall hear encouraging things after the debate, and I hope that we will all back the Health Service.

7.49 pm

Mr. Robert N. Wareing (Liverpool, West Derby): I was pleased to hear my right hon. Friend the Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot) talking about his experiences in the House when the National Health Service was introduced. I remember as a youngster going along to a meeting on the Sunday before the NHS came into being to hear the late Bessie Braddock talking about the change that was about to take place. The leaflet advertising the meeting was headed "The end of the Poor Law . . . Come to the funeral of the Poor Law."

The House should be reminded that the introduction of the NHS by Aneurin Bevan was partnered with the introduction of other elements of the welfare state, such as the comprehensive national insurance scheme introduced by Jim Griffiths. With that comprehensive system the Poor Law was ended. What makes people fear for the future of the NHS is that the Government have wrought and are wreaking havoc in the welfare state in many other respects. The social fund is in reality the new Poor Law.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security (Mrs. Edwina Currie): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Wareing: I have only just started my speech, but, for the hon. Lady, I will give way.

Mrs. Currie: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman, who is a fellow Scouse. I am following his speech with the greatest interest. Does he agree that, on this the 40th birthday of the NHS and in a debate of such importance, it is a tragedy that the sum total of Opposition Members now present is two Front Benchers and three Back Benchers?

Mr. Wareing: I assure the Minister that this debate would not be taking place but for the Labour party. For one thing, this is an Opposition day. The Secretary of State would not raise a debate on the NHS at this time. We would not be having the debate at all had it not been for Clement Attlee, Aneurin Bevan and Jim Griffiths, but we shall have more and more debates about the destruction of the welfare state under the Tory Government.

I got hold of a copy of the Conservative research department brief on the National Health Service and read about all the marvellous achievements that are supposed to have taken place under the Government. Some of those achievements, however, are hardly to be applauded. The hon. Member for Wycombe (Mr. Whitney) did not mention that, at a time when the Chancellor is telling us that we have a buoyant economy and have created marvellous wealth for our country, only three other countries in the European Community—Spain, Portugal and Greece—spend a lower percentage of their gross domestic product on health care, and those countries cannot claim that they have North sea oil. The future of the Health Service depends largely on the strength of the economy, and people fear for it because of our chronic manufacturing trade deficit.

Mr. Alistair Burt (Bury, North): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Wareing: No. The hon. Gentleman must remember that Mr. Deputy Speaker has asked for short speeches. Even if I give way, Mr. Deputy Speaker may deny the hon. Gentleman the chance to make his speech.

The people of this country have a right to be suspicious of the Tory party. I was pleased today to hear the Secretary of State speak along much more "consensus" lines than we remember in the past. Perhaps the Tory party realises how popular the Health Service is in this country, and is moving away from some of the outrageous statements made in the recent past by the extreme Right wing. But the Prime Minister's promise in April 1979 that there would be no increase in prescription charges, and the promise in 1980 that there would be no charges for the eyesight test. do not infuse Opposition Members with confidence that the Government will not return to some of the hare-brained schemes—I believe that the Minister has called some of them batty—that have come from the Adam Smith Institute and other extreme Right-wing think tanks.

According to the Institute's Omega report of 1984,

> "At present, many of the resources of the health service are spent on people who are quite able to pay their own way . . . Charging . . . for non-essential 'hotel' services would seem a reasonable way of asking the more affluent to take up a greater part of the health care burden."

The Tories often say, "We shall exempt those who are poor and in need," but the institute went on to say:

> "However, the temptation to exempt too many groups will defeat the whole object of the exercise—for example, some 31 million people are entitled to free prescriptions . . . Food and other items would have to be found by the patient whether in hospital or not, and it seems reasonable that the service should not cover completely free non-medical services and comfort trimmings."

[HON. MEMBERS: "Yes."] I hear Conservative Members saying that they agree with that. That is why the people of this country know that the Health Service is not safe in the hands of the Conservative party.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: What is wrong with it?

Mr. Wareing: I will tell the hon. Gentleman what is wrong with it. The people are already paying through taxation, based, we hope, on a system that involves the rich paying more than the poor.

The question of food provision in hospitals is a question of providing the right diet as part of patients' treatment. It is revealing that many people say that there are splits among the Opposition. I challenge the Minister for Health, when he comes to reply—he is not here at present, but I assume that the Parliamentary Under-Secretary is not replying to the debate—to take up the point made by his Back Benchers. Does he agree that there should be charges for food and other so-called "trimmings", as suggested by the Right-wing extremists who now control Conservative Central Office?

Mr. Bennett *ro*[illegible]—

Mr. Wareing: The hon. Gentleman can make his own speech.

[Mr. Wareing]

The Adam Smith Institute also talks about charging for ambulances, saying:

> "Non-urgent ambulance journeys can also be charged for".

Even the Minister for Health, quoted in *The Guardian* on 22 December 1987, said that

> "it would not be unreasonable to consider charging for food. Meals alone cost about £3 a patient a day . . . Quite a lot of people feel that it is not unreasonable to at least contemplate whether expenditure on food for people who are in hospital and not at home should be taken into account".

Interestingly, Dr. Maureen Dixon, director of the Institute of Health Service Management, said that that was facile, and the British Medical Association also pooh-poohed the idea. [HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."] It does not surprise me to hear Tory Members saying, "Hear, hear." A London Weekend Television poll found that

> "nearly two thirds of Tory MPs are worried about the NHS",

but the poll, carried out by the Harris Research Centre, showed that

> "63 per cent. of the 135 Tories questioned . . .believed that NHS patients should pay bed-and-board charges for staying in hospital. Moreover, 56 per cent. favoured a charge for visits to family doctors, with exemptions for the old and needy. Sixty five per cent. wanted tax concessions for private health insurance."

We are not out of the wood yet, because there is the danger that, following the review, the Government will go for private health insurance and will give firms incentives to provide insurance for their employees. Aneurin Bevan put succinctly the argument against any industrial basis for a private insurance scheme. In "In Place of Fear", he said of such schemes:

> "they are no substitute for a national scheme. An industrial basis is too narrow for the wide range of medical needs which should be met, both for the worker and for his family."

He referred to the experience under the old approved societies. Such a system would mean two types of health insurance provision—that in the expanding industries and that in declining industries.

Under the present regime, we are moving rapidly towards an increasing involvement of the private sector in health provision. It is an unplanned expansion and there is no co-operation between the public and private sectors. More and more private nursing homes are blossoming, and they are being created without any thought of the need to plan properly. In the Mersey region, in two of the hospital areas—Chester and Fazakerley in Liverpool—private nursing homes are being opened. No doubt they will make profits for health care firms, but there will be no real concern for monitoring the provision of these services. In south-central Liverpool, 2,500 elderly people are in private nursing homes, but at what cost to the DHSS?

The NHS has to service these homes, and local doctors have to treat people in them. However, the family practitioner committees have no part in the planning or monitoring of the services provided by these homes. There is no formal complaints procedure and the community health councils have no say in the workings of these private nursing homes. The health authorities do not have the manpower to monitor whether they provide proper catering and accommodation and whether the medical treatment required by elderly patients, such as physiotherapy, is being provided.

I hope that the Minister for Health will look at the issue of proper funding of the ancillary services in hospitals. So far, he has set his face against agreeing that the recommendations of the review bodies on the pay for health staffs will be fully funded by the Government. If they are not, there will be a continuation of the strains on nurses in hospitals. In its report, the Select Committee says that it was told by the Royal College of Nursing that studies in two areas—St. Thomas' hospital in London, and Southampton—showed that nurses spent 40 per cent. of their time on non-nursing duties such as taking patients to and from departments, collecting medical notes, collecting incontinence pads and doing the sort of work that other helpers should be doing. Although it is important, pay is not the only reason for the difficulty in recruiting nurses. A bigger problem is the burden on nurses who have to work long hours, often dealing with difficult patients and doing other people's work.

The low pay of ancillary staffs and all those who are part of the collective health team upon which the treatment of the patient depends should be greatly improved. Over 30 per cent. of the wages bill of the NHS goes on ancillary staff, so it is incumbent on any Government who believe in maintaining standards in the NHS to fund that improvement in full. I hope that the Minister will say something about this.

It is difficult for people with the sort of philosophy that is dominant in the present-day Tory party to consider what is needed in the fight against disease and to help those who are suffering. That involves the philosophy and values not of the yuppie mentality, the "loadsamoney" mentality, or the stock exchange, but of something much higher in humanity, which fills those of us who believe in the NHS. I know that, in the words of Aneurin Bevan——

Mr. Forth: Not again.

Mr. Wareing: Yes, again. In his "In Place of Fear" he spoke about

> "the massive contribution the British Health Service makes to the equipment of a civilised society. It has now become a part of the texture of our national life. No political party would survive that tried to destroy it."

That truth may be getting home to the Secretary of State. I hope that, no matter what other destruction is wrought on this country by the most evil Government that we have had this century, they have learnt the lesson from popular opinion that they dare not destroy Britain's Health Service.

8.7 pm

Mr. Roger Sims (Chislehurst): It is a pity that the hon. Member for Liverpool, West Derby (Mr. Wareing), having obtained a copy of the Conservative party briefing for this debate, did not read it. Had he done so and contributed to the debate from it, he would have made a rather more constructive speech than the extremely unhelpful and in many respects inaccurate one that he made.

The 40 years of the NHS is a cause for celebration. We have a good story to tell. A debate in the House is the opportunity to tell it and to look to the future. That is exactly what my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State did in an effective and wide-ranging speech. What have we heard from the Opposition? Over the weekend we heard the Leader of the Opposition, and today we heard from the Opposition Front Bench spokesman, the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) and the hon. Member for West

Derby, each of them with a catalogue of gloom, doom and criticism. Have we heard one word of constructive comment from them?

Ms. Hilary Armstrong (Durham, North-West): The hon. Gentleman did not hear the speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field).

Mr. Sims: I shall refer to the hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) in a moment.

One wonders whether some Opposition Members have read the Health Service report for 1986-87 and absorbed some of the facts and figures in it. It shows that there has been increased expenditure on hospitals and family practitioner services and that £960 million has gone on capital expenditure. Have the Opposition seen the figures of additional funds released by the sale of surplus land and of cost improvements that have released cash for patient care? Do they not accept that we are now spending £45 million a day on the NHS? It is treating more patients than ever before. There are more doctors, dentists and nurses, and they are better paid. The facts are completely different from the picture that the Opposition seek to draw.

After 40 years, this is a good time to consider the structure, funding and functions of the National Health Service. Many changes have taken place in those 40 years. My hon. Friend the Member for Eastleigh (Sir D. Price) referred to the change in the age composition of the population. There have been enormous changes in the treatment and the methods available. Sophisticated and expensive drugs and surgical techniques that were undreamt of 40 years ago have become available in the past few years.

It is right that the Government should be reviewing the structure, functions and funding of the Health Service. It is also right that the Social Services Select Committee, of which I am a member, should be reviewing it. Is the Labour party reviewing the National Health Service? We look in vain for any new ideas. We have heard none today and there are certainly none in the motion. As is so often the case, it is the Conservatives who are progressive and who are putting forward the new ideas. It is the Labour party that remains conservative. Its only policies are to oppose any new ideas, and simply to demand more money.

I agree that more expenditure is needed, and we have said as much in the Social Services Select Committee. I shall not argue with the Minister for Health or the Secretary of State about how much that should be or how it should be calculated. However, I notice that, although the Secretary of State sometimes disputes the Select Committee's conclusions, he has occasionally made extra funds available. I should like to think that our conclusions are having some influence on him. I certainly argue that the extra funds should be for specific purposes. We will not solve the problems of the Health Service by simply throwing money at it.

I should like briefly to examine four areas. One is information technology to which the hon. Member for Birkenhead referred. The House will have realised how fortunate we are in having the hon. Gentleman as Chairman of our Social Services Select Committee after his well argued and reasoned speech. His was the exception to what I have said hitherto about Opposition Members' speeches. Information technology is now widespread in industry and commerce. The National Health Service is a huge undertaking, yet it is way behind in its use of information technology. It will have to catch up.

I welcome the plans to introduce the family practitioner service's data communications network that will enable GPs to communicate with each other and have access to National Health Service data. I welcome, too, the introduction of resource management trials in various hospitals. They will enable consultants and managers to know the cost of operations and treatment—something that they do not know at the moment. They will give managers the tools of cost control and will also make practicable the operation of the internal market. They will also streamline the way in which consultants can handle patients. For example, they will be able to arrange a series of tests of a patient in one step, simply by pressing a button or two, instead of spending time completing a whole series of forms.

Resource management will benefit the patient and lead to more efficient use of the skilled manpower in the service, but it will be expensive. In one health authority that the Select Committee visited, we were given a figure of £3 million to £4 million. That expenditure will, of necessity, be phased and it must in the long run be to the benefit of the National Health Service and all its users.

Secondly, we must make greater use of the private sector. We have seen examples today of the Opposition's Pavlovian reaction to any reference to the private sector, although it is interesting that many members of the Labour party are happy to use the private sector, and, of course, some 40,000 trade union members are covered by private health insurance.

The Labour party is fond of referring to the proportions of GDP that are spent on health expenditure. It is interesting that, as a country, we spend rather less on health care as a proportion of the GDP than do many others. We should encourage more people, who can afford it, to spend more of their money on private health.

There is ample scope for more co-operation between the private sector and the National Health Service in both directions. There are many examples of where the National Health Service has contracted out to the private sector for operations, such as hip replacement. Similarly, the private sector is using the National Health facilities on a cash basis, obviously to the advantage of the NHS. The problem is that in many parts of the country local political views and political appointees on the health authorities prevent that co-operation from developing.

Thirdly, the pay increases to the nurses have been widely welcomed. We must now study the problem of the ancillaries' pay. For example, I have in mind the MLSOs and medical secretaries, who perform a vital role. Many consultants rely simply on women who produce their notes out of a sense of personal loyalty and dedication to the service—certainly not for the money they receive. They could do far better by going down the road and working in the commercial sector.

I would like to take this opportunity to draw particular attention to the profusionists. Hon. Members may not be familiar with them. There are only 140 in the country. In laymen's terms, their job is to attend to the equipment used for pumping blood around the body during heart surgery. I suppose that, if one has to define them, they are a cross between clinical technicians and anaesthetists. They form an integral part of a theatre operating team and without them heart surgery would stop, yet they are on the PTBE

[Mr. Sims]

grade—the lowest grade. A top profusionist earns half the salary of a top radiologist. Like other ancillaries, they are vital to the NHS, and it is important that we should consider their case. I am sorry that the Secretary of State did not feel able to meet a deputation from the profusionists. I hope that after my remarks he will be prepared to reconsider that.

The fourth area is that of preventive medicine. It could be the subject of a speech in itself, but I simply confine myself to welcoming the documents recently produced by the Health Education Authority and its efforts to promote the "look after your heart" campaign.

As chairman of the parliamentary ASH group, I draw attention to the largest avoidable cause of disease and death—smoking. I pay tribute to the work of ASH in trying to promote its cause. I suggest that a modest increase in funds to both those bodies would reduce the demands on the National Health Service, whose 40 years of success we are pleased to celebrate today.

8.18 pm

Mr. William O'Brien (Normanton): I am pleased to take part in this debate. We are celebrating the 40th anniversary of the Health Service. We must express our appreciation for the work that people in the Health Service do on behalf of patients.

The hon. Member for Chislehurst (Mr. Sims) referred to the Secretary of State's speech and the value of private medicine. I suggest that the right hon. Gentleman is blinkered. He mentioned the history of the service but had to have his attention drawn to the fact that he had not mentioned its architect. Only after provocation did the right hon. Gentleman accept that he had made an error in not referring to Aneurin Bevan.

The hon. Member for Chislehurst is effectively saying that if a person is wealthy he can afford to buy health. My constituency covers three health authority areas, one of which, Wakefield, is going through a traumatic period—and it has been since we had the salmonella poisoning outbreak at Stanley Royd hospital. The oubreak arose as a result of inadequate funding with which to provide a proper kitchen for hospital meals. Nothing has changed very much.

I invite Conservative Members to come and see what is happening in my constituency. They would see how the health authority has been starved of the resources necessary to provide the patient care that everyone screams we should have. If Conservative Members are sincere, I suggest that they visit Wakefield.

On 16 June, I received a letter from the Minister for Health. It was a copy of a letter that he had sent to the chairman of the health authority. I wrote to the Minister asking to meet him because of what he did not say in that letter, but the meeting has not been arranged. It appears that the Minister is afraid to discuss what is happening with Wakefield health authority because of what would be revealed. It would become clear that what the Secretary of State said today is a pack of lies and that nobody can believe what the Tories say about defending the Health Service. What is happening in Wakefield should be revealed.

We asked for an independent inquiry into the area's management, but it has been refused by the Minister. An inquiry is being carried out, but by the regional health authority. That cannot be fair or reasonable because of the authority's interest in the matter. There will be tremendous rancour in my area when the report is published because it is clear that the inquiry's findings will not be in the best interests of the area. There will be tremendous shortfalls in its recommendations.

On the evening of Sunday 26 June, in the cardiac ward at Pinderfield hospital, all the patients were aroused because staff came in saying that they wanted more accommodation. People had to be moved—at 11 pm on a Sunday. The health authority is being reduced to that because it is not being allowed sufficient resources. Unfortunately, a patient died that evening.

A constituent who had suffered a couple of heart attacks suffered another over the Christmas period and was refused admission. That person died shortly afterwards. Imagine how distraught a person's wife and family are when he needs help but cannot receive it. People cannot receive help because the health authority has had to cut the number of beds in the unit to meet budget proposals. That is the kind of Health Service that Conservative Members say they support. Heaven help us if that is how the future develops.

We are told that resources necessary to meet requirements are now available and that people who can afford to go private ought to do so. A constituent came to see me on Saturday. She has wanted treatment and hospital care for some time. In a statement she sent to me she says:

> "It was the first week in December 1987. My leg had deteriorated rapidly and there was a distinct shortening. Dr. Gaunt gave me no choice of consultants saying only that she would ask Mr. Ghali to see me as he had a very short waiting list and I would be seen before Christmas . . . She told me I could have physiotherapy on the NHS. I would also be fitted with a heel lift for my rapidly shortening limb. I was grateful for this as I live on a very narrow income with little stretchability to include private treatment of any sort. Alas, that promise was unfulfilled. Towards the end of January I received an appointment to see Mr. Ghali in June!!! I rang his secretary thinking there must be some mistake; I was told that had Dr. Gaunt put 'URGENT' on the request I would have been seen much earlier. Back to Dr. Gaunt . . . She refused to request an urgent appointment and said the only way I could be seen earlier was by seeing Mr. Ghali privately at Methley Park. I again pointed out the limitations of my income and also my principles which baulked at private treatment. However she refused to enter into any more conversation and unhappily I had to agree to the private consultation. An appointment was then obtained within 48 hours."

The House should remember that she was given an appointment for June in January. The statement continues:

> "I had a 20 minute consultation with Mr. Ghali and within a couple of days had received his account for £50, he had my cheque by the weekend . . . He assured me that I was now on the waiting list. I asked whether it would be possible to be transferred to another health authority with a shorter waiting list. I was prepared to go anywhere in the country. Mr. Ghali replied he has the shortest waiting list in the land—from 6-9 months. My leg was then 1½" shorter. Mr. Ghali promised me a heel lift and physiotherapy in the meantime."

We have heard today that that can be done.

> "My leg now began to deteriorate rapidly, the shortage increasing to 2" at which point I had a heel lift fitted privately, within two weeks I could no longer put my foot to the ground again and the shortening had increased to 3" . . . I wrote to Mr. Ghali now fearing that my limbs would not be brought into alignment. By this time, it was April and I had previously seen Mr. Ghali in February at Pinderfield under the NHS. He reassured me that my place was safely on the waiting list and again promised a heel lift and physiotherapy . . . these

> promises never took place—hence—my own purchasing of heel lift. Mr. Ghali failed to reply to my letter but within 10 days of my writing him I had an application form from Mercantile Credit for a financial loan, this came unsolicited by mail; one of the 'benefits' outlined was that of private surgery . . . In my letter to Mr. Ghali, I had included the sentence: 'I do not have the financial resources to seek private treatment'".

That is the kind of situation that is developing. Patients who admit that they do not have the money to buy private medicine are being canvassed by moneylenders to mortgage their future so that they can have private medical care.

That is Thatcher's Britain of 1988. The Secretary of State buries his head in the political sand. I challenge the Secretary of State, the Minister for Health and the Under-Secretary of State to come to my area. I will introduce them to case after case similar to the one to which I have just referred. When Conservative Members tell me how they see the Health Service, I tell them that they are blinkered and indoctrinated with Tory philosophy. My constituents will receive treatment only if there is an end to Tory doctrine. That is the only way to make the Health Service free at the point of need. Until the Government do that, the Health Service will not be run satisfactorily.

I add my plea to those of my colleagues and of the leader of my party for additional resources. The £2 billion requested last year should be channelled into the Health Service. We had a windfall last year and certain moneys were allocated to the regions. The sum of £4·5 million was allocated to the Yorkshire region. The £230,000 allocated to the Wakefield district health authority was channelled into the cook-chill system, which has caused so much antagonism in my area. The money did not go to patient care. It went to meet the shortfall of a system that is being introduced against the wishes and interests of patients in that area. The money was spent on an idea put forward by the district manager that we should have a cook-chill system in hospitals rather than traditional meals.

Conservative Members should wake up and realise that what is happening in the Health Service is not the rose-coloured development to which the Secretary of State refers. The real world is what the patients are having to suffer. If Conservative Members do not believe that that is the case, I invite them to come to my constituency and witness for themselves what we are having to go through.

8.32 pm

Mr. John Maples (Lewisham, West): The hon. Member for Normanton (Mr. O'Brien) has given us an impassioned and obviously heartfelt criticism of what is wrong with the Health Service. However, in common with the speeches of all his other hon. Friends, except the hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field), his speech failed to contribute anything new to what might be done about the problems of the Health Service. In such a debate, on the 40th anniversary of the Health Service, when a deep and serious review by the Government is under way, one would have thought that we could have looked to the Opposition for some constructive thoughts and ideas. We do not expect that from the Leader of the Opposition. I do not think that he is given to deep thought on that or other matters.

Ms. Hilary Armstrong (Durham, North-West): You got it on Sunday.

Mr. Maples: We expect the catchphrases and shallow polemics that we heard on Sunday. The hon. Lady will get a chance to make her speech in a moment.

The hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) is one of the intellectual heavyweights in the shadow Cabinet and we might have expected something a little more constructive and heavyweight from him, instead of which we had his usual witty and eloquent speech poking fun at the Government's review. We heard nothing new or constructive. He appeared to echo what now seems to be Labour party policy on the NHS, that the Government should have spent the £2 billion used in tax cuts on the NHS. Hon. Members may believe that, but, if we had a Labour Government, we would not have the £2 billion. That has come from the fact that the economy has grown for the past eight years whereas, with a Labour Government, it would not have done so.

We had some lecturing on history, not least from the right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot), who took us on a nostalgic tour of the late 1940s. Although he describes that period eloquently, I do not believe that he has ever moved out of it. With all the talk about Aneurin Bevan, the 1940s and what the Labour party did to fund the National Health Service, one wonders whether the period from 1974 to 1979 existed. In the rewriting of the history of Socialism, have the Labour Governments of Harold Wilson and Jim Callaghan been obliterated?

Conservative Members take it ill from Opposition Members when they criticise us about underfunding. When the Labour party was responsible for those matters in Government, it cut spending in the Health Service and completely halted the hospital building programme. Lectures from Opposition Members on those matters come very ill and appear extremely hypocritical.

There is no doubt that, whatever is wrong with the Health Service, in the past five years, more doctors and nurses have treated more patients more efficiently than ever before. One may ask oneself how that fact compares with the fact that beds are being closed and the public and many doctors are unhappy about what is happening in the Health Service. I want to make a constructive suggestion about one of the things that the Government might do in their review. The causes of what is going on are a combination of medical advances, an aging population and, quite correctly, higher expectations of people about what the Health Service might deliver to them. The Opposition pretend that it is simply a question of money, but that is not true. In real terms, the Governnent are spending £5 billion more than was being spent in 1979, yet some problems still remain. The idea that another £2 billion or £3 billion will solve that problem is simply incredible.

Potential demand is being fulfilled, but we need some form of rationing, by queue, price or regulation. In the Health Service, we have it by queue and in the private sector we have it by price. I prefer queues to prices in that connection. My right hon. Friends the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State are right at this point to conduct a serious review and I hope that they are considering the objectives of the Health Service. Those are crucial. We must decide what we are trying to do and what we cannot do with the Health Service and its funding. However, the structure of the NHS is the most important point to which I wish to address my remarks. There is no point in deciding

[Mr. Maples]

whether we should spend any more money before we have decided whether we have the right structure in place for delivering the service.

I and all my hon. Friends remain thoroughly and wholeheartedly committed to the Health Service, but that does not mean that it must be delivered in the form in which it is presently delivered. I wish to make a plea to my hon. Friend the Minister and to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for a move towards the establishment of an internal market. That would get us around some of the difficulties over the present administration of the Health Service which is necessarily bureaucratic and monolithic. There is little or no consumer choice and no competition in pursuit of efficiency. That question of efficiency is crucial to how much money we should spend.

Considerable advances have been made in management, with doctors becoming involved in the costs and choices that face them, but various matters raise considerable doubts in one's mind. For example, bed occupancy varies from 70 per cent. to 90 per cent. between district health authorities. The average length of stay varies from three and a half to 11 days. The recent National Audit Office study of the use of operating theatres came to the amazing conclusion that the average daytime weekly theatre usage is probably in the range of 50 to 60 per cent. We are told that the United States has a substantial overprovision of health services in many areas because of doctors' incentives to sell them, yet they manage to get by on six hospital beds per thousand people, whereas we have eight.

The performance indicators produced recently by the DHSS are perhaps not as reliable as we should like them to be, but I should like to take three of them which illustrate my point that there are enormous discrepancies of cost in different health authorities. If we take the cost per case as a percentage of the average, after having been adjusted for case mix and mobility, in the South-East Thames region there are variations between Camberwell in south-east Kent, at 3 per cent. below the national average, to Dartford and Gravesham, which is 115 per cent. above. That is a 20 per cent. variation in one region and there are similar variations between health authorities across the country.

The cost of providing the hotel service on a per bed, per year basis, varies among regions. In East Anglia, it is just over £1,000 and in north-east Thames it is just over £1,700. That is a variation of 66 per cent. Within the South East Thames region, the lowest is Maidstone with £895. The highest is a health authority which is well known to the hon. Member for Peckham (Ms. Harman) and myself, with £4,487. That is a factor of five. How can it cost five times as much in one authority as it does in another? The statistics to which I have already referred show that the highest costs are not always to be found in inner London. Camberwell is one of the cheapest areas on the basis of cost per case. There must be something radically wrong if one authority can do something for a fifth of the price of another.

I shall take one more example, and that is expenditure on linen, or laundry. There is a variation from £6·50 in Oxford to £10·90 in the South West Thames region. That is a variation of 67 per cent. Within the South East Thames region, the most expensive area is Eastbourne, with £14·80. The cheapest area is Hastings, which is next door, with £4·40. How can it cost three and a half times as much to provide a linen service for a hospital in Eastbourne as it does in Hastings? I suggest that these massive discrepancies should make us ask ourselves whether services are being provided as efficiently as possible.

Mrs. Alice Mahon (Halifax): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Maples: No. I am sure that the hon. Lady will have the opportunity to make her speech. I wish to be brief.

There are no clinical unit costs available. It would be interesting to know the cost of a hip replacement in one area compared with the cost in another. Those are figures towards which an internal market must work. The old DHSS performance indicators, which were issued in 1982, contained such figures. The cost of a maternity case varied throughout the country from £215 to £690. It would seem that the discrepancies in unit costs are repeated in clinical areas as well. We cannot escape the conclusion that if the best practice were followed, or if the 20 per cent. best practice were followed across the country, we would obtain much more health care for the money that we are spending. That is why I suggest to my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State that we move towards introducing an internal market. It would expose cost discrepancies, and competition between the providers of care within the market would encourage best practice. We would have smaller management units. The Health Service is enormous, and the British are terrible at running large organisations. I believe that smaller units would be much better run.

A free service does not necessarily have to be provided by the state. I believe passionately that we should have a free Health Service, but it does not have to be provided by the state. The private sector virtues of competition and the promotion of choice and efficiency can be introduced within a free state service, and that is being done in education. The purpose of some of the reforms that we are introducing in education is to promote diversity, choice and efficiency. That can be done within the Health Service too, while it remains a free service.

In the internal market that I have in mind, the money would follow the patient. The job of district health authorities would be to buy health care, in some instances from public hospitals and in others from private hospitals and charitable hospitals. National Health Service hospitals would become free-standing institutions competing for patients. The district health authority would be able to compare costs and negotiate the costs of what it would obtain from the various hospitals. It could obtain the combination of the best service that it wanted at the lowest price. That is not open to an authority now when budgeting is done on a block basis. I believe that choice would develop as hospitals specialised. The costly duplication that we see now would be eliminated, or at least reduced.

To some extent, that is happening already. It is not a revolutionary idea. I should like to pretend that it is and that I thought of it, but it is not. The NHS buys all its drugs and supplies in the private sector. We do not feel that it is necessary for the NHS to produce those items. Many of the fees for private nursing home treatment for what would otherwise be NHS patients are paid by the DHSS. In Guy's hospital, which is in the district that contains my constituency and that of the hon. Member for Peckham, the private wing never made any money and caused many problems. The management of these wings was handed over to a private hospital, which is now making some money from it. The two hospitals buy and sell services from and to each other. Pathology and X-ray services are sold to the operators of the private wing. It is an arrangement which helps both hospitals. There are many examples of district hospitals buying and selling services to and from one another and from the private sector. In 1985, the last year for which I have figures, 28,000 NHS patients were treated in private hospitals.

One of the most interesting examples is the establishment in Wales of a renal dialysis unit, which was put out to tender to a private company. Tenders were invited on a cost per case basis and the unit cost was reduced from £120 to £80. The unit was built and was running in six months. Any of us who are trying to secure capital improvements for our local district hospitals through the region and the Department know that that process has to be measured in years rather than months.

The practices which I have described should be extended further. The district health authorities should be used as the engines for developing an internal market. This is not something that can be introduced in the form of a big bang, but it should be allowed to grow. It is crucial that district health authorities should be told in their budgeting that they are not to give a block grant of £30 million to one hospital and £22 million to another. Instead, they should be instructed to buy costed and budgeted items of service from the units that are providing the services. The creation of an internal market in health care would promote efficiency and choice, which we all want to see. It would be more likely than the present system to provide patients with what they want. It should deliver more health care for the same amount of money. There would still be rationing and there would be difficult choices to make, but at least we would know that money was being spent to the maximum effect.

8.48 pm

Rev. Martin Smyth (Belfast, South): I welcome the opportunity of participating in the debate. The day began for me by watching the Under-Secretary of State on television. Like me, the hon. Lady was a member of the previous Select Committee on Social Services, and she criticised the present Committee because it is looking for more money. I assure her and the House that the Select Committee is like its predecessor in that it is determined to examine the issues and report accordingly. If we request more money, it is because the evidence thus far shows that that money is needed.

As I said yesterday during the press conference, the Committee's first report was criticised for producing an arbitrary figure that was plucked out of the air. Since that figure was published, we have discovered that the Minister has graciously pumped quite substantial sums into the Health Service. I said at the press conference that I do not mind what words are used by the Secretary of State as long as his actions speak louder than those words.

As we pay tribute to 40 years of the National Health Service, it is not amiss for any of us to examine in detail what is going on. I have no hesitation in saying on behalf of the people of Northern Ireland that we know the benefits of the Health Service. For 18 years before becoming an hon. Member I ministered in the congregation of which the first Minister of Health under the Health Service, the late William Grant, was a member. He was a Labour Unionist who was concerned to find the best services for the people at the best rates.

During my life I have seen tremendous changes from the days when I was a patient in the old fever hospital. It stood on the City hospital site, where there is now a magnificent tower block to serve the people of south Belfast. I pay tribute to the work that has been done. However, in the NHS, as in Parliament, the Church and every part of society, there will be excellent workers and the mediocre. There will be dedicated nurses and others who will be looking for Mrs. Brown every half hour of the day. For those who do not know what Mrs. Brown is, may I say that it is a code term for a cup of tea. We pay tribute to what has been achieved but we recognise the disparities that arise.

It is not enough to look back nostalgically and to think of the past as being wonderful because, in my judgment, there was from the very beginning an arbitrary figure snatched from the air for the service's funding, and we have never fully recovered from that.

Accordingly, if I may follow the hon. Member for Lewisham, West (Mr. Maples), the recommendation to which the hon. Member for Eastleigh (Sir D. Price) referred in his reasoned address pinpointed one of the Health Service's great needs, which is for better information technology. Anyone who imagines that the Select Committee was being unreasonable in suggesting that it would take another £1·8 billion to meet the Health Service's current pattern and improve it should remember that subsequent evidence has confirmed that reasoning.

It is exceedingly difficult to know the state of progress in every district, because some districts do not know what state they are in. In addition, judging by some of the answers I receive from the Department in Northern Ireland, which is much smaller than the equivalent Department in England, it also does not know the answers to all the questions. We are told that the best parliamentary question is the one to which one knows the answer before asking it, because time and again we discover that the Departments do not have the answers.

If there is to be an internal market, the district authorities must be supplied with the right tools. Only then will they be able accurately to price their services. I speak from experience. Even in a small community such as we have in Northern Ireland, the services provided by the Eastern board to the Western board are often discounted, because that is easier than going through all the paperwork that is needed to make a charge for them. When we speak of an internal market, we must also bear in mind that aspect.

Reference has been made to variations in the costs of providing linen and other laundry services, but we need more information before reaching an objective conclusion about the reason for such differences. It may be because of privatisation. In the previous Select Committee, we discovered that under privatisation someone had overlooked that redundancy payments might be necessary, and a figure of £15 million was ultimately suggested to us as being the sum required. We also discovered that some people employed in cleaning and laundry services in one district health authority had moved to another without receiving a redundancy payment. When making decisions, we must be careful to consider their consequences.

[Rev. Martin Smyth]

While we have remarkably good services in Northern Ireland, to which I must pay tribute, they are under pressure. This year, the Eastern board is looking for £7 million out of savings to meet current expenditure, but that will be impossible to achieve without making any cutbacks. The Minister responsible for the Health Service in Northern Ireland said that its health care budget is proportionately about 25 per cent. greater than in England and Wales. However, that must be put in its proper context. No more than three months ago I had the privilege of being treated as a National Health Service patient in the Royal Victoria hospital, which not only has the problem of high numbers of clamouring patients but the tragic security situation and the extra expense that it entails.

For example, I had to be accommodated in a secure unit. As a result of terrorist activity, there has been a tremendous technical advance in treatment, which is undoubtedly one reason why the Eastern board incurs nursing charges for north-west Belfast, in the Royal group of hospitals, that are much higher than for others. They provide intensive nursing treatment. In that context, it is tragic that in the years 1985-86 and 1986-87 there has been a reduction in real terms of about 4·1 per cent. in the budget. If we are to continue making proper provision at the point of need, we dare not curtail those services.

8.55 pm

Mr. Simon Burns (Chelmsford): I am grateful for the opportunity to participate in today's important debate, but I hope that the hon. Member for Belfast, South (Rev. Martin Smyth) will forgive me if I do not follow his remarks. I am also sorry to see that the hon. Member for Southport (Mr. Fearn) is not in his place—I see that he is just entering the Chamber. I was mesmerised as he tripped the light fantastic around the SLD's health policies. Last year, I fought a Liberal candidate and thought that I had some view of what the alliance's policies were. However, the swerves and U-turns made this evening have confused and bewildered me. I suspect that that is symptomatic of the SLD as a whole, and that none of my hon. Friends has been enlightened as to its health policy.

The Opposition are to be congratulated on initiating a debate on the 40th anniversary of the National Health Service, as it is singularly appropriate today. I join in agreeing with that part of the motion congratulating present and past staff of the National Health Service on their tireless and unstinting work on behalf of the sick and the elderly. Their dedication and devotion to duty shines as an example we must all seek to emulate.

It was probably Miss Elizabeth Taylor who claimed that life began at 40, but that was not true for the National Health Service. Life began at its birth 40 years ago, and in every year since 1948 it has met the challenges and has improved. It has gone from strength to strength, so that it now provides a wider range of services and health care, meeting the challenges of changes in medical science and technology that were not foreseen or envisaged when Beveridge and Bevan dreamt up and then enacted the National Health Service in the late 1940s.

I unstintingly support the National Health Service and use it exclusively—or inclusively—for my own health care, because I have found that it is excellent in the services that it provides. I have found also that my constituents, who are blessed with two excellent hospitals in the area, are confused and angered by the Opposition's constant attacks and carping purely for political gain.

However, I cannot agree with the majority of the sentiments expressed in the Opposition's motion today. It is not in the interests of the NHS merely to throw money at it willy-nilly. That might result in short-term political gain, or even reach tomorrow's newspaper headlines, but it does not go the heart of the problems that people claim exist in the NHS.

Given the record £23·5 billion that is spent on the Health Service each year, we should consider whether it is as efficient as it should be. I cannot believe that with such a large budget its efficiency is as good as it should be in areas such as drugs, energy and the managing of the hospitals and the consultants. I pay tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Wokingham (Mr. Redwood), who has produced figures on the effectiveness and efficiency of NHS staff.

If more and more money is thrown at the Health Service without looking at what happens to that money, people will, as in "Oliver Twist", constantly be coming back for more and more without ever tackling any fundamental problems. That is why the Opposition's motion is so depressingly negative. It offers nothing new or positive and, ultimately, nothing realistic for the Health Service's needs in the next 40 years.

Let me deal now with some of the figures that illustrate the wide variations in the service that is being provided in district health authorities which suggest to me that something is wrong with the efficiency of the Health Service and need to be looked at.

One of the greatest complaints, as has been mentioned, is about waiting lists. It is extraordinary that the Health Service does not know the correct figures for waiting lists. They may be up to 20 per cent. wrong because people either do not bother to turn up for appointments or they move to another district health authority without informing their previous health authority so that they remain on its waiting list, at the same time joining the waiting list in their new area. That exaggerates the figures and builds up the waiting lists. It is odd that the Health Service cannot even get that right. A private business with little control over, to put it crudely, its stock would be in serious trouble fairly quickly.

The waiting lists remain longer than they should be because there is too little interaction between hospitals and health authorities which may be able to swap and inter-marry their services. One health authority may have a long waiting list for one type of treatment but not for another of which another authority could make use. There could be greater inter-marriage between health authorities and between the NHS and the private sector. The Health Service could use its power as a bulk purchaser to buy services from a private hospital that might not be particularly busy at a given time.

The cost variations throughout the country of different services are a national scandal and should be looked at closely. The number of ancillary staff needed per 1,000 in-patients in Milton Keynes is 5·7 whereas in Halton it is 41·3. The number of administrative and clerical staff per 1,000 in-patients in Scarborough is 8·6 while in Halton it is 46·7. The number of nursing and medical staff per 1,000 in-patients in Scarborough is 39·4 while in Halton it is 160·9. The cost per case for medical records at the West

Cheshire hospital is £24 per patient. At the Charing Cross hospital in Hammersmith it is £124. The cost of drugs per patient in Scarborough health authority is £21·50 per patient on average, while in Hampstead it is £153·50 per patient.

Clearly those figures highlight the need for improvements and for cost savings so that the money saved can be targeted towards other parts of the Health Service that need funds to expand their services to meet greater demand without any reduction in health care. That is what we should be looking at, and I am sure that the Department of Health and Social Security, under my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services, is doing that.

There are other ways in which savings can be made without any adverse effect on health care, and I trust that the review is considering them. I should like to mention additional funding for the Health Service. I am not talking about the money that the Government provide year in, year out. I mean genuine additional funds from outside the NHS. I believe that a single National Health Service lottery should be introduced to harness the goodwill and the energy of people who already raise money to buy a kidney machine or a CAT scan. Once the scheme is up and running, and as long as the Treasury keeps its paws away from it, in the fourth year of a properly run lottery £1 billion extra could be raised to be spent on equipment that people can identify with. I see nothing wrong with that, and I urge my right hon. Friend to consider it seriously.

The Government have just enacted the Local Government Finance Bill introducing a community charge for financing local government so that every individual knows what local government is costing. I believe that a similar charge should be introduced for the National Health Service. Few people have a clue as to how much they are paying from their taxation. Few people know that the average family pays £32 per week towards the cost of the Health Service compared with £11 in 1979. The average family's weekly contribution has increased by £21, and that shows our commitment to the Health Service. We must bring home to people the cost of the Health Service so that they can decide how they want their money to be spent, and whether they want more money to go to the Health Service rather than to other services. This matter deserves serious consideration.

I shall support the Government's amendment because fundamentally it is more constructive in considering the Health Service than the Opposition motion. I look forward to the announcement of the review that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has instigated and is expected to take place later this year. I hope that it produces constructive ways of tackling any unease felt by Opposition Members about the Health Service.

9.7 pm

Mrs. Gillian Shephard (Norfolk, South-West): I shall be very brief. Many statistics and case histories have been bandied about during the debate, and I certainly do not intend to repeat them. But I cannot resist reminding the Opposition, since it was their choice of debate, that more is being spent on the Health Service than ever before, more patients are being treated, more professionals are being employed and there are more areas in which this country is leading its counterparts in terms of research and medical performance. All that is accompanied by the largest-ever hospital building programme in the 40-year history of the National Health Service.

I wish that the hon. Member for Wakefield (Mr. Hinchliffe) was present because he offered a challenge to all hon. Members to visit his constituency and see what he described as the crumbling Health Service. I should like to invite him, or any other Opposition Members, to visit my constituency to see the investment of £31 million in the West Norfolk and Wisbech health authority in the past nine years in capital building and the doubling of funds to run the Health Service for my fortunate constituents in south-west Norfolk where the terms "crumbling" and "crisis" would be curiously misapplied.

On the 40th birthday of the NHS what is more important than lists of achievements and of what is being spent is the rather more sophisticated debate about what we want from our Health Service in the next 40 years, how we can measure its success or otherwise, how we can best use the skills of those working in it and how we can achieve those objectives. One positive outcome of the debate that raged around our Health Service throughout the autumn and the winter, and which is mirrored in other western democracies, has been the plethora of ideas about new development and different ways forward. There has been a public realisation that, although there is general satisfaction with the performance of the NHS—we know that 90 per cent. of people are satisfied with it—there are areas that could be improved and other directions that might be explored without threatening the fundamental principle of the NHS. As the Secretary of State said recently, that principle is not and will not be in question. Access to medical care should not be dependent on the ability to pay.

What is certain—the public know this even if the Opposition do not—is that simply to increase the financial input is not the only answer. The Select Committee, of which I am a member, has received a great deal of evidence from experts in every part of the Health Service showing that there is no demonstrable link between levels of spending on health care and a nation's healthiness. That is partly because the Health Service is not the only contributory factor to a nation's health. It has a great deal more to do with the fact that we lack ways of measuring quality and effectiveness in the Health Service.

The amount of money spent by the Americans on health care has been mentioned. It is more or less twice what we spend. Are we to assume that the Americans are twice as healthy or that they have twice as many operations? One needs only one tonsillectomy or appendectomy. Recently I visited Germany to see what could be learned from its system. I did not return with the holy grail but I did learn that there is a great deal about its system that we would be better not to emulate.

The German system is the oldest in Europe and arguably the one on which all others are based. It costs nearly twice what the NHS costs us. It is independent of the state in that more than 1,000 sickness funds, with which the population have to be insured, negotiate terms with local hospitals and practitioners. The service is good for the consumer in that waiting lists are almost unknown. Consumers have a choice. They go straight to the consultant without using the intermediate general practitioner.

However, there is a downside. There are 5,000 surplus doctors looking for jobs and 30,000 surplus beds. There

[Mrs. Gillian Shephard]

are complaints from employers about the crippling financial contributions they are expected to make and all the by-products of a producer-led system. The average length of hospital stay is twice that in Britain. Patients are routinely, admitted on a Friday for treatment on a Monday. General practitioners ask their patients quite routinely "How long do you want to be ill for?" Also, equally routinely, patients are given a full body scan when they present with an ingrowing toenail.

The overwhelming problem in Germany is one of escalating costs, from 24 billion deutschmarks in 1970 to 113 billion deutschmarks in 1985. That is inevitable in a system where no one authority has the last word and which is producer-led. The German authorities are, quite rightly, worried about the system. It proved to me that we cannot have a system at which more and more money is thrown and where less and less thought is given to the structures, to choice, to care and to efficiency in the delivery of that care.

We have useful lessons to learn on health care from our neighbours. The French pay at the point of delivery. They pay hotel charges when admitted to hospital. That charge was introduced by a Socialist Government and the French officials we met said that at the time of its introduction it caused a brouhaha. It has at least made the French consumer aware of the costs of the health system.

On the 40th birthday of the NHS I wish it a future that more closely defines what we as a nation expect of it. I believe that the Prime Minister's review will achieve that. It is essential that it is given far better information systems by which to measure its performance. The Griffiths reforms, performance indicators and the Körner systems are all helpful steps in the right direction. We must move from a position where, as Dr. Davies of the British Medical Association said,

> "all we can really measure is the failure of the system rather than the success of it"—

a point amply illustrated by the contributions from the Opposition today.

The NHS needs to make better use of the skills of its work force as well. I am particularly concerned here with doctors. Doctors' decisions determine policies, not just in spending but also in planning. They will need to accept that their desire, which should be welcomed, to enter the funding and management debate must be balanced by an acceptance on their part that in return the public will want a debate about professional accountability and even about clinical judgment. I want to see a Health Service in which the professional skills of the nursing profession are used to the full and in which we have less arcane rules about the way we use our capital assets and the funds from them.

How shall we achieve this? We shall achieve it by being openminded about the next 40 years for the Health Service; by being prepared to build on what is already happening; to accept, as our neighbours in Europe accept, that the proper blend of private and public sector work, the proper blend of consumerism and professional skill, can bring the same sort of success in the next 40 years as the Health Service has had in the last 40.

9.16 pm

Mr. Eric Forth (Mid-Worcestershire): One of the themes of the debate is the need to recognise that the monolithic National Health Service has given us a relationship between the producers on the one hand and the consumers and patients on the other that has given rise to a lot of the dissatisfaction that has been expressed today. The clue to the nature of that reversed relationship is perhaps to be found in the paradox that we can spend so much taxpayers' money on a monolithic, centralised Health Service and yet find so much claimed or apparent dissatisfaction. This has given rise to a surprising amount of agreement during the debate about where we should go and where we should seek solutions. The agreement has been mostly on this side of the House, if only because on the Opposition side hardly any hon. Gentlemen have been present. At one stage, indeed, there was only one Back-Bench Opposition Member present, and, with the honourable exception of the hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field), we have heard no positive or constructive suggestions whatsoever from the Opposition.

Ms. Armstrong: There is a saying that progress is not about being progressive but about moving forward. The Opposition are interested not in the gimmicks but in supporting the Health Service and in ensuring that it can once again have the confidence of the British people. That means working carefully, slowly and openly in a way that the Government are refusing to do.

Mr. Forth: That is a catalogue of shibboleths of the kind that we have come to expect from the Opposition, but we have had absolutely nothing in the way of constructive suggestions. What we have heard outlined today are some key ingredients. *[Interruption.]* I do not know why Opposition Members who have just come in are getting so excited. If they had been here during the debate they would have heard from Conservative Members a number of suggestions, which I will now summarise for their benefit since they have not done us the courtesy of being here.

The first concerns the availability of information. Free patient choice and choice by general practitioners cannot take place without widespread availability of information about the comparative performance of different aspects of the National Health Service. It is widely agreed now that maximum information about the performance and availability of different types of treatment is necessary so that people can make their own decisions as to whether to wait longer for local treatment or travel further for more immediate treatment. That seems self-evident.

Underpinning that is the concept of what has come to be known as the internal market, or competition between providers. It is essential to the use of the information given to the patient and the doctor that they can then go on to make the freest possible choice among competing providers of health care as to which can provide the best care for the patient at the given moment.

There is widespread agreement among Conservative Members that it would be beneficial for different hospitals and districts to provide in competition with one another the best possible health care to the largest number of patients. Those things go together.

Underlying that concept is an obvious concept that is completely absent from the present Health Service—accountability through the provision of real cost information. I do not know how we can possibly hope to provide effective and efficient health care if there is no concept of the cost of money, the amortisation of equipment and the depreciation of buildings. That alone should provide an obvious answer to those of us who ask why we are not getting a proper return on our investment. One reason is that what is normal in the business world is totally lacking in the present world of National Health Service care.

I suggest that we should develop the concept of a patients' charter, for want of a better word. We should guarantee to patients of the Health Service that they will be provided with suitable health care within a given period. If the local district cannot provide that, or if they cannot get it from another district in competition with their own, patients should be entitled to go to the private sector for care and send the bill to their local district. If we did that, patients would know what to expect of their Health Service, and we should achieve accountability in the Health Service through the discipline of such a charter.

There has been no lack of suggestions from Conservative Members about how the Health Service can be improved. Ministers will be able to look through the report of the debate and find a catalogue of suggestions on which there is widespread agreement among Conservative Members. Nothing has come from the Opposition. I have the greatest confidence that when the review is completed Ministers will be able to select from a wide variety of options and make positive and effective suggestions for the future of the Health Service.

9.22 pm

Ms. Harriet Harman (Peckham): I welcome the fact that all hon. Members have said that they fully support the National Health Service. However, my right hon. Friend the Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot) was right to warn us to fear the outcome of the Prime Minister's review. The Government have been furtive about the review and the Secretary of State has not enlightened us tonight.

It is clear that those at No. 10 Downing street are keen to hear from anyone who has any ideas about how to beef up the private sector and marginalise the National Health Service. Ministers are in a state of panic, and the date of publication of the review keeps slipping back because most of the proposals canvassed so far by the Right—for example, tax relief for private health care and opting out for those who buy private insurance—have bitten the dust as impracticable.

It looks as though only two proposals are still seriously in the running. The first is the abolition of regional health authorities or the reduction of the number of regions by half, which might be a marginal improvement. The second is the introduction of the market into the National Health Service. Many hon. Members have spoken about the internal market. Those who favour the market argue that it would drive down costs if hospitals had to compete for patients. They argue that surplus capacity would be sold at a profit to the health authority and that districts could shop around for best health buys. The first and most fundamental objection to that is that competition drives down the quality of care.

The hon. Member for Lewisham, West (Mr. Maples) talked in glowing terms about competition in the Health Service. The evidence from America, reported in the *New England Journal of Medicine*—not just about competition between for-profit hospitals but about competition between not-for-profit hospitals—is revealing. The evidence from America is that the fiercer the competition the higher the mortality rate will be. Put simply, if one is treated in a hospital that has to compete with another hospital for its patients, one is more likely to die.

The reason for the significant correlation between increased mortality rates and competition is that in the competitive environment costs are driven down, corners are cut and the quality of clinical care suffers.

Outcome is the single most important measure of quality in hospital care. The hon. Member for Suffolk, South (Mr. Yeo) was right about that. If one asks people what matters most to them as they enter hospital, they say that they want to get better. They do not want to get worse and they certainly do not want to die. Yet the Government's blanket commitment to markets and their blind belief in competition for everything leads them to ignore that evidence and simply shout no.

The Government have failed to notice the evidence that links competition with mortality rates because they are not interested in the outcome of treatment. They are interested only in the cost of treatment in the Health Service. In health, the Government know the cost of everything and the value of nothing. They talk about the numbers treated but show indifference to whether the result of that treatment is recovery or death.

The Secretary of State has said that performance indicators are a spur to greater efficiency. Only 12 of the 423 performance indicators have anything to do with quality or outcome. All the others measure throughput. The fact that a person is more likely to die in a hospital that is enduring the rigours of the market should, I hope, make most people stop and think—even the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen), who is not here at the moment.

Mortality rates are not the only drawback of the internal market. There are other practical problems. My hon. Friend the Member for Kirkcaldy (Dr. Moonie) was right on that point. In theory, a district with spare capacity in one specialty could sell it to a neighbouring authority that has a waiting list and, in turn, that authority could sell its spare capacity in a different specialty. The system could work like that only if neighbouring or nearby authorities had waiting lists or surpluses in different complementary specialties.

If we look at the waiting lists we see that that does not happen. All districts have long waiting lists for general surgery and the only specialty where no district has a waiting list appears to be restorative dentistry. There is no market if all authorities want to buy general surgery and all want to sell restorative dentistry, unless a district sells a specialty in which it already has a waiting list and thereby makes its patients wait even longer. That would happen in practice.

The starting point for the argument in favour of the market is wrong, because it is based on an assumption of spare capacity in the Health Service. My hon. Friend the Member for Normanton (Mr. O'Brien) made it clear that the notion of surplus capacity in the Health Service is laughable. Empty beds, closed wards and unused operating theatres are not symptoms of overcapacity but are caused by underfunding and inadequate nursing policies. It is nonsense to say that there is a surplus when there are people on waiting lists needing services.

Even if there were a scheme for sending patients all over the country, why should they be expected to go? The Government's objective should be to provide services in all districts. We do not want to have a Health Service whereby

[Ms. Harriet Harman]

if it is piles, one must go to Birmingham; if it is varicose veins, it will be Manchester; and if it is a hernia, Newcastle. Our task is to improve the continuity of care. We need to improve the integration of acute and community services within each district and that task would become impossible with patients shuttling between different districts for routine treatment.

Let us be under no illusion that the market is anything to do with patient's choice. It is nothing of the sort. It reduces patient's choice and the GP's ability to give referral advice. Instead, supremacy is given to the manager's decision about where it is cheapest to treat the patient, not where it is most convenient for the patient or where there is the best chance of success.

The terms in which Ministers and other Conservative Members have talked about health care show that they still resolutely ignore the problems generated by commercialised medicine. When we last debated health care I spoke about the United States and since then have visited the States to see for myself. I was struck particularly by the point that, because health care in America is a business —it is not a health care system; indeed there is no system —with a multiplicity of competing hospitals and doctors, there is no coherent base for planning improvements in care, screening or preventive programmes. It is far too fragmented. Our Health Service provides us with a marvellous base for public health planning, and we fragment that at our peril.

Another sad point that struck me was that patients in America do not trust their doctors in the way that we do. Doctors there have a high status because they are very rich, but the profit motive poisons the doctor-patient relationship.

A doctor in Massachusetts general hospital in Boston told me that many newly qualified doctors come out of medical school owing $50,000 in student loans, so they want to start making money as fast as possible. If a woman over 45 goes into a surgery complaining of abdominal pains she will have a hysterectomy, whether she needs it or not. That is $1,200 in the bank for the doctor straightaway, which is why an American woman is four times more likely than a British woman to have her womb removed. The reason why so many Americans get second medical opinions is not that they are luxuriating enthusiastically in consumer choice: it is because they are terrified of being cut open unnecessarily. Overtreatment caused by the profit motive is an epidemic in the United States, which Congressional committees have had to look into. Not only does it put patients at risk of unnecessary tests and treatment, but it pushes up costs.

People will say that this does not happen here. The reason why overtreatment does not take place on the same scale in the private sector here is that medical culture is set in and dominated by the National Health Service. But let the private sector escape from its marginal position and that would soon change. All hon. Members would have fewer parts than we have now. Like my hon. Friends, I am exasperated by the Government's apparent commitment to the idea that the Health Service should be spending less and that we cannot afford it. One of the problems with the service is that we do not spend enough to make a really first-class service. We could afford to spend far more on it if the Government did not choose instead to squander public money on tax cuts for the wealthy and on nuclear weapons. The hon. Member for Moray (Mrs. Ewing) was right on that point.

On this, the 40th anniversary of the Health Service, the Government should be making efforts to improve it. First, that means adequate funding. It also means a number of other measures. The Government should be developing better ways to measure the outcome of treatment. They should be setting objectives for improving the outcome of treatment, and implementing ways of monitoring whether those objectives are being met. They should be developing our medical research programme and ensuring that results are acted on in the planning of the health services. They should develop and monitor standards of care and routinely survey patients' views on comfort and care.

We need peer review of doctors by doctors. In addition to medical audit of outcome, peer review would examine whether consultants turned up on time to see patients and whether they cancelled clinics at the last minute. We need to develop peer review of nurses by nurses. The idea of such review is not merely to weed out bad practice and to spot problems, but to enable health care staff to take part in a constant challenging and stimulating debate about how to improve the services that they provide for their patients. That would apply to all care staff, from consultants to hospital porters.

The professional organisations are keen on these ideas. They have been taken up by the British Medical Association and the Royal College of Nursing, and the Health Service unions are also excited by the prospect. Dozens of different quality initiatives are popping up at local level, but the Government are ignoring them because they are terrified of anything that might involve them in more public investment.

Not only hospitals should be involved in the audit. We need to improve the quality of care and services for patients who suffer from long-term or chronic illness, paying more heed to their concerns and examining how we can expand health care services to people in their own homes. I argue that the Government should set up a quality commission for the Health Service. We already have Her Majesty's inspectorates of prisons, of education and of police. But we have no nationwide, overall supervision of standards in the National Health Service, and we need that. Rather than having a large overall flabby body, we should have a small muscular commission that could develop all the initiatives that are taking place at local level. There are such initiatives, and professional inspections are carried out by the royal colleges for training purposes. From time to time, the Government or a regional authority may set up an inquiry into a part of the service or another region. All that, however, is patchy, haphazard and unco-ordinated.

We need to harness the enthusiasm within the Health Service to improve quality, to identify and iron out problems, and to identify and develop good practice. The NHS has served us well for the past 40 years, but under the Conservative Government's spending restrictions much of the energy and enthusiasm among managers, doctors, nurses and other staff has been dissipated and sidetracked in efforts to protect services from the worst of the cuts.

For the future, the service should be properly funded. That is an essential precondition for the years to come. It should also be reorientated away from service-cutting and penny-pinching. It should be freed from its money worries, and orientated towards pioneering new ways of delivering the highest quality of service to all.

9.35 pm

The Minister for Health (Mr. Tony Newton): I rather sense that the hon. Member for Peckham (Ms. Harman) had run out of speech as her Benches have run out of speakers, which has been not the least fascinating of today's developments.

In a debate that has at least produced some important common strands, one that certainly unites the House on this day is a spirit of congratulation towards all who have served in the Health Service during the past 40 years on what they have achieved. I wish to make it clear, because of what is sometimes said on the Opposition Benches, that in my congratulations I include not only doctors and nurses, about whom we are accustomed to talk a great deal, but all who do dedicated work behind the scenes to keep the service running.

Perhaps I might say to the right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot) that, in paying tribute to those who have been involved in the Health Service throughout those years, I have no objection to Nye Bevan and the part that he played. I think that all of us will have listened with considerable respect and interest to the right hon. Gentleman, who is probably the only Member in the House who was present at that time. I must also say gently to him that I might have thought even more highly of his speech had he referred not only to being here at the time of the voting on the National Health Service Act 1946, but to the day barely five years later—23 April 1951, with the Labour Government still in office for another six months—when the then right hon. Member for Ebbw Vale resigned because of what the Labour Government had already proposed to cope with the difficulties in the NHS.

I have looked out the Bevan speech of 23 April 1951, when he resigned over the imposition of charges on spectacles and dentures, and it makes interesting reading. The right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent made some reference to social security, and I hope that, as he managed to do it, I shall be in order if I follow him. Aneurin Bevan said towards the end of his speech that the then Labour Chancellor said that he was

> "coming to a complicated and technical matter and that if hon. Members wished to they could go to sleep. They did. Whilst they were sleeping he stole £100 million a year from the National Insurance Fund."—[*Official Report*, 23 April 1951; Vol. 487, c. 40.]

Mr. Foot: I am sorry that the right hon. Gentleman's report to the House is a little incorrect, but he was not there to hear what happened. Aneurin Bevan was saying that that amount of money had been stolen, and he was reproving Chancellors of the Exchequer who came along and were not sufficiently generous—[HON. MEMBERS: "Labour Chancellors."] Yes, Labour Chancellors. If only the Government would show the devotion to the service that Aneurin Bevan and Hugh Gaitskell showed, we might get on better.

Mr. Newton: My aim was not to pick a quarrel with the right hon. Gentleman but to underline the important recognition that emerged in most of the speeches made on both sides of the House, including the speech made by my hon. Friend the Member for Wycombe (Mr. Whitney), that the problems of funding the Health Service emerged at an early stage—before the Labour Government had even left office. We must all acknowledge that point in discussing the problems that we face today.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: How can the right hon. Gentleman reconcile the statement that he is making with the fact that his Department has denied £40 million for social work training to counteract some of the most devastating problems that society faces?

Mr. Newton: Simply because that is incorrect. The Government have increased expenditure on social work training and intend to take further steps to improve social work training. We simply thought that the proposals put forward by the Central Council for Education and Training in Social Work in the document to which the hon. Lady referred were not the best way to make progress in that matter.

Secondly, it is clear that we agree on continuing support for the concept of the Health Service as the foundation of health care, and on the desire to see its capacity to serve our people strengthened still further. Thirdly, and perhaps most remarkably, in view of the spirit in which the debate opened, there has been, apart from speeches from the Opposition Front Bench spokesmen and one or two others, considerable agreement about the need to look at the way in which the service works and to see how we can make it work better. The one distasteful feature of the debate was the attempt by the Opposition, at the outset of the debate, to question that consensus about the basis of the service in the future, and to suggest that, somehow, the NHS is a Labour party preserve.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State made nonsense of those claims. I shall repeat only two of the relevant figures. One is that expenditure in real terms has risen by well over one third under this Government, and the second is that the percentage share that the NHS takes of Britain's gross domestic product, which fell slightly under the previous Administration, has risen substantially under this. What is just as important as the fact that we have been putting more resources in is that we have been making better use of those resources. What are known, in admittedly not very pleasing jargon, as the cost improvement programmes have the practical meaning that another £600 million has been released for caring for patients. The result is those huge increases in the number of patients treated, and in the proportion of each——

Ms. Armstrong: No.

Mr. Newton: If the hon. Lady is suggesting that there has not been an increase, let me give her the figures.

Ms. Armstrong: I was trying to make the point that there are more people ill now, and more people need medical care because of the change in demography and the rise in unemployment.

Mr. Newton: With the greatest possible respect, which is not a great deal in view of what the hon. Lady has just said, I shall just give her the index of the treatment rates per 10,000 population for the over-75s. On an index of treatment rates per 10,000 population, between 1974 and 1979 the figure rose from 100 to 109, and between 1979 and 1985 it rose from 109 to 137. That is a dramatic increase. Those figures have been given to the Select Committee, so the hon. Lady can read them. They can be repeated for almost every part of the population.

Mr. Robin Corbett (Birmingham, Erdington): Does the right hon. Gentleman know that in Sutton Coldfield, the constituency of the former Secretary of State for Social Services, there are 112 beds for which the regional health authority cannot find funding, and that the opening of a £2 million treatment centre, including a hydrotherapy treatment pool, cannot be opened because the regional health authority says that there is not the money to put the staff—[HON. MEMBERS: "Rubbish."] It is not rubbish; it is true. The regional health authority says that it has not the money to engage staff to treat children and others with rheumatoid arthritis. If everything is so good, why are things so bad in the hospitals serving my constituency?

Mr. Newton: I hope that the hon. Gentleman will acknowledge that any problems in the Health Service—no one is suggesting that there are none—are very much the problems of a service that is expanding and investing in new equipment and treating more people than ever before. Indeed, the hon. Gentleman's question indicates that self-same point.

It has become a cliché to say that the Health Service is in some sense the victim of its own success. It is true that many of the problems and pressures, which unquestionably are faced, despite the largest capital building programme, for example, in the history of the west midlands region, are caused by continually rising demand. The very fact that we have been so much more successful in keeping alive babies who would have died not so many years ago means that young children need more care than would otherwise have been required. The very fact that life expectancy continues to rise because of the success of the service generates the demands that lead to the increases in treatment rates to which I referred.

Of course, the combination of those demographic trends and our capacity to provide more treatment is reflected in how we have tried to develop the service. We have more than kept pace with the demands, as the treatment rates that I quoted show.

Mr. Burt: While my right hon. Friend is in this area, will he note that today, in the model health authority of Bury —where there has been a 40 per cent. increase in consultants during the past seven years, and where the number of in-patients treated has risen by 20 per cent. per year since 1978—the keys were handed over on completion of phase 1 of the new £30 million Fairfield general hospital? Is not that another example of our care for the NHS?

Mr. Newton: I am obviously delighted to know that the 40th anniversary of the NHS has been celebrated in such an appropriate way in my hon. Friend's constituency.

As I was saying, the figures that I gave to the hon. Member for Durham, North-West (Ms. Armstrong) a few moments ago show clearly that we have not merely been keeping pace with, but moving ahead of, rising demands, generated by demography and our capacity to provide more treatment to more people. We also know that however successful we have been in the past——

Mr. Kevin Barron (Rother Valley) *rose*——

Mr. Brian Wilson (Cunninghame, North) *rose*——

Mrs. Margaret Ewing *rose*——

Mr. Newton: I shall not give way at the moment.

Nobody can deny the success, bearing in mind the number of patients treated, the number of new treatments introduced and other conceivable measures. However successful we have been in the past 40 years or in the past 10 years though, demand and the desire for new treatments will continue to increase. It is to see how that demand can best be met that we have set in hand the review which has been the focus of much of the debate.

The hon. Member for Kirkcaldy (Dr. Moonie), no doubt anticipating some of the sedentary demands being made by Opposition Members, wanted to hear the conclusions of the review. I am unable to help him tonight, but whatever conclusions the review reaches, it is clear that it will build on a great deal that has already been achived or has been set in hand by the Government during the past eight or nine years.

Mr. Robin Cook: As the Minister has at last got to the review, may I put to him the question which has lain unanswered throughout the debate and which I posed at the beginning of the day? Will he give the House an assurance that, when the review is completed, the House will receive the courtesy of hearing the results—or is the announcement to be reserved for the Conservative party conference, thus showing the party political nature of the review right from the start?

Mr. Newton: When we have completed the review, we will decide on the appropriate way in which to make our conclusions known. It is clear that the review's conclusions will make use of a great deal of work that has been set in hand, and which has been announced and is clear to the House.

The first element will be improvement in management in the service, set in train after the first Griffiths report, the beneficial results of which have been mentioned by many of my hon. Friends, and can be seen in health authorities throughout the country. The hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field), the Chairman of the Social Services Select Committee, made a thoughtful speech. One of the things that we want to do to strengthen the management process —which has been called for by several of my hon. Friends —is to make more targeted use of funds we make available to support good management. The waiting list initiative is a prime example of what can be, and is being, achieved by those means.

There has been unanimity about the need to improve the flow of information to managers, patients, others throughout the service and, indeed, Members of Parliament about how health authorities operate. That information may still not be as good as we would like or as we want to make it, but it is already a great deal better than it was when the Government came to office. It is already being used by health authorities to improve services.

Mr. Wilson: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Newton: No.

Contrary to what the hon. Member for Peckham said, we want to put more emphasis—as we have already done —on the range of choice available to people and the quality of service they receive. For once, I find myself agreeing with the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley), who I understand made a speech in Scotland today. I am not sure how what he said fits with what the hon. Lady said in the latter part of her speech, when she seemed to be flatly opposed to what the right hon. Gentleman said. He said that patients should choose their consultants, the day and time of their hospital appointments and have a greater opportunity to change GPs.

Mr. Corbett: Everybody wants that.

Mr. Newton: For once, the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook is pushing at an open door. It is this Government who have set in hand——

Mrs. Margaret Ewing *rose*——

Mr. Barron *rose*——

Mr. Newton: It is time that Opposition Members listened a bit.

It is this Government who have set in hand the spreading of better information about where the waiting lists are and what the referral patterns are. It is this Government who have set in hand the improvement of complaints procedures and the possibilities of choice of GPs. It is this Government's policy that patients should be given more information about the general practices and other health facilities in their constituencies, and it is this Government who have launched a quality of service initiative throughout the health authority world.

Mr. Barron: On the question of patient choice, perhaps the Minister can square his comments with what happened to one of my constituents, Mr. Tom Rossington, who is 93 years old and who, in the autumn of last year, went to his GP and was told that he would have to wait until July of this year to have an examination for his eye cataracts. He ended up seeing the same surgeon in Parkfield hospital in Rotherham a fortnight later for the sum of £70. Is that the choice for 93-year-old people in Britain today?

Mr. Newton: Our aim and achievement has been dramatically to increase the number of cataract operations that take place in this country.

Finally, we shall seek to build further on what we have done to improve health promotion and the prevention of ill health in this country, for example, by the development of cervical cancer screening and, for the first time in this country, by a full-scale breast cancer screening programme.

Mr. Neil Kinnock (Islwyn): The whole House is listening with interest to the way in which the right hon. Gentleman is describing the projections and hopes for the future. Will he tell us whether he accepts the view of the British Medical Association that the NHS still faces a major crisis? What is his view of the need expressed by the BMA and the Select Committee that, this year, it is necessary to have an additional £1 billion to £1·5 billion of expenditure to ensure that there will not be a repetition of this year's crisis?

Mr. Newton: The right hon. Gentleman has simply confirmed his reputation for being a man who, whenever he is offered a choice of weapons, chooses a boomerang.

Mr. Kinnock: Answer the question.

Mr. Newton: I shall answer the right hon. Gentleman by going back to the 30th anniversary of the Health Service. On 5 July 1978, when the then Labour Government were trying to get the BMA to sign a declaration about how marvellous everything was, *The Times* reported:

> "In its statement the BMA said that the health service was failing to provide the service that patients had been led to expect and doctors were no longer willing to cover up its deficiencies. The anniversary"—

the Labour party's anniversary—

> "could not be an occasion for rejoicing, but must be a time for serious appraisal of how to find more resources and boost the morale in all health service workers."

As I said, the Leader of the Opposition always chooses a boomerang and he has chosen an even better one than usual.

Opposition Members will have been expecting me to say something about the winter of discontent, but I am not going to say anything about that. I am going to say something about the summer of discontent that preceded it. I shall refer to one more headline that appeared on 6 June 1978, a month before the 30th anniversary. It reads:

> "Nurses heckle Mr. Ennals over NHS 'complacency'".

The nurses jeered him. A month ago the nurses gave my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State a standing ovation.

Question put, That the original words stand part of the Question:—

The House divided; Ayes 217, Noes 287.

Division No. 396] [10 pm

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Buchan, Norman
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eadie, Alexander
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fatchett, Derek
Fearn, Ronald
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Galloway, George
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*
George, Bruce
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Haynes, Frank
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Heffer, Eric S.

Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Howells, Geraint
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Janner, Greville
John, Brynmor
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kennedy, Charles
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Leadbitter, Ted
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
Macdonald, Calum A.
McFall, John
McGrady, Eddie
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McTaggart, Bob
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliott
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul

Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Paisley, Rev Ian
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Prescott, John
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Robertson, George
Robinson, Geoffrey
Rooker, Jeff
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steinberg, Gerry
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thomas, Dr Dafydd Elis
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wall, Pat
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Alun Micheal and
Mr. Ray Powell

NOES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Allason, Rupert
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Ashby, David
Atkinson, David
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer

Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim

Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon Alick
Buck, Sir Antony
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Hon Alan *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Critchley, Julian
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Tony
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*

Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Sir Eldon *(Bury St E')*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Charles
Jack, Michael
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, James
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lightbown, David
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
Maclean, David
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Moore, Rt Hon John
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley

Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, John *(Oxford W)*
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rost, Peter
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(Hertfordshire N)*
Stokes, Sir John
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thatcher, Rt Hon Margaret
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Waller, Gary
Walters, Sir Dennis
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Mike
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Kenneth Carlisle and
Mr. Stephen Dorrell.

Question accordingly negatived.

Question, That the proposed words be there added, *put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 30 (Questions on amendments), and agreed to.*

MR. SPEAKER *forthwith declared the main Question, as amended, to be agreed to.*

Resolved,

That this House warmly congratulates present and past staff of the National Health Service on forty years service to the public; recognises the achievements of Her Majesty's Government, firmly based on a strong economy, in devoting resources to the Service to enable both hospitals and community services to provide more care than ever before; and welcomes the current review to ensure that the Health Service is even better in the years ahead.

Education (Assisted Places)

10.17 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education and Science (Mr. Bob Dunn): I beg to move,

That the draft Education (Assisted Places) (Amendment) Regulations 1988, which were laid before this House on 13th June, be approved.

I begin this short debate on these important regulations by saying how much I welcome the tone of earlier debates. The hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw), in an article in *The Guardian* on 23 March, said:

> "First, we must recognise that a nation of consumers enjoying relatively high living standards becomes literally much more choosy, much more interested in choice and variety."

That is exactly so.

Before I begin the main text of my speech, I should be interested to know whether the Opposition will reveal that the think tank set up and run by Lady Antonia Fraser will be important and instrumental in the decision making leading to educational philosophy in the Labour party for the years ahead. We need to know whether the new think tank will be advising the Opposition. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Tell them to go back to the boozer.

Mr. Speaker: Perhaps the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) will join them.

Mr. Skinner: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I was a miner for 21 years and was not allowed to go down the pit shaft, along with other miners, reeking of ale. When I first came here I decided that in no circumstances would I come to the Chamber and legislate for the country reeking of ale. I have never been in any of those places, and you know that, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Let us get on with the debate.

Mr. Dunn: By tradition, our debates are always conducted with great calmness.

Before I was interrupted by the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner), I was saying that I was anxious to establish the precise role of the think tank in the development of the Labour party's education policy. When Lady Antonia Fraser refers to the development of education philosophy, I dare say that her knowledge of the state system of education will be drawn from many years' experience of handing out bounty in Belgravia. I always thought that Lady Antonia Fraser was a Conservative. I understand that she is now a member of the Labour party —without even having to rearrange her jewellery.

For the benefit of Opposition Members, perhaps it would be helpful to explain that the principal regulations governing the administration of the assisted places scheme require annual amendment to take account of the necessary revaluation of parental income scales and changes introduced in the Finance Act 1987. In the past we have also taken this opportunity to make various small amendments for which experience of the scheme has suggested a need. This year such an amendment takes account of cases where court orders for payment of school fees are in force. I venture to suggest that all the amendments—which I shall describe in a moment—are relatively straightforward.

Briefly, perhaps I might set the regulations in context. There are currently more than 27,000 pupils holding assisted places at 234 of the best independent schools in England and Wales. High academic standards are a prerequisite of a school's participation in the scheme.

As the House will recognise, the scheme continues to be both popular and successful. While the scale governing the level of fee remission is intentionally a tough one, 37 per cent. of assisted pupils qualify for full fee remission. In the current academic year these are pupils from families where the joint income was at or below £6,972 a year. Therefore, the assisted places scheme is clearly benefiting families who would otherwise be unable to send their children to these excellent schools.

I can tell the House with pride, as I do on these annual occasions, that the scheme has gone from strength to strength since its inception in 1981, and we intend to build on that success by expanding the number of available places in England and Wales to an eventual total of 35,000.

Ms. Hilary Armstrong (Durham, North-West): I am interested in what the Minister has to say. Is he able to reassure us that the children who, in his words, will benefit from the expenditure of that public money will be subject to the national curriculum?

Mr. Dunn: The hon. Member for Durham, North-West (Ms. Armstrong) is now becoming an experienced hand at the sort of dodgem techniques that we have come to expect in the House from the Opposition. Because they have nothing to offer in the way of philosophy, they carp and whinge, no matter how eloquently that carping and whingeing may be done, although the hon. Lady does it better than most.

Regulation 1(1) is concerned with title and timing. Hon. Members will not, I judge, require any detailed comment on it from me.

Regulation 1(2) allows bursars to use the new parental income scales ahead of the start of term for determining a child's eligibility and assessing fee remission questions for existing assisted pupils.

Regulation 2 introduces a new condition of eligibility. This is that a child all of whose fees are required to be paid under a court order may not be selected for an assisted place. It also removes entitlement to remission of any part of school fees required to be paid under a court order. This latter provision will apply in the case of a child who is about to join the APS or is already the holder of an assisted place. Any portion of fees which is required to be paid under a court order will no longer attract fee remission.

Regulation 3 arises from the Finance Act 1987 and the Finance (No. 2) Act 1987 and brings up to date the references to the relevant income tax legislation in schedule 1 to the principal Education (Assisted Places) Regulations 1985. Deductions from total income in respect of increased personal reliefs for those aged 80 or over and contributions to personal pension schemes are not to be made in calculating relevant income for the purposes of assessing fee remission.

Draft regulation 4 provides for the updating of the income scale used for assessing the amount of parents' contributions towards the fees. The threshold at or below which parents pay nothing towards fees is raised from £6,972 to £7,258.

The amendments I have just described are essentially good housekeeping and I know that they will find favour with the House.

10.27 pm

Mr. Derek Fatchett (Leeds, Central): The Under-Secretary, in his usual way, made a wide-ranging speech. We are grateful to him for his detailed introduction of the regulations and we all welcomed his opening remarks. Some scurrilous newspapers suggest that this may be the hon. Gentleman's valedictory speech from the Dispatch Box. If he wants anybody to put in a word on his behalf with the Prime Minister, I am sure that some of my hon. Friends will be happy to do so.

This is a debate tinged with a certain disappointment. We have lost the pleasure of the company of the Minister of State, the hon. Member for Mitcham and Morden (Mrs. Rumbold). When I first heard that the hon. Member for Dartford (Mr. Dunn) would be dealing with the regulations, I realised that it might be because the hon. Lady is now taking a much keener interest in planning matters and looking after the interests of the Secretary of State for the Environment rather than bothering herself too much with educational matters. It is noticeable how in that capacity the hon. Lady has developed a fairly wide brief, a much larger constituency, and that the interest in Morden extends to some very strange parts of London.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): Will the hon. Gentleman get to the regulations?

Mr. Fatchett: I will indeed. The comments of the hon. Lady are always very welcome and I will certainly concentrate on the regulations. I listen always to the hon. Lady's comments because I am sure that they should be heeded.

The other element of disappointment, if I can just comment on this, Mr. Deputy Speaker, without being chastised by you or others, is that we are not blessed with the presence of the spokesperson of the alliance party— [Hon. Members: "Which one?"] Whatever they now call themselves. Hon. Members may well understand my difficulties in that respect. If we have heard the valedictory speech of the Under-Secretary of State for Education and Science—which I am sure we have not—I am not quite sure what we can expect from the hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Livsey); perhaps he is just keeping the seat warm for the hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) who is out campaigning to get himself an assisted place as leader of the SLD.

The Minister said that the scheme was a major success. That hardly corresponds to the facts. In 1986 the number of youngsters entering the assisted places scheme fell from 5,146 to 4,905. There has in fact been a reversal in the number of youngsters going into the scheme, despite the Minister's heady rhetoric to the effect that the objective was to gain 35,000 assisted places.

The regulations and the principle of the assisted places scheme tell us a good deal about the Government's attitude to education and the state sector. They tell us much about the notion that we have independent schools. The very nature of the assisted places scheme is state intervention and public money keeping private schools in operation.

When we debated the national curriculum we were told by Conservative Members that the national curriculum should not apply to private schools because they were thoroughly independent. The workings of the assisted places scheme tell us that the private schools are in no sense independent. In many cases, they rely on the state for money.

Let us consider just a few of the schools that are part of the assisted places scheme and rely heavily on that scheme for their students. At Batley grammar school, 37 per cent. of the pupils come through the assisted places scheme. At Belvedere school, it is 27 per cent. [Hon. Members: "Excellent."] At both Birkenhead high school and Birkenhead school the figure is 24 per cent. At Bristol Cathedral school it is 28 per cent.; at Dame Allan's boys school it is 30 per cent. [Hon. Members: "Better still."] At Farnborough hill school, it is 34 per cent. At King Edward's school Birmingham, it is 37 per cent. At St. Edwards college it is 39 per cent.

Mr. Robert Key (Salisbury): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Fatchett: I shall give way to the hon. Gentleman in a moment. The hon. Gentleman and his hon. Friends said "Better and better" to each increased percentage that I cited. Where is the argument about independence? The schools are not independent; they are maintained by the Exchequer and the taxpayer. That is why we have always argued that they should be included in the provisions for the national curriculum.

Mr. Key: The taxpayer argument is a non-starter because those who choose independent education pay twice anyway. It was with great relief that the independent sector heard the hon. Member for Durham, North-West (Ms. Armstrong)—it was widely reported in the national newspaper of the Independent Schools Information Service—say that it was now Labour party policy that the independent schools would not be abolished.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. Interesting as all this may be, it has very little to do with the regulations before the House. I hope that hon. Members will stick to the regulations.

Mr. Fatchett: I am grateful to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. You are always willing to teach Conservative Members about the necessary procedures of debate——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Hon. Members on both sides of the House must stick to the regulations.

Mr. Fatchett: I shall certainly not be tempted any further into debates about the independent schools— *[Interruption.]* Mr. Deputy Speaker has said that I must not be tempted further. Otherwise, I should love to continue.

The scheme is much like the city technology colleges: it tells us a lot about the Government's values and priorities. They are prepared to spend more on a relatively small number of youngsters than on all our children in terms of the development of the national curriculum.

Some of the places covered by the regulations cost more than £5,000 per year per child, yet when a local education authority spends half that on each child—as did, for example, the Inner London education authority—it is rate-capped and subject to abolition. According to the Government, it is right to invest more than £5,000 a year in a small number of children, yet it is wrong to spend only half that sum on each of the 250,000 children of inner

[Mr. Fatchett]

London. The Inner London education authority is told by the Government that that expenditure is profligate and wasteful.

The Minister of State, Department of Education and Science (Mrs. Angela Rumbold): It is wasteful.

Mr. Fatchett: The Minister of State says that that expenditure is wasteful. How does she justify much higher expenditure on the assisted places scheme? The justification is that the Government believe in paying for an elite few. We believe in investing in and looking after all our children. I am willing to give way to the Minister on that point.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I remind the House that the merits or otherwise of the scheme have been decided by the House. We are discussing the narrow issues raised by the regulations, not the merits of the assisted places scheme.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It has never been the custom of the House in debating statutory instruments by affirmative resolution to exclude the merits of those instruments. There is what is known as a merits committee. When a Joint Committee or Select Committee deals with instruments and makes recommendations to the House, it is not allowed, according to its terms of reference, to discuss the merits. That is because the full House or a Statutory Instruments Committee can discuss them.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The merits of the assisted places scheme have been determined by the House in primary legislation. We are now discussing a statutory instrument which deals with a detail of that scheme, and hon. Members must confine their remarks to that.

Mr. Jack Straw (Blackburn): Further to the point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. My hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) has raised a serious point. With respect, "Erskine May" does not say that the debate must be confined to the detail of the regulations. It says:

> "Debate . . . is confined to the contents of the instrument".

My hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, Central (Mr. Fatchett) is arguing why, on the contents of the regulations, the House should vote against them.

Mr. Skinner: Further to the point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. One point of order at a time.

The hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) has confirmed what I said to the House—the debate must be confined to the contents of the regulations before the House. I am asking the House to recognise that fact.

Mr. Skinner: Further to the point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I was present at the beginning of the debate when the Under-Secretary of State for Education and Science —the hon. Member for Dartford (Mr. Dunn)—got to his feet. Mr. Speaker was in the Chair, rather than you, Sir, and perhaps you did not hear everything. The Minister spoke about the merits of the matter. If you had been in the Chair, you probably would have pulled him up on the same basis on which you pulled up my hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, Central (Mr. Fatchett). If you do this now, you will contradict Mr. Speaker, who is your gaffer. You have to make up your mind. Will you accept Mr. Speaker's decision to allow the Minister to speak about the merits, and therefore let my hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, Central answer the Minister's case? This is a matter for you.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The hon. Gentleman and I understand each other and what we are discussing. I certainly have regard for what he said.

Mr. Fatchett: With respect to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we could cite paragraph 4 of the regulations to claim that we were in order. It refers to the amount of money spent on the assisted places scheme.

I return now to the argument that is intrinsic to the nature of the regulations—the Government's willingness to spend £50 million on a handful of youngsters rather than to invest in the whole education system. Before you rightly brought me back into line, Mr. Deputy Speaker, although I did not believe that I had erred on that occasion, I was trying to make the point that, as the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education and Science, the hon. Member for Wantage (Mr. Jackson), said in a letter to my hon. Friend the Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw), the Government are willing to spend £5,661 on assisted places in certain cases and they say that the majority of cases cost about £2,500 a year. How many local authorities are entitled to spend that amount on what are, in effect, their assisted places—the schools that the overwhelming majority of our youngsters attend? The Minister of State readily agreed that the £2,500 that ILEA and other local education authorities spend is too much for most children. Therein lies the real division between us.

We want to ensure that all our children have adequate resources, teaching and books. But the Government want to invest in a handful of children and discriminate against the vast majority of youngsters.

Mr. Dunn: What is the hon. Gentleman's knowledge of the cost to the taxpayer of each assisted place compared to the cost to the ratepayer of a place in inner London secondary education?

Mr. Fatchett: I said earlier that some of my hon. Friends might be prepared to have a word with the Prime Minister on the Minister's behalf, but on the basis of that intervention our case would be rather flimsy.

There is a crucial difference. The Minister's argument is an intellectual figleaf. We are talking about the investment in individual youngsters, not the individual taxpayer's contribution. Of course less is spent on the assisted places scheme than would be spent by individual local authorities, because the scheme extends to only a handful of youngsters. We are discussing the investment per child. So the Minister says that a certain level of investment in children is profligate and wrong; but he justifies it in the case of private education——

Mr. George Walden (Buckingham): Will the hon. Gentleman answer two brief questions, which go to the heart of the matter? First, where does the demand for assisted places come from? Why should there be demand if children and parents are satisfied with local education?

Secondly, I advise the hon. Gentleman to be careful. He is making the case for opting-out schools, which will provide a choice for local children, with no extra Government expenditure.

Mr. Fatchett: I do not see the logic of the argument for the preferential treatment of opt-out schools. We are arguing on behalf of all our children.

As for the hon. Gentleman's first point, he will recall that I said that the Government are having some difficulty finding children to fill the available assisted places.

Mr. Alan Amos (Hexham): Rubbish.

Mr. Fatchett: The hon. Gentleman may say that, but the statistics do not lie: there has been a fall-off in the number of children taking up assisted places.

Mr. Martin Flannery (Sheffield, Hillsborough): Some appalling figures were given in a written answer about six months ago. For instance, one school had nearly 450 assisted places out of 1,200 at a minimum of £2,000 each, which is £900,000 for that school alone. When all the money was counted, it was found that there were at least a dozen schools like that, and about 30 with between 300 and 400 assisted places. A vast amount of money is involved; it is nothing like what was said at the beginning.

Mr. Fatchett: My hon. Friend makes his point very effectively. The schools to which we refer are not private, independent schools, but schools supported by state money to maintain preference. That is what we object to.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett (Pembroke) *rose*——

Mr. Fatchett: No, I shall not give way again.

Let me finally make clear the Labour party's position, and that of a future Labour Government. Because of the privilege and preference engendered by the assisted places scheme, because it discriminates against the many in favour of the few and because it does not invest in our children, we intend to cancel it. It has no part to play for a future Labour Government who believe in extending opportunity in education to all our children. Because of our belief in that opportunity, we oppose the regulations and the principle of the assisted places scheme.

10.46 pm

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): The hon. Member for Leeds, Central (Mr. Fatchett) said that public money was keeping private schools in operation. That is far from the case. What it does is give children who would otherwise be denied it the opportunity of the finest education that the country can offer.

We in Lancaster have been fortunate, in that we have retained our grammar schools through thick and thin and therefore have no need of the assisted places scheme. But the school that I had the honour to attend—Queen Mary's, Lytham—took children from all over the area: from every housing estate and every possible district. Once the school unfortunately went private, that was no longer the case: youngsters who had had the privilege of that education no longer received it. Now, I am thankful to say, there are 43 assisted places in Queen Mary's school, and once more those children have the opportunity of a first-class education.

Mr. Patrick Thompson (Norwich, North): Someone like myself who has taught many people on the assisted places scheme would agree with my hon. Friend when she says that it is the young people with parents on low incomes who gain from the scheme. That is why it has been such a success.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: Indeed. The saner part of the House cannot have failed to be impressed by the Minister's figures for those on wholly assisted places. That is the crucial figure, and I believe that his intention to expand it to 35,000—many of whom will be wholly assisted—is entirely in the interests of the children of this country. My constituents and I fully support it.

10.49 pm

Mr. Richard Livsey (Brecon and Radnor): In theory, the assisted places scheme may sound reasonable; in reality, it has many weaknesses. It is important to stress that my party does not oppose private education. If people wish to spend their own money on independent schools, that is up to them. What we object to is that this form of education benefits from state money which would be better employed in the state sector——

Mr. J. F. Pawsey (Rugby and Kenilworth): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Livsey: Not yet. I have only just commenced my speech. I shall give way in a minute.

When the state sector is desperate for funds, as it is at present, it cannot be right to support the assisted places scheme. I understand that in 1985-86 the figure of support was £29 million, and the forecast is that in 1987-88 it will be £49 million. That increase is because, in some instances, almost twice as much is being spent per pupil on assisted places as is being spent per pupil in the state schools.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): The hon. Gentleman seems to be going down the same path as the Opposition in advocating the ILEA level of spending on secondary education. Is he aware that the leader of ILEA said about the secondary school system that it had let down the children for the past 10 or 20 years? Does he advocate that in the same way that the hon. Member for Leeds, Central (Mr. Fatchett) advocates it?

Mr. Livsey: If the state sector had been properly funded during the tenure of the Conservative Government, perhaps the leader of the ILEA would not have to make such statements. The inadequacies of the state sector have come about because it has been bled of public funds, and it has suffered grievously. We should be talking about the improvement of education, particularly state education, which provides schooling for the majority of children. Almost twice as much money is spent per pupil on the assisted places scheme as is spent per pupil in the state sector.

Mr. Dunn: I am sorry to interrupt the hon. Gentleman, but he has twice said something that is incorrect. The average cost of a maintained sector secondary school place for England as a whole in the financial year 1986-87 was £1,570. The cost to the taxpayer of each assisted place in the academic year 1986-87 was £1,759. That is not twice the cost in the state sector.

Mr. Livsey: It is, none the less, more than what is being spent in the state sector. A parliamentary answer given on 26 March 1987 shows that, for example, in Harrow the

[Mr. Livsey]

cost of an assisted place was £2,252, whereas the average cost per pupil in the state sector was only £1,200. The cost is different in different places. That is on the record.

The private sector will benefit substantially from the tax cuts given in the recent Budget to some of the richest people in our society. The state sector, rather than assisted places, should be getting the state money. Some of the best pupils are being taken out of the state sector and put into private schools, and that weakens the state sector.

Comprehensive schools are desperately short of funds, and the experience of my children in comprehensive schools has shown me that books are shared. In my local authority, spending on books is as low as £7 per pupil. It is time that the Government thought about investing in our children, because almost 90 per cent. of them are educated in the state sector.

The state cannot afford the subsidy being given through assisted places. The scheme is an anachronism. I note that the regulations try to assist those on low incomes, and that is of interest. None the less, these children are being taken out of the state sector, and as a result funds are being drained from it. The problem is that there is a danger of creating a two-tier education system through Government subsidy, and, as a matter of principle, that is not acceptable. We need to assist the majority of children in the state sector, and not a small minority, which is a highly selective system.

10.55 pm

Mr. James Pawsey (Rugby and Kenilworth): The hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Livsey) will forgive me if I do not pursue him down the various paths that he was evidently signposting. On the Government side of the House we had difficulty in establishing whether the speech that he was delivering so well was his or that of the hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) or, indeed, that of the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith).

I am sorry that the hon. Member for Leeds, Central (Mr. Fatchett) is not now in the Chamber. He mentioned many statistics, but he did not choose to refer to the fact that a recent poll showed that some 72 per cent. of those people consulted were in favour of this scheme going forward.

I would like to comment specifically on regulation 4, which refers to the scales of remission. Clearly, that is an important issue which affects the number of children going to assisted places schools. Undoubtedly, the scheme makes a relatively modest contribution towards increasing the amount of freedom and choice available to parents. It broadens children's horizons and enables them to share in the advantages that undoubtedly accrue from the independent sector. The scheme helps those parents who, while appreciating the benefits of independent schools, are perhaps unable to afford them. It also helps those who are less well off, single parent families and those who may be socially disadvantaged.

In a letter of 26 January to the chairman of the Incorporated Association of Preparatory Schools, my hon. Friend the Minister, who I am delighted to see in his usual place on the Treasury Bench—I have not the slightest doubt that he will grace it for many more years —said that the

> "Government has made a commitment in principle to a modest expansion of the scheme".

Mr. Straw: We have listened to the hon. Gentleman's generority towards the hon. Member for Dartford (Mr. Dunn). Does that mean that, if the hon. Gentleman should ever be offered the job of Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State at the Department of Education and Science, he will refuse it?

Mr. Pawsey: With the utmost respect to the hon. Gentleman, if my hon. Friend should move Departments and become a Minister of State, which is something that Opposition Members are unlikely to do—certainly in the lifetime of most hon. Members—of course, his and my promotion would be most welcome.

A modest expansion has occurred in the assisted places scheme since it was first announced in 1981. While the increase in places is to be welcomed, it has not gone far enough. One of the aims of the Education Reform Bill is to increase the amount of freedom and choice available to parents. Clearly grant-maintained schools represent a major step forward. The assisted places scheme is another facet in the drive to provide the maximum choice for parents. The scheme is clearly set out in regulation 4, but hon. Members will recall that it covers only the educational cost. The fees for boarding are carefully excluded. I wonder whether there is now an argument for re-examining this part of the scheme.

Much of the benefit to be derived by youngsters in the independent sector is from boarding and, as the majority of schools are geared to the needs of the majority of pupils who enjoy the benefits of boarding, day boys may miss out.

Moreover, many youngsters will attend school until the late evening, which will present some difficulties for parents collecting them and returning them to school the next day, especially if the schools are some distance from home. Geography restricts choice.

I was disappointed to see that the regulations do not refer to children from the ethnic minorities. I suspect that the majority of children who take advantage of the assisted places scheme are white. Does my hon Friend intend to broaden the scope of the scheme and to improve the publicity so that we may attract more Asian and West Indian children to participate in the scheme?

It is not surprising that the scheme attracts considerable interest among a wide range of independent schools. When it was introduced, some schools were suspicious about it, but those suspicions have been dissipated. The more schools come forward, the better.

In a letter dated 6 June my hon. Friend the Minister advises that there has been a substantial response to the invitation, issued to independent schools at the turn of the year, to participate in the scheme. Each application is considered in detail against a background of rigorous criteria which ensure that the quality of participating schools remains uniformly high.

Will my hon. Friend the Minister consider extending the scheme to younger children and preparatory schools? A substantial number of parents clearly believe that the education offered in the independent sector at an early age is worth paying for and worth making substantial sacrifices for. They believe that such schools offer a substantial advantage.

I would like there to be a modest expansion in both the number of overall places and in the age range, assisted places being provided for younger children in preparatory schools. I should like my hon. Friend to reconsider the possibility of funding part of the boarding cost, and I hope that he will consider means of ensuring that we get more participation by both West Indians and Asian children.

11.2 pm

Mr. Martin Flannery (Sheffield, Hillsborough): The hon. Member for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey) took a broad sweep which went miles beyond the regulations. He spoke of advertising and involving more people. I fully understand why. I do not agree with him, but it is impossible not to take such a broad approach.

We shall get rid of the assisted places scheme as soon as we are returned to office as it is now an expensive and fundamental part of private education. These proposals will merely intensify that fact. Public money taken from the state sector, which has suffered endless cuts, is being given to private education, not to help poor children but to expand the private sector in opposition to the public sector.

Mr. Patrick Thompson: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Flannery: Not just now. Let me get on a bit and then we shall see. If the hon. Gentleman is not a good boy, I shall not let him in at all—and that goes for all Conservative Members.

The harsh reality is that more and more amendments will be necessary to siphon more money from the ratepayers—including poor ratepayers—so that the children can go to school in that sector. Regulation 12 of the main regulations states:

> "The parents of an assisted pupil shall not be entitled to any remission of fees for which they are liable in respect of a period before the pupil took up his assisted place or (in lieu of notice or otherwise) after he has left the school, or if he so remains at the school, after the end of the school year in which he obtains the age of 20 years."

The statutory age for the vast majority of our children is 16 years, yet this regulation talks about an age of 20 years. I do not know what kind of pupil that is. The age is being amended to a slightly younger age.

The money from ratepayers, many of whom are poverty-stricken, is being siphoned off to send as many as 450 of the 1,200 children to one school. That is over one third, so we should be clear about what is being amended.

Mr. Thompson: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Flannery: I shall not give way just now.

Over one third of the pupils in those schools are being paid for by public money. That is what the measure is about. Conservative Members are defending siphoning off money from the poor for middle-class children, saying that they are poor. The Government are using public money to let children go to those shcools who already have plenty of money to go to the private sector if they want to do so.

Mr. Thompson: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Flannery: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will make his own speech. He can stand up to speak, just as I did.

In the Newcastle-under-Lyme school to which I referred earlier, more than 450 of the 1,200 children are on assisted places. That accounts for almost £1 million a year for one school alone. The Minister gave the figures, but, of course, he cheated when he said £1,700. He knows that £1,700 is an average and does not take many other things into account. He gave that figure so that people would not see the reality because, in many of these schools, the fee paid is £2,500, not £1,700. That figure was given in an answer by the Minister. The hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Livsey) has a copy of it, which I have just consulted and which I have quoted on many previous occasions.

Many schools are now involved and the amount of money being paid out is £27,000, at an average of well over £2,000 each. The total is at least £54 million at present. The Minister says that the figure will go up to £35,000. Does anyone think that it will remain at £35,000 when, six months ago, 30 more schools were wanting to get on to this education gravy train?

The figure will not remain at £70 million.

Mr. Thompson: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Flannery: I shall give way in a moment, if the hon. Gentleman will let me finish this point.

Seventy million pounds of public money is now about to be expended, and we know what will happen. As soon as another 30 schools leap on the gravy train, the figure will move up to £100 million, taken out of the state sector and given to rich schools.

Mr. Thompson: The hon. Gentleman is——

Mr. Flannery: The hon. Gentleman should say that he is grateful.

Mr. Thompson: I am most grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving way. He was talking about expansion of the independent sector. If it is to expand, that will remove a burden from the state sector, which means that there will be more funds available for it. If there are more assisted places, that will have the same effect. The hon. Gentleman's argument is wrong.

Mr. Flannery: The hon. Gentleman is so lyrical that we could almost set his comments to music. The harsh reality is that our money is being taken away from us to shore up an already flourishing private sector. We shall get rid of it as soon as we can—[HON. MEMBERS: "Oh".]—and tonight, with the utmost determination, we shall vote against the wickedness that takes money away from poor children so that it can be given to rich schools.

11.10 pm

Mr. Nicholas Bennett (Pembroke): The hon. Member for Sheffield, Hillsborough (Mr. Flannery) talked of a wicked system that takes money away from poor children. But it gives money to poor children. The assisted places scheme was set up to help those from families on low incomes who deserved to receive the best possible education and the choice that was available in other areas but not in theirs.

The hon. Gentleman is a member of a party which for years has squawked about the fact that only 6 or 7 per cent. of our children are able to attend independent schools. Yet here is an opportunity for more children to go to such schools, and the hon. Gentleman is opposed to it. He is opposed to private education in principle, and that is what it is all about. He did not talk about the rights of parents to choose their children's schools and the education that they should have. We are talking about a modest scheme which provides an opportunity for those who would not

[Mr. Nicholas Bennett]

necessarily have the chance to obtain the education that their parents wish for them. I welcome the intentions behind the regulations.

Mr. Fatchett: Has the hon. Gentleman seen the research by Mike Douse which was published in *Educational Studies?* It is entitled "The Background of Assisted Places Scheme Students". It arrived at two conclusions which I shall draw to the hon. Gentleman's attention. First,

> "relatively few APS students come from unambiguously working-class backgrounds."

Secondly,

> "many APS students are drawn from families already within the 'Independent School frame of reference'."

Thus both his major conclusions run against and vitiate the assertions that the hon. Gentleman is making. The arguments of my hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Hillsborough (Mr. Flannery) are substantiated by independent research and do not depend on the prejudices that the hon. Gentleman is trying to peddle.

Mr. Bennett: I should be interested to know exactly who the survey was commissioned by and exactly who the gentleman who produced it is. I am interested to know what an unambiguous working-class background is. That is a strange description. Perhaps the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) comes within that category. Under this Government, the number of those who describe themselves as working class has been declining as the middle class expands due to tax cuts and increased prosperity.

The assisted places scheme defines by income, and those with large incomes are not allowed to participate in it. We know that those who have been taking advantage of it are, for example, the sons of policemen, the sons of shopkeepers and the sons of shop stewards. Ordinary people have been given back the opportunity which was removed from them in 1976 when the Labour Government abolished the direct grant schools. The schools that have the largest percentages of children on assisted places are former direct grant schools that provided free education for such children under state provision until the Labour Government abolished it. Labour Members should remember that when they discuss the regulations.

The hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Livsey) is a near neighbour of mine in parliamentary terms. I realise that he was trying to read the handwriting of the hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown). That accounted for his halting delivery and the doubtful philosophy that lay behind his speech. It is strange that the party which until recently called itself the Liberal party, and which still has Liberal in its title, should oppose a scheme which encourages diversity and the variety of education which was a fundamental philosophy of John Stuart Mill and the Liberal party until very recently.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. That is all very interesting but it has little to do with the regulations that are before the House.

Mr. Bennett: I shall try to follow your injunction, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but the hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor appears to have left his philosophy and his principles behind along with the rest of the Liberal party, when it decamped.

The hon. Member for Leeds, Central (Mr. Fatchett) made the peculiar argument that, because people will receive state funds in assisting their children to attend independent schools, those schools will cease to be independent. On that logic, if anybody spends any part of their supplementary benefit or income support, or has a local authority bus pass to use public or private transport, the object of that expenditure or assistance will cease to enjoy its independence. That would also be true of universities, which, we are proud to say, are independent.

It is nonsense to believe that, because the state is prepared to assist people with funding, it will dilute the independence of the institution concerned. That underlines the Labour party's nonsensical opposition. It does not believe in freedom of choice, in diversity of education, or in competing standards of quality. Labour Members want a grey, uniform system in which our young people will be forced to attend the neighbourhood comprehensive, on which the Labour party will impose its standards, rather than allow anybody to have a choice. I applaud the Government for sticking to their principles.

11.16 pm

Ms. Hilary Armstrong (Durham, North-West): We are having an interesting debate and one that, in many respects, goes to the heart of all the education debates of the past month. Tonight's discussion centres on certain narrow powers, and it appears that the Government have created for themselves a number of problems. Perhaps the Minister, when he replies, will be able to provide solutions to them.

Government Members claim that the regulations are intended to permit access by the widest possible range of children—although the number will be small—to the best possible education. However, that education—even on the Minister's lowest average estimate, including a parental contribution—will cost substantially more than in the state sector. Yet the Government have tried to tell us, week after week, month after month, that resources are not a problem in the state sector.

We have been arguing for many a month, and many a year, that the Government ought to be putting far greater resources into the state sector to improve the quality of education and the opportunities there for all children, and to meet the aspirations and wishes of the parents, about whom the Government say that they are so concerned. How will the Government reconcile that contradiction? They say, "The state sector is spending far too much and we shall have to cut back the amount of money going into those schools. On the other hand, because we're interested in providing a good education for these few children, we'll spend more public money to support a small number of places at much higher cost."

The second problem that Conservative Members have highlighted tonight is that the Government are trying to justify the public sector supporting independent schools. The hon. Member for Pembroke (Mr. Bennett) made that point very forcefully. If that is so, and if the hon. Gentleman is right in saying that the public purse ought to be spent in that way, how can the Government justify having the House work through the Education Reform Bill in the way that it has? How do the Government justify such children being completely outside the national curriculum? The Government are simply not prepared to face up to that contradiction.

I could talk about many other contradictions that are inherent in the Government's case, but those two alone give the lie to the Government's claim that the regulations extend choice.

In my county of Durham there are no assisted places, but there are many young people who are attending school day by day who have the right to, and we have the duty to offer to them, the very best. It is no good the Government saying that their answer to that is to enable a few to enter the independent sector.

The Government need to examine the independent sector and ensure that it provides the quality that it claims to provide. If one looks at such narrow qualifications as exam results, many of those schools simply do not come up to the level of many of our state schools.

If we are really talking about extending choice and opening up opportunities, the Government have to take on board the fact that, instead of dealing in this marginal and elitist way with a few children, they must address the needs of all our children. The children in Durham are just as important to Britain's future as the children in Surrey. The Government cannot get away with constantly discussing the quality of education when they are only addressing the needs of a few of our children.

If the Government are really interested in extending choice and ensuring that parents feel that their children have the best, they will begin to put into the state sector the resources that they know that it needs and without which it cannot survive.

The state sector, used by 92 per cent. of our children, is being starved of the resources that it needs to provide those opportunities and that choice. The Government are failing that 92 per cent. of the population of school age children when they address themselves to regulations such as these and not to the needs of the children and the needs of our state schools.

11.22 pm

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): It is important to say a few words about the assisted places scheme and the regulations which modify the principal regulations in determining the eligibility of youngsters to qualify under the scheme.

First, parents who are seeking the best education for their children would be well advised to send them to co-educational comprehensive schools because that system has been tried and tested and, despite attacks by politically motivated groups, mostly from the Conservative party, on the figures provided by the Department of Education and Science, in academic terms, which are generally the only terms looked at by Conservative Members, the number of passes at O and A-level per thousand children has steadily increased throughout the past quarter of a century when comprehensive education has changed from being a derided experiment into an accepted and, indeed, preferential choice for most parents.

Many of us remember the time of the 11-plus and the discrimination between those who passed and those who did not. Many of us resented the snobbery and discrimination which accompanied that. I can well remember as a young lad at primary school getting involved in fights with other youngsters about who went to which school. Because I happened to pass the 11-plus and went to a grammer school I was called a snob-school snob by children from the same street in which I lived because of the snobbery endemic in that system. Our children went to comprehensive co-educational schools and we blessed the day that the Labour movement pressed for those schools to be instituted because my wife and I knew that our children were never subject to the discrimination and pressure that we had to suffer when we were at school.

It is important to emphasise comprehensive co-education. Of course, it will always seek to improve standards of attainment, but it still represents an important principle with a high standard of application.

Mr. Pawsey: Will the hon. Gentleman say something about parental choice? Does he accept that parents should have the opportunity to send their children to alternative schools? Does he agree that the idea of CTCs is a good one? Does he agree that areas that maintain grammer schools do so because parents wish to retain them? Does he agree that comprehensive schools may have some of the answers, but they do not have all the answers? In the regulations, as in the Education Reform Bill, we are seeking to broaden parental choice. Will he address his mind to that?

Mr. Cryer: I shall certainly address my mind to that point. I shall not spend time on CTCs as the DES is wasting money on CTCs which are not covered by the regulations and no doubt you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, would pull me up if I dwelt on that subject. Suffice it to say that the £30,000 that the Government gave to Bradford chamber of commerce to investigate a CTC in Bradford was money frivolously and wastefully thrown away in an outrageous use of taxpayers' money. I am surprised and startled that more Conservative Back Benchers have not been a little more critical about such misuse of taxpayers' money.

As for choice, the Education Act 1944 was introduced by R. A. Butler, a man who once found favour in the Conservative party. He would have no place in the Government of today, because he was too progressive, too much part of the old, one-nation section of the Conservative party, but his Education Act 1944 was generally regarded as a progressive measure at that time.

The Education Act 1944 was interpreted in various court decisions, and the Conservative party generally supported the judiciary view that the choice for parents must always be interpreted as being measured within the framework of the facilities which a local authority can provide. That is not absolute; it is a qualified choice. The hon. Member for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey), representing the Right-wing, rabid section of the Tory party, said that the middle class was expanding. Those articulate, middle-class parents should be arguing for improvements in the state sector of education so that the choice within the state sector is more meaningful, and not making such arbitary discrimination.

The hon. Member for Rugby and Kenilworth suggested that the children who were the subject of the regulations deserve to get the best possible education. I thought that all our children deserved the best possible education. The argument that Conservative Members are putting forward is that a certain section of the population—clearly not all the population, because only a minority will come under the assisted places scheme, which is expensive enough at a total cost of £50 million—will be subject to the regulations.

Some parents may consider that, in academic terms, private education is the best possible education. But there

[Mr. Cryer]

is no doubt that some parents will regard it purely in terms of the snob value and the position in society which is reflected by their child going to an independent school. Many people in that position send their children to such schools not for the education they get but because of the cap and uniform they wear. They think they have got in with the posh people.

I hear Conservative Members trying to chide me about having gone to a grammar school. I went to that school because it was part of the system that operated at that time and, being 11, I did not have much choice. Like all children in the area, I had to take the 11-plus. Like some, I passed, but the majority failed. I objected to that system then——

Mr. Nicholas Winterton (Macclesfield): When?

Mr. Cryer: I argued about it at the time, from 11 onwards, when I got to grammar school. *[Interruption.]* Some of us had political leanings at a very early age and some of the fights in which I was involved as a young kid, in which bricks were thrown between gangs, taught me that snobbery and discrimination exercised among young children produced bad results among those children. Today, the Tory Government are bringing into the 1980s the sort of divide that existed in the 1940s.

When earlier I criticised the hon. Member for Lancaster (Mrs. Kellett-Bowman) over her two minutes or so of platitudes, some of her hon. Friends seemed to express regret about my not having addressed the House on this matter. I am making good that omission now, and I have not finished yet.

There are two elements in the sort of discrimination we are discussing. One is snobbery and the other is the development of a meritocracy; IQ plus effort equals merit. The famous book of the 1950s, "The Rise of the Meritocracy", has largely been discredited on the basis that to pluck a tiny section out of society and provide it with a privileged education is wrong.

My hon. Friends and I argue—and the Conservatives argue when they are looking for votes—that people should have the same opportunities. But here the Government are deliberately plucking out a section of society and providing it with a privileged, what they regard as a better, education, though I dispute that it is better.

I shall contrast the attitude of Ministers as they lavish £50 million on this scheme with their attitude to the situation in, say, my constituency, where, in the state sector, Bradford has urged the Government to spend more to replace some of the 500 temporary classrooms that are in use in the area. These temporary classrooms have been in use so long that some money that has been allocated for permanent buildings is having to be used to repair them, thus preventing the local authority from spending the money on the permanent extensions that are badly needed. The Department of Education and Science says that there is not sufficient money to provide more permanent classrooms in Bradford. Schools cannot be provided with adequate playing space. In schools in Queensbury in my constituency——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman knows that these regulations are not an appropriate peg on which to hang a discussion on the state of education in Bradford.

Mr. Cryer: "Erskine May" is quite specific that one is allowed to give passing illustrations by way of explanation, and I am doing that. I could do it a great deal more quickly if I could get to the end of it, but I am sure your guidance is very helpful, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The regulations are costing taxpayers money. They modify the whole of the regulations under which children are determined as being eligible or otherwise for the assisted places scheme. The total cost of that scheme is about £50 million. These regulations are misplaced, because there are more urgent priorities for the money that is being allocated. I am saying by way of explanation that in some schools in Bradford there are many temporary classrooms that need replacing by permanent accommodation and that the education authority is having to build outside toilets to cater for the classrooms which are outside the permanent accommodation because the Department of Education will not provide the money for such accommodation in the state sector.

It will shock you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, as much as it shocks me that the Government are prepared to lavish £50 million on a scheme that bolsters the private sector. The truth is that when the assisted places scheme was originally introduced the private sector was withering, and it was a shot in the arm by the taxpayer that kept it from withering away. The Government are now giving more money to bolster inequality and snobbery and allowing the state sector, which deals with 92 per cent. of our children, to wither away, as a deliberate act of vengeful policy against the majority of the people. I am sure that these arguments will get home by the next general election and that the Government will rue their actions today.

Mr. Fatchett *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Has the hon. Gentleman the leave of the House to speak again?

11.38 pm

Mr. Fatchett: With permission, Mr. Deputy Speaker, may I say that we have had a lively debate which has shown some of the key divisions in education provision. My hon. Friends the Members for Sheffield, Hillsborough (Mr. Flannery), Durham, North-West (Ms. Armstrong) and Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) have made a strong argument against the privilege that is implied and enacted by these regulations.

The only thing said by my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South with which I disagree is that Tory Members had to wait until they came to this place for some political education. It seems to me that the only political education that Conservative Members need is enough to enable them to find their way faithfully into the appropriate Lobby without much thought.

There have been two key arguments in the debate. The first concern the nature of the so-called private independent sector. Not one Conservative Member has been able to substantiate the argument that we have a private independent sector. They know that the schools in that sector are supported by the taxpayer. As my hon. Friends have said, that intervention has kept the schools alive; without it, they would not exist in their present form. They are not private schools; they are state-subsidised schools and should be recognised as such. The argument that we have heard so often from Conservative Members that the national curriculum should not apply to the independent sector has been shown to be very thin indeed because we now know the true nature of that independence.

The other argument that Conservative Members have advanced is that the scheme and the regulations provide for opportunity. That is a very interesting argument. We need to remember the Government's record, and their reluctance to invest in education for all our children. If Conservative Members propose to tell us about opportunity, they should tell us about opportunity for each and every one of our children. As my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South and others have said, the simple fact is that the Government have decreased spending per child by 20 per cent. in real terms during their lifetime.

Mr. Key: Not true.

Mr. Fatchett: It is true.

That is the extent to which the Government believe in equality of opportunity. If their words were true, and if their acts followed their words, the Government would make the money for the scheme and the money that they are wasting on city technology colleges available for all our children. They would invest in the education of all our children. Their ideology—their commitment to a few and to privilege—stops them doing that. That is why Opposition Members oppose the scheme, and why we shall vote against the regulations tonight.

11.43 pm

Mr. Dunn: This debate has become an annual event for me. I welcome it because it enables me to show clearly the support of the Government and my hon. Friends for the scheme. It also enables Opposition parties to exercise their prejudice against parental choice. The Opposition do not give a fig for parental choice.

In a speech that I found incredible, both in its arguments and in its lack of focus, the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) quoted R. A. Butler, a man highly esteemed in our party for his part in the enactment of the Education Act 1944. I remind the hon. Gentleman that R. A. Butler believed in the tripartite system of secondary provision—the grammar schools, the technical grammar schools and the secondary modern schools.

Mr. Straw: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Dunn: In one moment.

The hon. Member for Bradford, South went on to talk about his experiences as a child in a working class community. I know all about that, too. He spoke about Bradford and its needs. I remind the House that there was a by-election victory in Bradford only a few days ago in which we took a seat from the Labour party with a massive swing and a greater majority than might have been expected; so much for our policies and the lives of the people of Bradford. The hon. Member for Bradford, South does not understand——

Mr. Straw: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Dunn: I shall give way in a moment—[HON. MEMBERS: "Give way."] No. I must make this point. This has to be placed on the record.

The Labour party has never understood the aspirations of ordinary families. What it forgets is that when a working class child received a place at a grammar school, it was a matter of pride for the whole community. It was never even a matter for contempt or for the anguish described by the hon. Member for Bradford, South—whom I do not see in the Chamber, incidentally.

Mr. Cryer: On a point of order——

Mr. Dunn: Surely the whole point——

Mr. Cryer: On a point of order——

Mr. Dunn: I am enjoying myself too much to give way, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Cryer: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The Minister is clearly politically blind and apparently physically blind. I have been sitting in the Chamber the whole time, but he has not been able to see me. I want to make it clear that I am here.

Mr. Dunn: I apologise to the hon. Gentleman. He merges into the background every time that I try to see him.

The hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Livsey), in an unusual speech which it is worth reading, said that under the scheme the brightest children from state schools are taken out of the state system and placed in the independent schools almost by force. That is totally untrue. Because of parents' aspirations, those children ultimately find their way into independent schools. I must remind the House—

Mr. Straw: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Dunn: I have changed my mind.

A survey conducted in 1976 showed that 72 per cent. of the public approved of the assisted places scheme.

Mr. Straw: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Dunn: I will not give way.

When broken down by voting intention, support for the scheme was as follows: 86 per cent. of Conservative voters, 74 per cent. of SDP voters, alliance voters or whatever they are called, and 60 per cent. of Labour voters were in favour of the scheme, and 70 per cent. of trade unionists expressed approval. We do not need the Labour party's support when we have the people's support. I commend the regulations to the House.

Question put:—

The House divided: Ayes 186, Noes 128.

Division No. 397] **[11.46 pm**

AYES

Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Allason, Rupert
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Ashby, David
Atkinson, David
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bowis, John
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr

Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dorrell, Stephen
Dunn, Bob
Dykes, Hugh
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Tony
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gow, Ian
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Sir Eldon *(Bury St E')*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hind, Kenneth
Holt, Richard
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Janman, Tim
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Maclean, David
Maude, Hon Francis
Neale, Gerrard

Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, John *(Oxford W)*
Pawsey, James
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Price, Sir David
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Renton, Tim
Riddick, Graham
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Sims, Roger
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stokes, Sir John
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Tracey, Richard
Trippier, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Walden, George
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Mike

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Tony Durant and
Mr. David Lightbown.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Armstrong, Hilary
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Dalyell, Tam
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Eadie, Alexander
Fatchett, Derek
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Flannery, Martin
Foster, Derek
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Galloway, George
George, Bruce
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Graham, Thomas
Grocott, Bruce
Hardy, Peter
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam

Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Leadbitter, Ted
Lewis, Terry
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
Macdonald, Calum A.
McGrady, Eddie
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McKelvey, William
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliott
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Patchett, Terry
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Redmond, Martin
Robertson, George
Rooker, Jeff
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sheerman, Barry
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Spearing, Nigel
Steinberg, Gerry
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Turner, Dennis
Wall, Pat
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Frank Haynes and
Mr. Allen Adams.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved,

That the draft Education (Assisted Places) (Amendment) Regulations 1988, which were laid before this House on 13th June, be approved.

Northern Ireland (Sex Discrimination)

11.57 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Mr. Peter Viggers): I beg to move,

That the draft Sex Discrimination (Northern Ireland) Order 1988, which was laid before this House on 17th May, be approved.

The order has several key objectives. The first and most important is to further promote equal opportunities in employment between men and women. The second is to achieve that aim in a manner that reduces unnecessary bureaucracy. The third is to put Northern Ireland on the same footing as the rest of the United Kingdom in this part of the law.

The order contains provisions analogous to those enacted in Great Britain by the Sex Discrimination Act 1986. Together with articles 7 to 10, which replicate changes introduced in Great Britain in 1976 subsequent to the enactment of the Sex Discrimination (Northern Ireland) Order of that year, the provisions will bring Northern Ireland law into line with that of Great Britain. The order is a positive measure, and reflects the Government's policy of ensuring parity of provision throughout the United Kingdom in the promotion of equality of opportunity between the sexes.

Northern Ireland has its own separate legislation and administrative framework for the promotion of equality of opportunity between the sexes and the control of unlawful sex discrimination. In reality, however, the law in Northern Ireland has tended to mirror that in Great Britain. That is hardly surprising, as much of the provision is rooted in our obligations as a member of the European Community, which bite as much in Northern Ireland as elsewhere in the kingdom. Similarly, the issues addressed in the Sex Discrimination Act 1975 and the Sex Discrimination (Northern Ireland) Order 1976, and in subsequent measures in this sector, are common to Great Britain and to Northern Ireland. It is clearly sensible, therefore, for there to be parity of provision between Northern Ireland and Great Britain and this is what this order is designed to achieve.

A number of the changes in the order, in particular articles 3 and 11 and articles 4 and 5, have been the subject of separate consultations, which paralleled similar consultations in Great Britain. The totality of the order has also been the subject of consultation as part of the normal legislative arrangements for Northern Ireland legislation of this type. I am grateful to all of those who have offered comments, even if it was not possible to accept all the points that were made.

Before dealing with the substance of each article, I remind the House that articles 3 and 11 and articles 4 and 5 stem from separate judgments of the European Court of Justice and are designed to meet the court's ruling that, on the issues concerned, the United Kingdom sex discrimination legislation—that is, the Sex Discrimination Act 1975 and, by extension, the Sex Discrimination (Northern Ireland) Order 1976—did not fully meet the requirements of the European Community equal treatment directive.

Articles 3 and 11 are a direct response to the court's concern that the 1976 order was deficient on three counts covering, first, exemption of private households, secondly, of small firms with five or fewer employees, and, thirdly, its application to collective agreements and the rules of undertakings and of independent professions and occupations. Articles 4 and 5, on the other hand, reflect the court's ruling in the case of Marshall *v.* South West Hampshire area health authority in February 1986 that the dismissal of a woman solely because she had reached state pensionable age where that was different for women and men was contrary to article 5(1) of the equal treatment directive.

I shall now deal with the substance of the various articles. Articles 1 and 2 are self-explanatory and deal with the title, commencement and interpretation of terms used in the order. Article 3 repeals article 8(3) of the 1976 order, which exempts private households and businesses with five or fewer employees from the requirement not to discriminate in employment and replaces it with a more limited exception for private households.

Article 3 makes the further change of removing the exemption for small firms—that is, firms with five or fewer employees. I would add that, following the suggestion in another place during the passage of the 1986 Act, partnerships consisting of five or fewer persons were brought within the scope of the sex discrimination legislation. This was a logical extension which reflected the increase in the number of women entering business on their own account and the Government's commitment to self-employment. This provision has been replicated in full in the draft order.

Articles 4 and 5 provide for equal treatment in retirement age and are a consequence of the European Court judgment in the Marshall case, to which I have already referred. Again, the articles mirror provisions which were introduced into the 1986 Act in Committee. Employers will have up to six months to rearrange their procedures and adjust their personnel planning to comply with the new provisions, but I would hope that employers in Northern Ireland will implement these changes as quickly as possible.

Article 6 removes the administrative hurdle of designation by the Department of Economic Development which previously faced organisations wishing to provide training for people of one sex in occupations where they are seriously under-represented or to help them return to the labour market after a period of domestic or family responsibilities.

The aim of any codes issued by the Northern Ireland commission, referred to in articles 7 to 10, as with its Great Britain counterpart, will be to give practical guidance aimed at eliminating discrimination and promoting equality of opportunity: The Equal Opportunities Commission (Northern Ireland) already publishes a range of booklets of high quality. I understand that its booklet on sexual harassment is a model and has been used in Great Britain. The codes that it will now be able to bring forward will be admissible as evidence before an industrial tribunal and can be taken into account by a tribunal in deciding whether an act of unlawful discrimination has taken place. They will, therefore, be an important reference point for employers, trade unionists and individuals in understanding their rights and responsibilities under sex discrimination legislation.

Article 8 specifies a new requirement which the Equal Opportunities Commission must fulfil before it can embark on a formal investigation and will bring Northern Ireland law into line with that in Great Britain. The article requires the commission, when it proposes to inquire into whether a named individual has committed an unlawful

[Mr. Peter Viggers]

act, to inform that individual of the commission's intention to investigate and to offer the individual concerned the right to make oral or written representations and to be legally represented. We believe that it is right that the powers of the investigating body, and the rights of individuals who might be the subject of such investigation, should be the same throughout the United Kingdom.

Article 9 clarifies the maximum amount an industrial tribunal may award in respect of complaints presented to it by individuals under the Sex Discrimination Order. This limit has been set at £8,500 since 1 April 1987.

While article 10 is a minor amendment, I am sure that it is a welcome one to the Equal Opportunities Commission as it extends its discretion to assist individuals in the preparation, and the presentation, of a complaint to an industrial tribunal where there is some special reason for affording such assistance.

By contrast, article 11 of the draft order is again designed to bring our equality laws into line with the European Community equal treatment directive. The European Court judgment that gave rise to the changes in article 3 also required us to make void discriminatory provisions in collective agreements, internal rules of undertakings and rules governing the independent occupations and professions.

Another key objective of the draft order is the repeal of restrictions on hours of work. Article 12 removes from the Factories Act (Northern Ireland) 1965 outmoded and discriminatory restrictions on hours of work for women in such undertakings. It also removes the power to impose such restrictions under the Mines Act (Northern Ireland) 1969 and the Quarries (Northern Ireland) Order 1983. The repeals will put women in the manfacturing sector in Northern Ireland not only on a par with men in the same occupations, but with other women in jobs where there are no legislative restrictions on hours of work.

Mr. David Alton (Liverpool, Mossley Hill): Will the hon. Gentleman say how that will affect people who might be involved when working in the nuclear industry, especially those who may be affected by radiation-related diseases? Will he comment on the possible detrimental effects to a woman's health, especially when she is pregnant?

Mr. Viggers: The hon. Gentleman makes a fair point. It is unreasonably believed by some that women are less capable of taking on manual and other work than men. Informed opinion now recognises that that is not the case. However, for gynaecological or other reasons, women could, obviously, be unsuited for work. I will investigate the specific point made by the hon. Gentleman and, with the leave of the House, I will refer to it in my reply.

Finally, article 13 of the draft order closes a small loophole in the sex discrimination laws by preventing district councils from using public entertainment licensing powers in a sex discriminatory way. I know of no district council that discriminates in this way, but as the European Commission considers the United Kingdom legislation to be deficient in this respect we have taken the necessary steps to rectify it.

The reforms introduced by this draft order are a further step in what I would hope is a common goal of promoting equal opportunities and flexibility in employment. The order also removes some unnecessary restrictions. I believe it is a major step towards true equality between the sexes and commend it to the House.

I have sought to deal briefly with the specific points raised in the order, but I will be happy—with the leave of the House—to deal with points raised during the debate.

12.8 am

Ms. Marjorie Mowlam (Redcar): I thank the Minister for the detailed explanation of the articles in the draft order. I am sure that some of them will be warmly welcomed by people in Northern Ireland, but, clearly, some of them will not.

The Minister gave two explanations for the order being introduced. First, he said that it was to bring Northern Ireland legislation into line with that in the rest of the United Kingdom. He referred especially to articles 7, 8, 9 and 10. His second justification was that the order brings Northern Ireland legislation in line with European Community law. In particular, he mentioned the judgments of the European Court of Justice at Luxembourg, and he referred especially to articles 3 and 12.

It has to be said that the Minister was a little liberal with his definition of causality. Many people in Northern Ireland would argue that the British Government introduced parts of this legislation not because of an unswerving desire for greater equality for women but because the changes were forced on them by the European Court of Justice, which found that the British Government had failed to comply with the equal treatment directive in employment, vocational training, and working conditions. The Minister is aware that that directive was binding on the Government.

We welcome some of the proposals in the order which bring about positive changes for women. We welcome those which end the exclusion of sex discrimination legislation in undertakings of fewer than six people. We also welcome employers and partners having to provide equality in retirement age and equalisation of the age of unfair dismissal. We have many criticisms of the order, but in view of the late hour I shall concentrate on just four.

First, why has it taken so long for this legislation to be introduced in Northern Ireland? Article 3 bans discrimination against people employed in undertakings of six or fewer people. We welcome that article because if someone is discriminated against in a shop where there are, say, five employees, it ought to be dealt with. We cannot understand why it has taken so long for that legislation to be introduced in Northern Ireland. The European Court of Justice, in the case of the European Commission v. United Kingdom, said in 1983 that that exemption was unlawful.

The exemption was deleted for Britain in February 1987. As the Department of Economic Development has said, it is estimated that the change will affect more than 3,600 employees who work in small firms in Northern Ireland. It will not be sufficient for the Minister to say, as Lord Lyell said for the Government in the other place yesterday, that this is the first opportunity that the Government have had. To many people in Northern Ireland, that response suggests a lack of desire to implement the European Court's ruling.

Secondly, why are the Government complying with some obligations under European law but not others? The Government seem to be selective about which bits of European law they will implement. Articles 4 and 5 illustrate the anomalous position in which the Government have put themselves.

We welcome the Government's compliance with the provision that employers and partners have to provide equality in retirement age, particularly as women, on average, live seven and a half years longer than men. But how can the Government then ignore parts of the European directive which would stop the blatant discrimination that continues against women in relation to redundancy payments and pension entitlement? It will not be satisfactory for the Minister to argue that those items fall outside the scope of the equal treatment directive and that therefore he does not need to consider them. In the case of Cato v. Queen Charlotte's special health authority, it was found that to specify different age limits for redundancy was in contravention of European law.

Thirdly, the Government are threatening women's rights rather than helping them, as the draft order equalises downwards. Article 12 is an example of that. It removes protective legislation from women. Under the guise of equality, the Government are saying that women will be treated in the same way as their male counterparts. The Minister mentioned the Mines Act (Northern Ireland) 1969, the Quarries (Northern Ireland) Order 1983 and the Factories Act (Northern Ireland) 1965. We are talking here about important rights such as those that affect working hours, Sunday labour, rights to annual holidays and many health and safety protections.

We recognise that women in other areas of employment do not receive such protection, but instead of removing protective legislation the Government should review the situation to ensure that all workers are guaranteed minimum standards on working hours. We do not consider it unreasonable to expect that workers in this country should have rights to adequate breaks, adequate relief for shift work and adequate child care provision. We have only to look at countries such as Norway and Sweden to see that they have improved safety standards for workers. We are asking why we do not have the same here.

We are therefore arguing for equalisation up rather than down, as the Government propose. It is no good the Minister arguing, as he began to suggest, that that would in some way increase freedom of choice because the submission to which he referred—made after consultations with both the Irish Congress of Trade Unions and the Equal Opportunities Commission in Northern Ireland—argues that there is no evidence to suggest that it would increase freedom of choice for women. We rehearsed the arguments in the House when we debated Sunday trading and the reasons why those proposed changes would make the situation worse.

The fourth criticism that we should like the Minister to address is that, on balance, the order limits the powers of the EOC in Northern Ireland, while at the same time increasing its workload. We willingly accept that the EOC has been given the right to introduce a code of practice into specific firms. We accept that that is a useful tool and we welcome it, but it is a right which, as I am sure the Minister is aware, the EOC has had since the 1970s. At the same time, the order will limit the EOC's ability to be effective. It will limit how the EOC can introduce that code of practice. It will force the EOC to give notice to a named individual that it is to carry out an investigation where unlawful discrimination is thought to be taking place.

In addition, the EOC must substantiate the belief that unlawful discrimination is taking place. As I am sure that the Minister and hon. Members are aware, discrimination is sometimes difficult to see. It is often hidden and indirect. It takes many forms and, therefore, to ask the EOC to substantiate a belief is very problematic. Perhaps, when the Minister answers our questions, he will define for us what belief means in the context of the order.

It would be useful if the Minister could clarify what the explanatory note means when it states that no significant effect on public expenditure will result from the order. The order increases the remit of the EOC in Northern Ireland and, therefore, one would assume that there would be a subsequent increase in the EOC's budget to handle that increased remit. When that question was put to Lord Lyell in the other place yesterday, the answer was unclear and we would appreciate it if the Minister would clarify that point.

I am sure that the Minister would like to join me in welcoming the good work done by the EOC and Mary Clark-Glass in the past year, particularly the recent success in giving girls aged 11 the right of transferability without having a percentage barrier to their chances to go on to specific schools. I am sure that the Minister will welcome the progress that the commission ensured in that legislation.

The order proposes only piecemeal amendments to the current legislation. It does not in any way fulfil the Government's obligations, under the equal treatment directive. We argue, therefore, that it will lead to further litigation in the European Court of Justice. A particularly worrying, underlying dimension that runs through the order is that the Government's proposals are primarily motivated by a desire to deregulate, rather than by a real commitment to remove sex discrimination. It is clear that the Government's response to their European obligations has yet again been to propose changes that would repeal sexually discriminatory legislation at the cost of the removal of essential protection in health and safety at work for women.

The order is too little and too late for women in Northern Ireland. There are many obstacles that will present serious problems to the creation of true equality between the sexes. The Minister claimed that it represents a major step forward, but we consider it to be a small step forward and two steps backwards. It avoids dealing with the main issues of discrimination. We shall continue to challenge the Government on the widespread discrimination which still exists and press them for a much more detailed examination of current sex discrimination legislation.

12.30 am

Mr. Eddie McGrady (South Down): I am glad to have the opportunity to contribute to the debate. Last Friday, the House discussed the White Paper on fair employment legislation in Northern Ireland and it is appropriate that we are now discussing disadvantage due to sex discrimination. It is significant that last week in the High Court at Belfast, Judge Hutton ruled that two education and library boards and the Department of Education were guilty of indirect discrimination in respect of 11-plus

[Mr. Eddie McGrady]

examinations. That illustrates the attitudes that lie within the ethos of sex discrimination. There are probably many laws and regulations that contain discrimination, both direct and indirect, that have yet to be tested in the courts. The order seems to be a piecemeal response to a problem that is endemic. It reflects a lack of initiative to deal with the problem in its totality.

My party, along with many other organisations, including the Equal Opportunities Commission, made detailed submissions to the Department of Economic Development of Northern Ireland. My party's submission was at one with that of the EOC and those of many other bodies. It sought equality of status for all women on the work floor, in the office and in the professions. My party expressed its misgivings and made proposals for alterations. After the period for consultation came to an end the order was published, and it appeared that not one material change had been made to it. It seems that no cognisance was taken of the many submissions which were made during the consultative period. It would seem that it is a waste of time being involved in that process if it ends with no changes being made to the original proposals.

There have been changes in employment, one of which is the greater participation of women in work. The statistics showed that last March, in Northern Ireland, almost 250,000 women were in employment. It is significant that over 7,000 women are self-employed. In addition, there has been an influx of women into the professions and the higher echelons of the Civil Service, but those are the exceptions. Many women in employment are concentrated in the part-time arena in low-status occupations. Many are concentrated also in the easily exploited service sectors such as hairdressing, contract cleaning and catering. It is important that employers understand the vital role that they have to play in the promotion of equal opportunity for women. Legislation such as that which is before us should address itself to the totality of the problem. As the hon. Member for Redcar (Ms. Mowlam) said, the order represents a piecemeal approach.

There is no denying that the order contains advances, which we welcome, especially in relation to private households, small undertakings and partnerships, retirement ages, collective agreements and rules of undertakings. These have been dealt with in some detail by the hon. Member for Redcar and it will not be necessary, therefore, for me to do so.

Having welcomed those particular aspects of the order, I may add that it has a number of serious shortfalls, which must be addressed. The draft order proposes repealing certain protective legislation. I agree with the hon. Member for Redcar that that would be a retrograde step. The order would appear to discard certain rights that women need and that ought to remain on the statute book.

The Equal Opportunities Commission would be empowered to issue new codes of practice containing practical guidance on eliminating discrimination in employment and on promoting equal opportunities as between men and women. We hope that such codes would be persuasive in respect of industrial tribunals. However, the draft order embodies proposals that would narrow the terms of reference applying to formal investigations by the EOC. Such restrictions have already been identified by the English and Welsh commissions as being limiting, and we now appear to be repeating that error in the draft order that is before the House tonight.

The investigations upon which the EOC could embark will be restricted to individuals only, and only where there is a preconceived idea that discrimination has occurred. The order would also allow for something that is a matter of concern to many having experience of this subject. I refer to protracted, pre-investigation representations, which could bog down the whole investigative process, introduce unnecessary delay and cost, and draw further on the commission's resources.

The Government have failed to introduce promised amendments relating to equal redundancy benefit entitlements for women working in the private sector in Northern Ireland, who will not enjoy the same benefits as women employed in the statutory sector. That is obviously unfair, and does not make for equal opportunity.

Under an EEC directive that will become operative next year, there must be equal retirement and pension plan ages for men and women in respect of occupational pension schemes. It would appear that the Government have failed to legislate for that equality in social security reforms affecting retirement ages, which is an aspect that the order should have addressed.

The Government have demonstrated a lack of commitment and willingness to provide equal opportunities by, for example, imposing restrictions on the EOC. The order will place a greater burden on the commission to exercise the responsibilities with which it is charged. It is a great pity that the opportunity has not been seized to deal with the problem in its totality. I am certain that further directives and legislation affecting both Northern Ireland and the EC will be tested in the courts, and that it will be only a short time before we find ourselves debating another amended order on sex discrimination. It is regrettable that the opportunity has not been taken to deal in this order with the totality of the problem as we know it to be, and to deal with the differences that exist today.

The hon. Member for Redcar spoke of the Government taking one step forward and two steps back. I may add that the representations that were sought and made were, by and large, ignored in the final draft order. That was a retrogade step, and regrettable.

12.29 am

Mr. Eric Forth (Mid-Worcestershire): This is one of those profoundly depressing occasions when one finds one's own Government submitting, it would seem, to the combined forces of the Europeans on the one hand and that dreadful equal opportunities industry on the other. I am reassured only by the fact that some Opposition Members are dissatisfied with what my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State has brought before us tonight. That gives me some slight cause for hope.

My hon. Friend has not explained why the existing body of so-called equal opportunity law and that great bureaucracy of the equal opportunities industry that exists here on the mainland—our friends in Northern Ireland have up to now been spared the worst excesses—should be applied to Northern Ireland rather than that the mainland should be brought into line with Northern Ireland.

All of us know perfectly well that the fair sex need no body of legislation or interference, even by my hon. Friend, to give them equality. They are already superior in almost every respect to the male. What the males among us have to ensure is that we try to retain some sort of equality for as long as possible before ladies take over in almost every respect.

It always surprises me that even such an eminent political figure as the hon. Member for Redcar (Ms. Mowlam) should expect legislation to protect her sex against the depradations of mine. It seems perfectly obvious that, with a lady as Head of State and a lady who is Head of Government, women are increasingly running everything in sight. The mere suggestion that we need legislation, created mainly by men, to protect them is patently ludicrous. For my hon. Friend to suggest that that absurdity should be extended to the good people of Northern Ireland is, to say the least, regrettable.

But what my hon. Friend has not explained to any of us is something that he said in his opening comments when I was encouraged momentarily. However, the moment passed. He said that his measures would reduce unnecessary bureaucracy. My heart soared when he said that. I thought that here was one small chink of light in this depressing and black moment in politics because, among this great morass of nonsense before us this evening, which I guess the House will approve, much to my regret, my hon. Friend offered us the hope that there might be a reduction in bureaucracy.

Regrettably, my hon. Friend left that point and moved on to wade through the great jungle of provisions that will weigh upon business and the community in Northern Ireland, liberating positively no one. Just to reassure me and bring me into the Lobby with him tonight—I am sure that we shall divide on such an important matter as this —will my hon. Friend tell me in what respect bureaucracy is reduced?

My hon. Friend said almost in the same breath that we were to extend the provisions to small undertakings of fewer than six employees. My simple mind, even at this late hour, can just about grasp the idea that if my hon. Friend is to extend this nonsense to small undertakings and impose these burdens on smaller businesses, bureaucracy will almost certainly have to be greater. I can envisage even more interfering busybodies going around muttering the shibboleths that are the basis of all this legislation——

Dr. Lewis Moonie (Kirkcaldy): One does not mutter shibboleths.

Mr. Forth: I do not know what the hon. Gentleman does with shibboleths, but I should have thought that most hon. Members would mutter shibboleths. They could articulate them, they could even chant them, but I suspect that the hon. Gentleman, who is usually a sensible man, would probably mutter shibboleths, as he was doing earlier on the subject of the National Health Service. But let me not be distracted because I sense that my hon. Friends are becoming slightly impatient.

I simply want to press my hon. Friend on a relatively important point. Can he reassure me that the bureaucracy of the equal opportunities industry in Northern Ireland will not be increased by the measures that he is putting before the House tonight? If he tells me that yet more civil servants will not be going around interfering in yet more ways in people trying to go about their ordinary business to earn an honest penny, I would be reassured. If he cannot tell me that, I shall, as I already suspect, be confirmed in my suspicion that yet another burden is to be placed on law-abiding, ordinary people. I am very disturbed that my hon. Friend, by talking about sex equality, will add to the burdens of industry and business, prejudice the possibilities of employment and increase the possibilities of interference by commissions, courts and other unnecessary bodies.

I hope that, even at this late stage, my hon. Friend will think again and suggest to his ministerial colleagues in other Departments that they should seek to reduce the role of the equal opportunities industry on the mainland and bring it into line with what I gather is the eminently sensible basis of the equal opportunities so-called industry in Northern Ireland.

12.35 am

Mr. David Alton (Liverpool, Mossley Hill): The speech of the hon. Member for Mid-Worcestershire (Mr. Forth) has made me more enthusiastic about the order than I thought I might be. Unexpectedly, I share one or two of his reservations. I agree with him when he said that simply multiplying bureaucracy and orders clearly is not the answer to ensuring fair employment, equal opportunities, or increased employment. That is the overriding need in Northern Ireland where just under 18 per cent. of people are out of work and some 31,000 women and 86,000 men are currently on the dole.

In the context of our debate last Friday, when we considered the creation of new rules and regulations to stop discrimination in employment on grounds of religion, there is a danger that by multiplying commissions, orders and regulations we shall prevent people being able to employ anybody. The orders could become so much in conflict with one another that it will be impossible for anyone to employ anyone without fear of prosecution, so we have to be cautious in the way in which we approach the legislation.

To be debating at this time, in a maximum period of 90 minutes, should we wish to use it, an order that becomes the law of the land in Northern Ireland is an inappropriate way of dealing with legislation. We regularly use this beat-the-clock method of legislating on unamendable orders and, although there is some worth in the measure before the House tonight, hon. Members will simply have to vote for or against it. These orders do not allow for any nuances in politics and that is one of the worst things about dealing with Northern Ireland issues. It has attracted so much attention among hon. Members representing Northern Ireland that the hon. Member for South Down (Mr. McGrady) is the only hon. Member from Northern Ireland in the House this evening. That shows the nonsense of the way in which we deal with such matters.

Instead of the "ad hoc-ery" and instead of bringing forward unamendable orders, how much better it would be if we could consider the issues on a wider basis for the United Kingdom and in the European context. Changing patterns of work will require us to think long and hard about the way in which we provide employment opportunities in future. Rather than more and more legislation, provisions for sharing work will be more important in future. We must give each person the chance to a job, the chance to make a contribution to the community, and we must insist that they receive proper remuneration for that work. The order clearly does not allow for any of that.

[Mr. David Alton]

My chief concern is that one standard will exist for dealing effectively with religious discrimination, which we debated last Friday, but other forms of discrimination will be dealt with in altogether different ways. For instance, we are told absolutely nothing about discrimination on the grounds of disability. It is absurd to introduce an order into Northern Ireland on the pretext of harmonising United Kingdom legislation, when the sole justification for the White Paper was that special Northern Ireland circumstances required special measures. It is ludicrous to introduce laws based on principles which are out of step with our commitment to European harmonisation.

I wonder increasingly about the merit of such orders. It is absurd to expect a company such as Harland and Wolff or a major construction company to employ vast numbers of women. But in the expanding service sector, where there are increasing opportunities for women to be appointed, there needs to be some mechanism to ensure that that happens.

Mrs. Maria Fyfe (Glasgow, Maryhill): Is the hon. Gentleman aware that during and after the last war hundreds of women worked in the shipyards in jobs that previously had been thought to be unsuitable for women?

Mr. Alton: We know that happened. Indeed, as a result of jobs that women performed during the first world war, the suffragette movement, which had been unsuccessful prior to that war, achieved success in 1919. In the absence of men at the front line women did their jobs. That resulted in the demand for women to gain the suffrage becoming irresistible. But I do not agree with the hon. Lady's suggestion that we should be demanding that women should be encouraged to do certain jobs. I am simply asking that in those areas where we should expect to see women being appointed and promoted—for instance, in the massively expanding service sector, in local government and in public services—such developments should be occurring.

Under article 8(3A) of the order, the commission's powers to deal with promotion of job opportunities for women is being limited because it is being given a reactive rather than a proactive role. The commission will not be allowed to initiate an inquiry where it is clear that a major employer is not showing any regard to equal opportunities. It is the blatant and deliberate abuse that concerns me.

I subscribe, as I suspect most hon. Members do, to the merit principle, but I can see the dilemma for an employer faced with several applicants for a job. All may be of comparable merit. The employer should not be pilloried for hiring the man with a dependent wife and family at home rather than another applicant. My concern is for the industry or public service where discrimination is institutionalised and unchallenged. In this order the Government had the opportunity to give power to do something about that.

I am concerned in that trade unions can be part of this institutionalised discrimination. Often it is built into collective agreements. By removing the power of industrial courts to deal with collective agreements, as the order does, it will make it easier for trade unions to negotiate for their members regardless of wider considerations. The duties of trade unions and the Government are clearly different, and the order should have reflected that.

My last concern is the one I raised during the Minister's opening remarks. It is that on the pretext of equalisation some valuable protection is likely to be removed, and that will leave some female employees open to exploitation.

The order is not welcomed by the Equal Opportunities Commission and others working in the field. It does not take into account changing attitudes about work. It should be part of a wider reassessment of how we structure our society and cater for each person's aspirations, including those women and men who prefer to spend more of their time bringing up their children and coping with their families. It also illustrates yet again how inappropriate is this 90 minute, beat-the-clock, unamendable procedure. For those reasons I shall advise my hon. Friends to oppose the order if there is a vote tonight.

12.43 am

Mr. Viggers: I suggest to the hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton) that this debate has shown the value of the 90-minute procedure. Nobody is suggesting that it is a perfect situation in which we find ourselves. All hon. Members must feel that the procedure by which Northern Ireland instruments come before the House late at night and have 90 minutes for debate is far from satisfactory.

In so far as it is, I urge hon. Members, especially those with constituency responsibilities in Northern Ireland, to co-operate in discussions as actively as possible so as to produce a better system. But if we must have 90-minute debates on orders, I should have thought that this one would be a model because some extremely effective and important points have been made, and I shall deal with them.

The hon. Member for Mossley Hill, in an intervention in my earlier remarks, spoke of women working in the nuclear industry. Broadly, they are unaffected by the proposed draft order.

There is, of course, already a general duty imposed on employers by the Health and Safety at Work (Northern Ireland) Order 1978 to ensure, as far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare of employees, and if an individual woman worker is pregnant no doubt that should be taken into account. I have no detailed brief on that and if the hon. Gentleman wishes to pursue the point I shall be happy to respond to any representations that he makes.

Turning to the points made by the hon. Member for Redcar (Ms. Mowlam) in her speech from the Opposition Front Bench, her first substantial point was that the Government have been slow in bringing forward the draft order. I have to repeat the point made by my noble Friend Lord Lyell in the other place, because in the absence of a legislative vehicle, such as the Race Relations Act 1976, which applies in Great Britain, there has been no opportunity in Northern Ireland legislation to incorporate the Sex Discrimination Act 1975, and it was not thought by the Government to be possible to bring before the House a draft order that dealt only with these individual points. So in the absence of any legislative vehicle—a hook, as it were, on which to hang the legislation—there has not been a convenient opportunity.

Secondly, the hon. Lady made the point that the proposals do not fulfil the Government's obligations under the equal treatment directive. During the passage of the Sex Discrimination Bill the European Commission was provided with copies of all published prints of the Bill and of the final Act of 1986 and at no stage did it suggest that our proposals did not meet Community law or the European Court judgments, which gave rise to some provisions. As the draft Northern Ireland order under consideration replicates the provisions of the 1986 Act, we are confident that it meets Northern Ireland's obligations under the equal treatment directive.

The hon. Lady asked about redundancy payments. I confirmed to the House on 8 December 1987 that changes in the age limits for statutory redundancy payments proposed for Great Britain will also apply to Northern Ireland. This will be done as legislative time permits.

The hon. Lady also asked about state pension age and suggested that this also should be balanced. This is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services, but I can say that work on reappraising the cost and economic implications of equalising pension ages has been under way since 1980, along with full consideration of a number of options. We hope to reach a conclusion on the matter during this year.

The hon. Lady also referred to article 8 of the draft order and criticised the fact that in future it will be necessary for the EOC to justify its investigations. This is a parity measure. It is right that employers in Northern Ireland should enjoy the same rights in respect of formal investigations as their counterparts in Great Britain. The commission has undertaken only two investigations under its existing powers in the last 12 years and I cannot imagine that the change made by article 8 will be a major disadvantage, as has been claimed.

Ms. Mowlam: The Minister is absolutely correct to say that there have been only two cases in the past 12 years, but that may relate more to the fact that there is only one member of staff dealing with the problem than to the nature of the demand.

Mr. Viggers: That allows me to lead in beautifully to a point on resources, which the hon. Lady also made. It is a recurring theme in the happy dialogue between the EOC in Northern Ireland and the Department of Economic Development, for which I am responsible, that further funding would be welcomed. But the amount of funding of the EOC in Northern Ireland is 321 per cent. higher than the per capita amount of EOC funding in Great Britain. If one says that it is always necessary to have a larger amount of funding because a smaller organisation necessarily has more overhead costs, I must say that the Northern Ireland block generally works on a population basis, so such an argument could be applied to every organisation in Northern Ireland. I maintain that a funding of 321 per cent. higher than the funding in Great Britain must be regarded as reasonably satisfactory. I am sure that my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Worcestershire (Mr. Forth) regards it as fully satisfactory.

The hon. Member for South Down (Mr. McGrady) asked about the current judicial review sought by the Equal Opportunities Commission against the Department of Education. This case has been adjourned in the High Court until tomorrow for the completion of the judgment. The hon. Gentleman and the House will appreciate that it would not be prudent for me to comment further until the final outcome is known.

The hon. Gentleman also made the point that the Government ignored—to use his word—representations made on this draft order. The Government distributed a copy of the draft order and invited representations from 85 organisations, of whom 29 responded. Nearly all responded by a simple acknowledgment, but nine made representations. These were considered carefully. It is true that the Government continued with their proposal to introduce the order as originally drafted. However, representations are not ignored; they are carefully considered. They were carefully considered and taken fully into account—and changes were made—in the White Paper that we debated last Friday. There are a number of respects in which the arrangements for Northern Ireland differ from those for Great Britain. To take an example from my Department, the provisions for both adult and youth training are quite different in Northern Ireland and take account of special local factors and the representations that have been made to us.

My hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Worcestershire lambasted me about the provisons. I respond to him, in the context of the forthcoming Kensington by-election, by describing myself as drier than Dudley Fishburn. I can assure him that the repeals in the proposed measure will lift a bureaucratic millstone from employers in the manufacturing sector. The current restrictions are complex and entail a mass of paperwork, detailing the period of employment, hours, overtime and meal breaks of women employees. The order will also allow employers and their work forces additional flexibility, with the prospect of organising working hours to optimum effect. There are also some simplifying measures in the draft order.

I reiterate that the changes introduced by the order will extend to women in employment in Northern Ireland the benefits that are already enjoyed by women in the rest of the United Kingdom. While the European Community has been a catalyst in this process of development, the changes reflect the Government's ongoing commitment to the removal of unfair sex discrimination and the promotion of equal opportunities between men and women.

I commend the order to the House.

Question put:—

The House divided: Ayes 82, Noes 31.

Division No. 398] **[12.52 am**

AYES

Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Ashby, David
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Batiste, Spencer
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Bevan, David Gilroy
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bowis, John
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chope, Christopher
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Emery, Sir Peter
Fallon, Michael
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
French, Douglas

Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayward, Robert
Hind, Kenneth
Holt, Richard
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lightbown, David
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Maude, Hon Francis
Neubert, Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Pawsey, James
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Raffan, Keith
Ryder, Richard
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Twinn, Dr Ian
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Waller, Gary
Watts, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wood, Timothy

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Stephen Dorrell and
Mr. David Maclean.

NOES

Alton, David
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Cohen, Harry
Cryer, Bob
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Flannery, Martin
Foster, Derek
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
George, Bruce
Gordon, Mildred
Graham, Thomas
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Ingram, Adam
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
McAvoy, Thomas
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Morley, Elliott
Mowlam, Marjorie
Nellist, Dave
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Frank Haynes and
Mr. Ray Powell.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved,

That the draft Sex Discrimination (Northern Ireland) Order 1988, which was laid before this House on 17th May, be approved.

1.2 am

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. You will have learnt with some concern of the result of that vote, for which the Government have not been able to keep their numbers. The Government have a duty to see that their legislation is put through the House, and they require 100 Members for a closure vote. Has the Prime Minister notified you that she will come to the House and make a statement about the inadequacy of the organisation? I wonder whether she can carry on the Government in the face of this lamentable organisation by the Tory Whips.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): I realise that the hon. Gentleman has been having his little bit of fun. It was, however, hypothetical, because the closure was not moved, and the Division was perfectly in order.

PETITION

National Health Service

1.3 am

Dr. Lewis Moonie (Kirkcaldy): It is appropriate that tonight, on the 40th anniversary of the founding of the National Health Service, I should be asked to present this petition on behalf of the Royal College of Nursing. It has been signed by 500,000 people from all parts of the United Kingdom, including more than 26,000 from my county of Fife. The sheer scale of the response to the petition is surely a true sign of the depth of feeling engendered by this issue.

The main points of the petition are as follows. We are asked to

> reaffirm that the National Health Service shall remain funded from taxation and free at the point of delivery; legislate to remedy the cumulative underfunding of the National Health Service identified by the House of Commons Social Services Select Committee; implement and fully fund the recommendations of the Review Bodies for health service staff pay; ensure through legislation that spending on the National Health Service grows to meet the health challenges posed by longer life expectancy, new medical advances and emerging medical problems; affirm that health shall receive a fair share of the nation's wealth.

I can add nothing to that.

To lie upon the Table.

Barlow Clowes

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Lennox-Boyd.]*

1.4 am

Sir Peter Emery (Honiton): The problem concerning the Barlow Clowes affair cannot and should not escape parliamentary consideration. In an entirely honest and well-run financial investment market, the affair should never have happened. Because Barlow Clowes recieved the stamp of approval from the Department of Trade and Industry, it is not surprising that many investors in these companies feel that they should have been alerted long before the terrifying collapse came about. Like many other hon. Members on both sides of the House, I have received dozens of letters from constituents expressing concern at their unbelievable financial loss through their investments.

There are many complications, but let us try to sort out the matter. Two companies are involved: Barlow Clowes Gilt Managers, with 7,400 clients investing £52 million; and Barlow Clowes International, the Gibraltar organisation, with 11,500 clients who had invested over £138 million. As I understand the position, the liquidators have realised £52·3 million from the gilts management company but only about £16 million from the Gibraltar company, where it appears that there is an unsecured loan book of £85 million.

It seems that £62 million had been lent to companies associated with Peter Clowes and £13 million to companies associated with Guy von Craamer, while £2 million went to James Ferguson Holdings—the parent company for the Barlow Clowes operation—£2 million to a Geneva accountant, who is an ex-chairman of James Ferguson, a Mr. David Mitchell, and £1 million to Dr. Peter Naylor, another director of James Ferguson. It would appear that some £40 million is missing, and that as much as 80 per cent. of the loans authorised by Clowes in the loan book is unlikely to be recovered.

The tragedy of all this is the number of small investors who were taken in by the belief that their investment was safe in Government gilt-edged securities—investors who were advised by a number of professional financial advisers, whose marketing technique is much open to question and who appealed especially to retired persons. The investments catered for providing half-yearly or even monthly distributions, and are known in some circumstances to have been recommended on writing paper from the Retired Persons Investment and Pensions Advisory Service, with a message headed "Guaranteed Income–Investment Services". They enclosed

> "a schedule of actual return you will receive from your investment in the Guaranteed Income-Investment Services equivalent to 15·42 per cent. gross."

The letter closes with the phrase:

> "I am very pleased that you have taken advantage of this excellent guaranteed investment which provides a high income guaranteed not to fall."

If that is not pretty near fraud, I do not know what is.

I should like to ask the Minister a number of questions. Before I do so, however, I think it right to stress that those who wish to condemn the Department of Trade and Industry must understand one thing. In the carrying out of any investigation, if it becomes apparent or leaks out to investors that a company is under suspicion, that can bring about a major loss of confidence in the company. The possibility then arises that the very investigation, at its inception, could be the cause of a considerable loss of funds for investors. The DTI must act to help rather than hinder honest companies and proper investment. In carrying out its responsibilities, it must perform a very difficult balancing act, and circumspection is essential.

Will the Minister let the House know how many official complaints or intimations of concern were received by his Department about Barlow Clowes from 1985 to 1988? If the investigators were appointed in October and November of last year, under section 106 of the Financial Services Act, why was Barlow Clowes not warned not to accept any further investments until an interim report from the investigators had been received? If this had happened, a considerable number of people who later invested would have been saved.

Does the appointment of Sir Godfray Le Quesne to investigate the facts concerning the Department's handling of the matter preclude any investigation being carried out by the Parliamentary Commissioner, the ombudsman, as has been suggested? I should like to know the answer, because, if that is the case, for how long will this hold sway? Limitation on the action of Members of Parliament referring matters to the Parliamentary Commissioner is unacceptable and something that the House will want to take up quickly.

Although it has been made clear that the report by Sir Godfray will be published, may we be certain that we can have that report, given to the Minister, preferably by September, but certainly by October? Any further delay would be unacceptable. Is it correct that the police in Manchester were carrying out certain investigations into the Clowes companies as long as two years ago? Did the Department know this?

Has my hon. Friend considered the position of certain of the financial advisers associated with placing Clowes investments, two of whom, I believe, have now had their licences withdrawn? Have these companies indemnity insurance? Any professional financial adviser who persuades an investor to put all his money in one fund rather than having a spread of investments is hardly professional. Then to give advice to put all the money into a fund that is allegedly giving a return, supposedly in gilt-edged securities, which is considerably above the return that any other similar investment could bring must be considered to be providing dubious advice, and perhaps even fraudulent advice. Should not the Department be looking into this side of the affair much more fully?

Should there not be a more full inquiry that will consider the position and the relationship of Spicer and Pegler, the auditors, Touche Ross and Co., which advised and recommended Clowes backing into James Ferguson, and Singer and Friedlander, merchant bankers to Clowes' deals? Should not these highly professional firms have smelt a rat? If not, why not? Surely the public has a right to know, and it may not be just the Department that has to carry blame.

Factually, the investors in Barlow Clowes International, the Gibraltar company, are likely to suffer a severe loss, if not a total one. Any distribution from this investment is likely to take years rather than months because of the complexity of the situation, and the difficulty in realising or obtaining refunds of loans. However, there are two specific problems about the gilts management company, although there is also more hope. The first problem is ascertaining whether some of the funds realised by the liquidators was money put in from

[Sir Peter Emery]

Gibraltar, or from other sources, to prop up Barlow Clowes Gilts Management because the Securities and Investments Board was breathing down its neck.

Secondly, a new factor has emerged. The Inland Revenue has put the special office of the inspectors into the company. Therefore, will the Minister use all his power to urge the Treasury to ensure that the tax implications are sorted out in days or weeks, rather than months or years? That is often what happens in such cases as this.

If that cannot be achieved because the Department is the official receiver and Cork Gully, which is doing an excellent job, is only the manager, will the Department consider two possible steps to help the 7,500 investors in the short term? It should either allow the fund managers to make a distribution, perhaps every three months, of the income arising from the £53 million in its hands and now invested so that the investors can obtain some income, or, as the official receiver, direct that a 10 or 15 per cent. distribution be made, for which purpose it should approach the court. In either case, obviously, distribution should be made only to those investors who can substantiate their position absolutely to the satisfaction of Cork Gully, the fund managers.

If Sir Godfray reports in a manner unfavourable to the DTI—and I wish at this stage to make no judgment at all—may we have the assurance that the Government will take rapid steps to assess and to provide compensation? Whatever the outcome, this is an unhappy situation that can please no one. The Government must take, and would want to take, every possible step to bring it to a rapid conclusion.

What stands out above all else is that anyone placing his savings in an investment should always ensure that his capital is spread in a number of accounts or companies and never placed in a single investment. Secondly, caveat emptor, the investor must beware if the financial dividends suggested or advertised are greatly above the normal market returns. That can be achieved only if the investor is taking considerable extra risks of loss, and risks which in this sad case most of the investors believed they were being guaranteed against.

The Government cannot brush this matter under the carpet. There must be no cover up, and I do not believe that the Government would want that. Where there is fraud or malfeasance, prosecutions must quickly be brought. If there is culpability at the DTI, compensation must be assured.

1.17 am

Mr. Nicholas Winterton (Macclesfield): I am most grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Honiton (Sir P. Emery) for permitting me to speak briefly. In doing so I declare a constituency interest. Not only have I hundreds of constituents who have been investors in the Barlow Clowes companies, but Mr. Peter Clowes is a constituent and his gilts management operation is based in Poynton in my constituency.

As the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Corporate Affairs will know, I have in my files copies of correspondence dating back to 1984 that give not just a number of warnings about Barlow Clowes but show that the whole system of self-regulation of the financial services industry subsequently established by the Financial Services Act is inadequate, does not work, and should never have been expected to work. The spectacular collapse of Barlow Clowes was not just possible under the Act, but was arguably a direct result of pressures arising out of the Act and changes in taxation policy. Warnings were given to the DTI, but were not heeded.

Long before the Financial Services Act was introduced, I, on behalf of a constituent, Mr. Peter Hayes, an investment consultant, alerted the Government to the inevitable results of the provisions of the Act. The Prime Minister was warned in a letter of 22 March 1984 that

> "the Act which may shortly be placed on the Statute Book will merely drive those with poor ethics in the industry to operate offshore—in Gibraltar."

Those were the warnings given to the Government about what was happening, but, sadly, those warnings were ignored.

Like my hon. Friend, I make a plea that the Government publish the internal inquiry report as soon as possible, but much sooner than he requested. I believe that it would be wrong to do it when the House is in recess and can do nothing about it. There is pressure, and a duty, upon the Government to have it published before the end of the month and before the summer recess. Many of those who invested were elderly and were relying on their investment to maintain an acceptable standard of living in their retirement.

There are literally thousands of investors in the south Manchester area. If there is any evidence in the report of neglect, maladministration or of something wrong in the Department itself, will the Government make compensation available at the earliest possible date?

1.20 am

Mr. Stephen Day (Cheadle) *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Does the hon. Gentleman have the leave of the hon. Member for Honiton (Sir P. Emery) and the Minister to speak?

Mr. Day: Yes, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I congratulate my hon. Friend the Minister and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State on setting up the independent investigation, which is very helpful. I would also like the report to be placed before the House as soon as possible. We are talking not about people who invested for a quick overnight kill to buy a Porsche, but about people who are in dire financial circumstances as a result of the collapse.

The money that was invested came from such things as early retirement payments, redundancy money, matured insurance policies and savings. I know of 400 people in such circumstances. They looked for security in later life. It has to be said that one of the key elements in assuring them of that security was the DTI licence. Even though the licence applied only to the United Kingdom operation, its existence reassured Gibraltar investors. Both were sold as gilt-edged securities. I understand that there were doubts about the company previously. If the licence had been withdrawn from the United Kingdom operation, that would have saved many people from investing in the Gibraltar one.

I urge my hon. Friend the Minister to accept in principle, without making any commitment before he knows what the results of the inquiry might be, that if the report shows that the DTI's role contributed to the financial distress of investors, compensation will be considered. These people are in dire straits and need some security for the future. Neither I nor the investors to whom I have spoken expect the DTI to carry the can for them. They accept some responsibility for their investments, but if the report shows that the Department was a contributory factor, it should make some announcement about compensation.

1.22 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Corporate Affairs (Mr. Francis Maude): My hon. Friend the Member for Honiton (Sir P. Emery) opened the debate by saying that this is a matter which it is proper for Parliament to consider. We do not shrink from that, and I am grateful for the opportunity to set out, in perhaps a little more detail than I was able to go into when I made a statement a few weeks ago, what the position is.

Nobody is more aware than me of the distress and anxiety that has been caused to thousands of people. Many right hon. and hon. Members have received letters from many constituents who are in this distressing situation. Many hon. Members have sent those letters to me, so I am acutely aware of the distress that has been caused and of the anxiety of many that the matter should be brought to a conclusion as soon as possible.

It is particularly distressing that, because of the way in which the Barlow Clowes schemes were marketed, a substantial proportion of investors are retired and can ill afford to lose their savings, as my hon. Friends have said. The House will understand that other creditors may be involved and that it is important, in fairness to everyone concerned, that the normal proceedings established by insolvency law should be followed.

Nobody who is involved in this process can be in any doubt about the impact that the events of the past few weeks have had on the lives of those people who are affected, and I am determined that all should be done as quickly as possible to establish what the prospects are of investors recovering any of their investments, and how quickly they might be realised.

In explaining this case, it is vital that we bear in mind that we are discussing principally two separate companies. The first is the United Kingdom firm, Barlow Clowes Gilt Managers Ltd. which, as I explained on 13 June, held a licence under the Prevention of Fraud (Investments) Act 1958 until 29 April this year. It subsequently operated under interim authorisation under the Financial Services Act until the Securities and Investments Board exercised its powers of intervention. Those powers of intervention were given to it by the Financial Services Act 1986. Those powers did not exist under the previous Act. It is important that I should make that clear to my hon. Friend the Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton) because there has been some misunderstanding about that.

That company was also the subject of the section 106 investigation, to which I referred in my statement. As the House knows, the facts of my Department's handling of that case are currently under investigation by Sir Godfray Le Quesne and I know that the House will not, therefore, expect me to comment on those aspects of the case until Sir Godfray's report has been received. Several of the matters on which my hon. Friend the Member for Honiton asked me to comment fall fair and square within Sir Godfray's remit and it would be wrong for me, at this stage, to try to provide answers that might be incomplete.

It would surely be better for Sir Godfray's inquiry to take its course and for the full facts to be set before the public as soon as possible. He knows that it is our concern that that should be done as quickly as possible and he shares that concern. He has been at work for the past two and a half weeks and has said that he hopes to report to us before the House reassembles in the autumn. There can be no benefit to anyone in the investigation being too hurried. It must be done properly and I hope that he will take it as an earnest of our intentions that we believe that nothing should be swept under the carpet, that there should be nothing remotely resembling a cover-up, that all the matters should be fully investigated and that we should not seek to publish the report before Sir Godfray has had the fullest opportunity to investigate. None the less, he is aware of the urgency and has said that he hopes that it will be possible for him to report before the House reassembles.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: I accept my hon. Friend's explanation, but will he say precisely what the position is over the licence granted to Barlow Clowes? As I understand it, the company was trading for a considerable period without a licence and was not granted a licence until September or October 1985, some two years after it had started trading and should have had a licence to do so,

Mr. Maude: I covered that matter in my statement of 13 June. The facts are broadly as my hon. Friend sets out, but they will be covered by the investigation.

My hon. Friend the Member for Honiton mentioned the possibility of investigations by the ombudsman. It is, of course, open to any hon. Member to bring a complaint from a constituent to the attention of the ombudsman, but it is for him, in every case, to decide whether he investigates. Section 5 of the Parliamentary Commissioner Act 1967 governing his powers outlines the circumstances in which he may not investigate, but it is, in every case, for him to make up his mind within the terms of the Act. There are no powers for the Department to prevent an investigation taking place, nor would we seek to do so.

Investors who have placed money with the United Kingdom company will naturally be keen to know where matters now stand. The court has appointed an official receiver as provisional liquidator, to prevent further prejudice to the interests of investors, and has also appointed joint special managers. The special managers are receiving information from investors, who should register their interests with them as soon as possible. The court will be hearing the petition for winding-up tomorrow, 6 July. Obviously, I cannot speculate on the outcome of that hearing. If the court were to make a winding-up order, the official receiver would need to call a meeting of creditors, and the creditors and shareholders would have the opportunity of appointing a liquidator to replace the official receiver.

The House will understand that these procedures inevitably take some time. I am much aware of the anxiety of investors, and I know that in the event of liquidation they will want the earliest possible indication of the prospects of recovering some or all of their money. I am aware also that there is concern about tax implications. Any tax implications that may emerge should be resolved at the earliest possible moment.

It seems likely—this may have been read by some—that investors with Barlow Clowes Gilt Managers Ltd. have a

[Mr. Maude]

good chance of recovering a good part of their money. This may turn out to be so, but the special managers are still investigating what additional claims there might be and, in particular, whether there has been any intermingling of the British and Gibraltar client funds. That is why it is really not possible for me to make a clearer statement now.

Many of the most distressing cases appear to involve investments placed with Barlow Clowes International. I must inform the House that here the position looks rather less encouraging. BCI's view was apparently that it was not carrying on business in this country. Accordingly, it did not seek a licence or other authorisation under the old Act. Nor has it sought authorisation under the new Act. Whether my Department had reason to believe that it, BCI, should have had a licence will have to be judged on the facts that will be covered in Sir Godfray's report. A company that is not carrying on business in Britain is not, and cannot be made, subject to our supervision, either under the old or the new legislation. As a Gibraltar-registered company, the liquidation of BCI is proceeding according to Gibraltar law. The current position is that proceedings have been taken in Gibraltar, and joint liquidators and joint receivers have been appointed. My Department is in touch in parallel with the Gibraltar authorities.

The House will know that the serious fraud office, in conjunction with the City of London police company fraud department, is also investigating Barlow Clowes Gilt Managers Ltd., BCI, and associated companies. A charge of attempting to pervert the course of justice has already been brought, and is clearly sub judice.

The volume of correspondence relating to investors dealing with the Gibraltar company, BCI, has inevitably focused attention on the role played by intermediaries, as my hon. Friend the Member for Honiton suggested, in recommending the Barlow Clowes schemes. This is an important link in the chain. If BCI is right in maintaining that it did not require a licence or authorisation, its products could not be marketed in Britain except by intermediaries which were so licensed or authorised.

It appears that in the majority of instances the intermediaries involved were members of FIMBRA, the Financial Intermediaries, Managers and Brokers Regulatory Association. None, so far as I am aware, was a licensed dealer. As FIMBRA was a recognised association of dealers under the old Act, its member firms did not require a licence and were not directly regulated by my Department. They were, however, required to comply with the rules of FIMBRA, which would have obliged them to exercise proper care before recommending investment products such as the Barlow Clowes schemes. Both FIMBRA and the Securities and Investments Board are looking closely into the relationship between Barlow Clowes and the intermediaries which recommended their products. FIMBRA has already prohibited from taking on new business the two firms which seem to have been responsible for much of the money from Britain which was placed with BCI.

Hon. Members have been pressing, tonight and previously, for me to make a statement on the question of compensation for investors in Barlow Clowes. I understand why they should press me in that way. On the general issue, it would be wrong for me—I think that this is accepted—to prejudge the findings of Sir Godfray's report. The object of the inquiry is to ascertain the facts. It would be nonsensical, having ordered the inquiry, if we were to commit ourselves in advance to a particular response on a series of, as yet, hypothetical possibilities. I know, and deeply regret, that the uncertainty of the position of investors must add to their distress, but until we have facts to go on I cannot say what the position on compensation will be, or ought to be.

I am grateful for the balance which my hon. Friends who have contributed to the debate have brought to it and for the temperate way in which they have expressed themselves. I hope that they are reassured as to the urgency with which we are addressing this matter and the concern with which we are approaching it. There is no intention to cover up anything. We have expressed our determination that all these matters should be investigated as fully as possible.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at twenty-six minutes to Two o'clock.

House of Commons

Wednesday 6 July 1988

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

BREDERO (BON ACCORD CENTRE, ABERDEEN) ORDER CONFIRMATION

Mr. Secretary Rifkind presented a Bill to confirm a Provisional Order, under section 7 of the Private Legislation Procedure (Scotland) Act 1936, relating to Bredero (Bon Accord Centre, Aberdeen); and the same was read the First time; and ordered to be considered upon Tuesday 12 July and to be printed. [Bill 191.]

HIGHLAND REGION (LOCHINVER HARBOUR) ORDER CONFIRMATION

Mr. Secretary Rifkind presented a Bill to confirm a Provisional Order, under section 7 of the Private Legislation Procedure (Scotland) Act 1936, relating to Highland Region (Lochinver Harbour); and the same was read the First time; and ordered to be considered upon Tuesday 12 July and to be printed. [Bill 192.]

Oral Answers to Questions

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Commonwealth Parliamentary Association

1. **Mr. Couchman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he has any plans to pay a ministerial visit to the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association meeting to Australia.

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mrs. Lynda Chalker): My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has asked me to lead the United Kingdom branch delegation to the conference.

Mr. Couchman: When my right hon. Friend meets members of the Australian Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, will she thank them for their warm hospitality to Members of this House when they visited them in Australia? During the Australian bicentennial, will she remind them of the close ties that we cherish between our two countries, and in that spirit of close affinity will she offer to our Australian friends a view of how the United Kingdom's economy has improved since 1979 so that our Australian friends see how they might lift their economy during the coming decade?

Mrs. Chalker: Indeed, we thank the Australian Commonwealth Parliamentary Association for its warm hospitality to all members of the CPA groups who are to visit Australia this September. As my hon. Friend said, we cherish the very close ties that have come very much more into our minds in this bicentennial year, particularly the sail training ship, which has brought so much pleasure to Australians, which was a gift from this Government.

It is notable that after Treasurer Keating took sound corrective action inflation fell from 9·3 per cent. in February 1987 to about 7·1 per cent. in December 1987. He has also delivered an economic statement that suggests that he intends to free the dynamic forces within the economy. He has also cut corporation tax from 49 to 39 per cent., following the economic example set by this country. We hope that it will bring as much success to Australia as it has brought to this country.

El Salvador

2. **Mr. Michael Welsh:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made regarding the increase in human rights violations in El Salvador.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Tim Eggar): In February this year we supported the extension of the mandate of the United Nations Special Representative on human rights in El Salvador. I discussed these matters with the Salvadorean Foreign Minister during his visit to London in March.

Mr. Welsh: Is the Minister aware that during the first four months of this year 100 civilians have been killed, the vast majority of them by death squads? They had been tortured and beaten, their hands tied behind their backs and then executed. That is the way in which the death squads carry out that kind of punishment. Is the Minister also aware that in this sparsely populated country of 5 million, 10,000 children die every year through malnutrition and disease? That is also a violation of human rights. Will the Minister use his good offices and ask his friends in the EEC, who gave aid amounting to £14 million last year to El Salvador, and his other friends in America who give aid to that country, to put pressure on the Government of El Salvador so that the killing is stopped, human rights are observed and people are treated with the respect and dignity that they deserve?

Mr. Eggar: As I have said, we have made very clear to the El Salvadoreans our concern about reports of the increase in human rights violations this year. We recognise the scale of the difficulties and the problems that are associated with a destructive insurgent war. The UN Special Representative found no evidence to prove that the Government connived at human rights abuses, and acknowledged the President's real efforts to curb violations of human rights. It would have been helpful to the House if at the same time the hon. Gentleman had expressed concern about the abuses committed by the guerrillas. The UN Special Representative noted that there were a number of injuries to civilians as a result of a deliberate policy by the guerrillas.

Mr. Jacques Arnold: Does my hon. Friend agree that it does not help in the slightest to spend our time knocking the democratic President and the Government of El Salvador? They have a difficult enough time maintaining the balance between, on the one hand, Nicaragua-backed insurgents and, on the other, brutal elements in the military.

Mr. Eggar: I note my hon. Friend's comments. There are abuses of human rights in El Salvador, and it is correct to express our concern about them.

Middle East

3. **Mr. McTaggart:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what new plans he has to further the peace process in the middle east; and if he will make a statement.

The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Sir Geoffrey Howe): We shall continue to encourage the parties to the Arab-Israel dispute to respond positively to Mr. Shultz's initiative and to agree arrangements for an international conference.

Mr. McTaggart: The Government have made many fine statements about this issue, but when can the House expect real action from them? Will the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs raise with his European partners the need for a positive initiative? As a first step, will he arrange for a Minister to speak to someone from the PLO?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The hon. Gentleman will know that this topic has been the subject of regular and serious discussion at meetings of European Community Foreign Ministers. It is only a short time since we had the opportunity of meeting the Israeli Foreign Minister, Mr. Peres, when we took the opportunity to impress upon him our sense of urgency, and in particular our concern, about the need to ensure that the access provisions for exports from the occupied territories are being permitted and put into effect by Israel.

We have a regular dialogue with the PLO at official level. We have made plain the extent to which it is entitled to participate in the conference, when it is held, and we shall continue to do so.

Sir Dennis Walters: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that, despite the Israelis' brutality and oppression on the West Bank and in Gaza, the PLO has maintained a very moderate position? Would it not be sensible at this stage to follow up the intentions of the Venice declaration and raise meetings with the PLO to ministerial level?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I understand the extent of my hon. Friend's knowledge of, and interest in, this subject and that particular aspect of it. The PLO is well aware of those aspects of its policy that stand in the way of renewed ministerial contact: the need for unqualified recognition of Security Council resolutions, recognition of Israel's right to a secure existence, and renunciation of violence. However, that does not stand in the way of regular dialogue with the PLO at official level; nor does it inhibit our ability to play our part in carrying the peace process forward.

Mr. Dalyell: Ought not either the Foreign Secretary or the Defence Secretary to clarify the rules of engagement under which British ships are operating in the Gulf?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: That has nothing to do with the question; nor is it a question that is answered.

Mr. Temple-Morris: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that part of the middle east peace process must relate to the major war that is going on in the Persian Gulf? Does he have any plans in the present tragic circumstances to bring Iran to the conference table at the United Nations, to give it some chance of an honourable peace?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: As my hon. Friend knows, we attach importance to the implementation of resolution 598 as the foundation upon which a negotiated settlement can be built. Iran has failed to accept that resolution. We support the work of the Secretary General in trying to secure acceptance of resolution 598 by both sides, and we shall give our full support to the authority of the Secretary General to that end.

Mr. Kaufman: Further to the question that has just been put by the hon. Member for Leominster (Mr. Temple-Morris), will the Foreign Secretary say whether, before the Prime Minister issued her knee-jerk support for the United States over the tragic incident on Sunday, she gave a moment's thought to the effect of her comments on the British hostages being held in Beirut, whose fate is a matter of great concern to everybody in this country? As almost one year has elapsed since the passage of resolution 598 through the Security Council, without any action being taken to implement it, will the right hon. and learned Gentleman now go to the United Nations and consult its other permanent members with a view to moving a resolution for a mandatory arms embargo on any country that will not accept resolution 598, so that some action can be taken to bring to an end an appalling conflict, which has killed 1 million people and is placing the whole world at risk?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I am prepared to endorse without qualification the right hon. Gentleman's description of the tragedy and horrors of this long-continuing conflict. I am not, however, prepared to go along with his own knee-jerk reaction to the carefully prepared statement put out on behalf of the Government on Sunday in the light of the tragic incident with which he started his question.

As that statement made clear, the whole world must deeply regret the loss of life involved in that tragedy. We therefore took care to extend our sympathy to the bereaved at the outset. But, in the light of the very concern expressed by the right hon. Gentleman about the continuation of the conflict, it is equally right to accept the general right of foreign naval forces present in the Gulf upholding the freedom of navigation, under article 51 of the charter, to defend themselves. The statement clearly reaffirmed—I hope that the right hon. Gentleman does not doubt this—the legitimacy as a matter of principle of action taken in self-defence.

As for the incident itself, obviously it is neither sensible nor proper at this stage to make further comment until there has been fuller investigation of the details, and we must await the outcome of the United States naval investigation.

As for the last point, I need no lectures from the right hon. Gentleman to underline the need for us to take every action that we can to bring about an early end to the Iran-Iraq conflict. It was British action that secured the implementation of resolution 598 in the first place; it was British action that therefore secured the first meeting since 1972 of Foreign Ministers last September. It is Britain that is still in the chair of the five permanent members committed to promoting action to implement it. I raised with the Soviet Foreign Minister in New York just three weeks ago the need for further action, and I secured his response precisely to put teeth into resolution 598 by putting on the order paper and implementing an arms embargo resolution. We have not so far been able to secure the support of all five permanent members for that, but the House can be sure that it is not for want of trying on the part of Her Majesty's Government.

Mr. Batiste: Given the welcome, though sudden, interest of the Iranian Government in the preservation of human rights, can my right hon. and learned Friend see any prospect either of a more immediate interest in the ending of the Iran-Iraq war or of the ending of the abnegation of human rights in that country or its sponsorship of international terrorism?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: My hon. Friend is right to draw attention to those aspects of the conduct of Iran and the Iranian Government which continue to cause dismay, at best, and shock, at worst, to other parts of the international community. That is why it is necessary, Iraq having accepted Security Council resolution 598, for Iran to do likewise. If Iran does not do that, I repeat that the Security Council should proceed to consider a follow-up resolution to enforce compliance.

Mr. Dalyell: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. In view of the subsequent answer to the hon. Member for Leominster (Mr. Temple-Morris), why was my original question on the rules of engagement out of order?

UNESCO

Sir Russell Johnston: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has any plans to meet Mr. Mayor, the Secretary General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation, to discuss the possible re-entry of the United Kingdom into the organisation.

Mr. Eggar: I met Mr. Mayor during his visit to London on 22 June.

Sir Russell Johnston: The Minister has not replied to my question. The question is, did he take steps to begin a dialogue with a view to Britain's re-entering UNESCO? Many hon. Members on both sides of the House believe that it was a great mistake for Britain to leave that organisation, a view shared by our colleagues in the European Community. It would be a very good thing to set an example to the United States for a change.

Mr. Eggar: During our meeting Mr. Mayor gave his impressions of the past six months, during which he had been a director-general of UNESCO. I gave him my assurance that we would continue to monitor developments at UNESCO carefully. At the same time, I made it clear that we need to see evidence that the necessary fundamental reforms at UNESCO have been achieved before we can even begin to consider our position on membership.

Sir Peter Blaker: In contrast with what the hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber (Sir R. Johnston) said, is it not clear that it was only the departure of the United Kingdom and the United States from UNESCO that brought an end to the corrupt and costly regime of Mr. M'bow? Mr. Mayor has made a good start, but is not more evidence needed of a lasting change in the actions and policies of UNESCO before we can consider rejoining?

Mr. Eggar: I very much agree with my right hon. Friend. At the last executive board meeting in Paris there was a considerable amount of evidence that member states opposed even the fairly minor changes that Mr. Mayor has recently introduced. It does not make sense for us to decide whether we shall rejoin until after the end of the general conference of UNESCO, which will take place in 1989, because that general conference will show whether the member states are prepared to introduce necessary reforms over the subsequent five years.

European Council, Hanover

5. **Mr. Anthony Coombs:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the European Council meeting at Hanover.

8. **Mr. Brandon-Bravo:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the European Council meeting at Hanover.

14. **Mr. Dykes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the recent European Council meeting at Hanover.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: As my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said on 30 June, the outcome of this Council was very satisfactory. We have confirmed that the way forward in Europe lies in the creation of wealth and jobs. British firms will be well placed to take advantage of the opportunities that the single market in Europe offers.

Mr. Coombs: Does my right hon. and learned Friend welcome the rapid progress that has been made in the past year by the EEC towards trade liberalisation in accordance with the Single European Act? Will he confirm, however, that physical harmonisation does not necessarily mean uniformity of taxes and that the danger of full monetary and economic union is the possible loss of economic sovereignty to this country? Therefore, will any such proposals by the Delors committee be firmly resisted as being premature?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I should like to agree with my hon. Friend about the important progress that has been made in the Community in completing the single market, to the benefit of United Kingdom industry and consumers. Under the German presidency, which has just finished, more than 50 such single market measures have been completed.

Progress towards European monetary union has been a proclaimed objective in Community texts for many years, but any change in that direction that involved any major institutional change would require not only unanimity within the Council but ratification by national Parliaments, so the matter will be fully available for consideration over the many years ahead when it will be on the agenda.

Mr. Brandon-Bravo: My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, in an upbeat statement last week on this topic, said that one third of the menu of things to be done had already been completed under the momentum of the German presidency. I think I am right in saying that the next six months will be under the presidency of Greece, a country whose priorities may be a little different. Would my right hon. and learned Friend care to comment on that?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I certainly endorse my hon. Friend's comment that the national personalities and priorities of the member states vary from half year to half year. I expect that the six months that we spend under Greek presidency will be different from the six months that we have had under the German presidency.

My hon. Friend is also right to emphasise the large number of measures towards the single market taken in the past six months. Indeed, since June 1985 about 200 measures have been taken. For the next six months, it is important to emphasise that the Hanover European Council, with full Greek participation and endorsement, agreed four priorities for the coming months: opening up of public contracts; liberalisation of banking and other financial services; mutual recognition of standards; and progress on so-called intellectual property—trade marks and patents.

Mr. Dykes: With this harmonious and positive summit, and the fact that since the internal market campaign was launched by the Government the Commission office in London has been inundated with many more inquiries and expressions of interest by a public who are increasingly enthusiastic about the development of the Community, does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that, as the member states get used to working more reciprocally in these legitimate areas with majority rule, this country would derive more benefit from that system of democratic majority rule that by insisting on a rearguard action to preserve outdated and anomalous traditions?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I must confess that I was exhilarated by the enthusiasm of my hon. Friend's question for about its first 85 per cent., but I was dismayed that a member of the Conservative party should dismiss traditions quite as brusquely as he did. We are able to achieve the proper balance between those matters. In the provisions of the Single European Act we have retained and stressed unanimity in cases where it is appropriate, but, under the British presidency, as a talisman of our willingness to make headway, more decisions were taken by majority decision that in any preceding presidency.

Mr. Rees: Were there any formal discussions about Northern Ireland between the Taoiseach and the Prime Minister in Hanover?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The Prime Minister and the Taoiseach had a meeting at Hanover at the conclusion of the European Council meeting and a short press statement was issued thereafter.

Mr. Tom Clarke: At its last meeting, did the Council consider the view expressed by the Iranians that, at the monthly meeting with European ambassadors, the only empty chair is that of Great Britain? Would it not be in the interests of dialogue that that chair be filled, and is not dialogue now important?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The hon. Gentleman will find that the seat that would be occupied by the British ambassador in Tehran is occupied by the Swedish ambassador, who looks after our interests there.

However, on the wider question, we discussed in the House last week the obvious desirability of being able to establish normal relations with a country as important historically and prospectively as Iran, but I went on to make very clear the need for Iran to recognise the number of steps that it should take—suspending the sponsorship of terrorism, according proper guaranteed rights to diplomats, treating prisoners in Iran in accordance with consular rules, and abiding by the provisions of resolution 598. Those are the steps that need to be taken if the revolutionary regime in Iran is to come to terms with the way in which it should live in company with other nations.

Mr. Corbett: What recent discussions have taken place at the European Council to secure the territorial integrity and independence of Cyprus and the removal of Turkish troops? Will the Foreign Secretary undertake to raise that matter with President Evren when he visits London later this month?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: We have certainly discussed the Cyprus question on a number of occasions, most recently in the context of the association council proposed with Turkey on 25 April, which did not in fact then take place. Certainly we attach importance to progress in Cyprus in response to the initiative of the United Nations Secretary General. Whenever either I or the Prime Minister meet the Head of Government or the Foreign Minister of Greece or Turkey, we raise the question on that basis, and I have no doubt that it will be discussed in the course of President Evren's visit next week.

Mr. Soames: Will my right hon. and learned Friend confirm that the British Government are wholeheartedly committed to examining the possibility of the creation of a European central bank?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I confirm that the Government wholeheartedly accept the commitment, in the study established at the European Council, for the consideration of concrete steps towards the objective, reaffirmed in the Single European Act, of progressive realisation of economic and monetary union. Those words have been endorsed by the House and by successive Governments for many years. How far and how fast that requires us to go towards the establishment of a central bank is one of the questions for consideration by that committee.

Mr. Robertson: Has the Foreign Secretary noticed that the excellent Greek Government, on assuming the presidency of the Community, declared that one of their main priorities would be to press for social policies such as job creation, health and safety, retraining and sexual equality up to the completion of the internal market by 1992? Since those commendable policies were comprehensively rubbished by the Prime Minister at the Hanover summit, something which brought strong criticism from the German press, will the Government and the Foreign Secretary be supporting the Greek presidency in its objective, or will the Government yet again stand alone in ensuring that big Europe will be only for big business?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The hon. Gentleman retains one qualification—the ability to coin the odd phrase. The trouble is that the phrases that he coins have nothing to do with the real world. The European Council agreed on a programme of measures to be given priority in the months ahead. I have already identified them. They are measures designed to continue the liberalisation of the market in the European Community. The Community also agreed that the promotion of economic prosperity, and of economic growth by that means, provides the best foundation for employment and social measures. The unemployment rate in the United Kingdom is below that of the European average. Our percentage rate fell by 2·5 per cent. last year —faster than any other country in the Community. In the years 1983 to 1986 we created 900,000 jobs, which was more than the rest of the European Community put together. That is the best way to achieve the social progress that is wanted by all members of the European Community.

Sharpeville Six

6. **Mr. Tony Lloyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made recently to the South African Government on the case of the Sharpeville Six; and if he will make a statement.

7. **Mr. Winnick:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent representations to the South African authorities Her Majesty's Government have made regarding the Sharpeville Six.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: Further appeals on behalf of the Sharpeville Six were made by Foreign Ministers of the Twelve on 14 June, by the Security Council on 17 June, by Heads of Government at the Toronto summit on 20 June, and by the European Council on 28 June. We have also raised the issue again direct with the South African Government.

Mr. Lloyd: I hope the Foreign Secretary will accept the fact that international moves in this direction have already had an impact in delaying execution. If he really wants to be the Prime Minister's successor, and not simply her poodle, will he go along and demand of the Prime Minister that she uses her special relationship with President Botha to make it clear publicly that Britain is insistent on clemency being granted, and that it should be granted now?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The whole House, including Her Majesty's Government and my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, share the concern raised by the hon. Gentleman that clemency be exercised in respect of the Sharpeville Six. It is for that reason that we have participated in the various representations that I have already described. We have been in touch today, through our embassy in South Africa, to establish the present position. Legal moves are still taking place there. An application is still outstanding for consideration by the Chief Justice in South Africa, and the executions have been suspended at least until 19 July, and will be extended thereafter. We have already urged that all legal options should be used. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has already once urged, in an appeal to President P. W. Botha, that clemency should be exercised, and that plea stands against the possibility of it being necessary at the end of the appeal process. We are all seeking, in any way that we think most effective, to procure the result that the whole House wants. We are convinced that those efforts are not likely to be any more effective if we accompany the plea for clemency by any kind of threat or menace.

Mr. Winnick: As the Six could be executed during July, is it not essential that the Prime Minister makes a personal appeal to the President that they should not be executed? Despite what the Foreign Secretary has just told us, is he not aware that Labour Members—Conservative Members may think differently—are far from satisfied that the British Government are doing all that they can to ensure that the hangman's noose does not take the lives of the Six?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I beg the hon. Gentleman to be humble enough to accept, first, that we want as much as he does to see the exercise of clemency in this case and, secondly, that the pleas that have been made by Her Majesty's Government and the representations that have already been made once by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, which were supported by the decisions that she arrived at with the rest of the Heads of Government in Hanover last week—representations that have the authority of Her Majesty's Government and are unaccompanied by threats and menaces—are far more likely to have an effect than the sort of threat that the hon. Gentleman would put beside them.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that it is difficult for President Botha to exercise clemency in this case, for two reasons? First, the Western world has given the South African Government no credit for the relaxations of apartheid that have taken place in recent years. Secondly, while the African National Congress pursues an indiscriminate policy of terrorism and murder in South Africa, the white community especially will need the reassurance that a strong policy by the South African Government gives.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: My hon. Friend makes a valid point. We all wish to see apartheid brought to an end as quickly as possible, but that process is more likely to be hastened by acknowledging progress when it has been made than by pretending that it has not happened. It is equally right to say that the process of reform is more likely to be set back by violence than the reverse. For that reason, we continue to drive home the case to the ANC and the South African Government that acts of violence set back the process of reform. That said, and although it is not our normal practice in any automatic way to intervene when sentences of death are imposed—we do so only once the legal process has been concluded, and then only in exceptional circumstances—[HON. MEMBERS: "Why?"] Because the great majority in the House, the Government and almost every other Government in the world, endorse the view, which I am invited to endorse, that it would advance the prospect of good government in South Africa and the end of apartheid if the South African Government were to see their way to exercise clemency in this case.

Mr. Menzies Campbell: Does the Foreign Secretary understand that the joint measures with which the Government have been associated command the approval of at least some of us on the Opposition Benches? Does he recognise that there is considerable concern about the extent to which the Government are prepared to pursue unilateral initiatives? Does he accept that the best possible argument in this case is one that is based, not on the somewhat arcane legal principle of common criminal purpose, but upon the humanitarian considerations that necessarily apply in this unhappy and unfortunate case?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: It is on the basis of the consideration that I have described that our appeal is based. We do not make pleas of this sort on any automatic basis that is likely to be discounted. Our appeal for clemency has been considered carefully in this case. We try to make that appeal in the fashion best calculated to be effective. There is no doubt whatever—I am sure that the hon. and learned Gentleman will agree with me—that it is not likely to be effective if it is accompanied by threats.

Mr. Wells: Do not the abhorrent happenings in Sharpeville, which led to this terribly difficult position in the courts in South Africa, reinforce the wisdom of the Government's policy of setting their face against further sanctions against South Africa, which would induce further economic difficulties in the townships and lead to an incipient revolutionary situation of a sort that led to the present position? Are we not able strongly to plead for mercy for the Sharpeville six because we have not supported sanctions?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I am delighted to be able to agree with every word that my hon. Friend has said. It is right that sanctions would be positively directed in the wrong direction. It is our experience and judgment that punitive sanctions so far imposed by other countries have failed to hasten reform, have reduced external influence and have strengthened the hand of those who are opposed to reform. As we have set our face against sanctions, we are more likely to have more influence, rather than less.

Mr. Kaufman: The Foreign Secretary has properly rejected the racist baying from the Conservative Benches on this issue. He says that the Government wish all legal options to be taken before making further representations, and we naturally hope that those options will result in proper clemency being shown to these six innocent people. If that were not to happen, and it became clear within the next few days that these six innocent people faced hanging by the South African regime, will the right hon. and learned Gentleman assure us that the Prime Minister will demonstrate the concern which he says she feels by personally picking up a telephone and speaking to the President of South Africa to ask for the clemency for the six innocent people?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: Again the right hon. Gentleman has a gift for reaching out for the wrong end of the stick. Far from racist baying from the Government Benches, there is powerful support from both sides of the House for measured and effective action to secure clemency in this matter. We have already done all that we can for the present. In March this year, when the matter was first being considered, the Prime Minister asked President Botha to exercise the prerogative of mercy. A stay of execution is in force until 19 July and it may be extended beyond that. If the appeal fails then, as the Prime Minister told the House on 30 June, her appeal would once again go before President P. W. Botha. I do not think that his consideration of that is likely to be enhanced by the drama of a telephone call, and still less if it were accompanied by threats and menaces. The appeal will be sustained in the manner we judge most effective to secure the objective that the right hon. Gentleman wants.

British Ambassador (Tel Aviv)

9. **Mr. McKelvey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if, in the light of the current state of United Kingdom-Israel relations, he will withdraw Her Majesty's ambassador in Tel Aviv for consultations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: No, Sir.

Mr. McKelvey: If the Government are not prepared to recall our ambassador, can the Minister outline to the House how he intends to focus the minds of the Israeli Government on the deteriorating conditions between us and them? Will he tell them in no uncertain manner that we will not permit their agents to spy, burgle and counterfeit their way around London? Furthermore, will he tell them that many of us are gravely concerned at the fact that they continue to gun down Palestinians on the West Bank and elsewhere?

Mr. Mellor: It is not just the hon. Gentleman who is concerned about that. Most hon. Members are concerned. I certainly am and so are the Government. On the general conditions in the occupied territories, we continue to make clear in all the fora open to us our dissatisfaction at the fact that the Israeli Government are refusing to take any steps forward. The hon. Gentleman may recall that the final declaration at the Toronto summit reiterated the sentiment, which is now commonplace everywhere, except in certain sections of the Israeli Government, that the status quo is now unsustainable and must be changed. On the matter of present incidents involving the activities of unauthorised agents in this country, our dissatisfaction has been made clear at the highest level. As a result, one diplomat was told earlier that he would not be welcome back to the United Kingdom, and another one has been dispatched home. We hope that the message is clear.

Sir John Biggs-Davison: As a general rule, is it not the case that when there are difficulties with foreign states, or matters arising that occasion disapproval, it is most important to have the fullest diplomatic representation?

Mr. Mellor: I entirely agree with my hon. Friend.

Mr. Janner: Does the Minister agree that, despite differences of opinion between the two countries, relations between Britain and Israel remain good? Further, does he agree that that is right, bearing in mind that those countries in the middle east supported by some hon. Members—*[Interruption.]*—are either feudal oligarchies, military dictatorships or fundamentalist lunacies?

Mr. Mellor: The hon. and learned Gentleman is aware of the House's reaction to some of his comments. Therefore, further remarks from me are redundant. Relations between Britain and Israel are good, but could be a great deal better if some of the points that I mentioned earlier were dealt with properly.

Mr. Bill Walker: Does my hon. and learned Friend agree that we must continue to foster good relations with Israel and that, in the interest of both countries, we must seek peace in all the troubled parts of the middle east? Does he agree that the British and Israeli Governments could probably take a joint initiative and ask the United States and Iran for access to the black boxes from the crashed airliner and the tapes, which must be in existence, of the exchanges that took place between the airliner and the warships?

Mr. Mellor: As my hon. Friend knows, a full investigation is under way to find out how the tragic incident earlier this week took place. We must await the results of that.

Commercial Officers

11. **Mr. Cran:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans he has to ensure greater length and continuity of service among commercial officers deployed in Britain's embassies and consulates.

Mrs. Chalker: Continuity is important, but is only one of a number of factors which determine tour lengths for United Kingdom-based officers. Commercial officers work in tandem with locally engaged staff, who offer continuity. Together they provide an effective and valued service to British exporters.

Mr. Cran: In paying tribute to the importance that I know my right hon. Friend attaches to export promotion, which, if evidenced by nothing else, is evidenced by the size of the budget that she has contributed to it, may I ask whether she agrees that, while locally recruited staff are important, British industry places the highest possible importance on high-level commercial staff appointed by the FCO? Does she also agree that many companies feel that tours of duty, if that is the correct expression, for those staff are not long enough, and that consequently the continuity that companies expect is not there? Against that background, it is felt that an investigation should take place.

Mrs. Chalker: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his tribute to Foreign and Commonwealth service officers, but I must say to him that long stints in certain posts can give rise to problems.

Mr. Kaufman: Yes.

Mrs. Chalker: That is why we have decided that four years is about the right length of time for second secretaries and above who are appointed to commercial posts abroad. Where conditions are difficult, and for certain staff, the time may have to be shorter. I can assure my hon. Friend that representatives of British industry who meet the permanent under-secretary and me on a regular basis to discuss commercial issues seem to be very satisfied with the combination of knowledgeable, locally engaged staff and commercial officers, with the emphasis on high-level staff, who normally do tours of duty of about three to four years.

Sir Ian Lloyd: In considering the whole question of length and continuity of service, will my right hon. Friend pay special attention to the position of scientific officers in our embassies, who render such distinguished and valuable service, not only to the scientific community, but to industry in Britain as a whole?

Mrs. Chalker: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that question. We hope that in the scientific field we shall get more interchanges with the private sector, because we can certainly gain from the knowledge of such people in commercial and scientific posts. There are exchanges at the moment, but there are not enough and we should like to see more.

South Africa

12. **Mr. Skinner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will now consider applying economic sanctions against South Africa; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: We do not believe that the application of punitive economic sanctions against South Africa would help bring about the end of apartheid, which is the objective of the hon. Member and of Her Majesty's Government alike.

Mr. Skinner: Is the Minister aware that if there was any doubt in anybody's mind either here or outside about the ideological empathy between this Government and the South African Government, it was surely dispelled on Monday night when the Prime Minister walked through the Lobby to support a private Bill to enable the South Africans to export more coal to Britain? That coal has blood on it. Surely it is time that the British people understood more clearly that the Government's opposition to sanctions is not about some mere technicality, but because they want to give aid and succour to the hated Botha regime?

Mrs. Chalker: The hon. Gentleman's question is almost not worth replying to. I can only say that if he continues to act as Scargill's voice in this House and to drum away at policies that will not help black people in South Africa, it will be a very poor show for him and for what he is supposed to stand for. The hon. Gentleman spoke about a decision of the House. The House is responsible for Britain's economy. There is no ban on the import of South African coal, and to have one would depend on a number of other people and not just on Britain. The hon. Gentleman does not help black people in South Africa by the way in which he approaches this issue.

Sir Jim Spicer: Will my right hon. Friend take every possible opportunity to speak privately to the leaders of black South African trade unions to ascertain their true views relating to sanctions, as opposed to the views that they have to express publicly to avoid attacks from the ANC?

Mrs. Chalker: I assure my hon. Friend that we have many continuing contacts with leaders of black trade union leaders in South Africa. We intend to keep in close touch with their views, and we know of surveys that have been taken of those views. They do not wish sanctions to be introduced, but it is true that they sometimes fear to speak out about the real views of their people. While we do not believe that enough progress has yet been made, we very much welcome the successful establishment of black trade unions in South Africa, and we hope that it will continue.

Miss Lestor: I warn the right hon. Lady that when I meet her later this week to discuss Mozambique I shall not deal only with the banditry and terrorism that is being practised by the South African-funded MNR in Mozambique, but will raise with her the question of the sanctions that South Africa imposes on Mozambique; for example, the slashing of the number of Mozambican miners it employs and the under-use of the port of Maputo. The Government acknowledge the damage that South Africa does to Mozambique with those sanctions by trying to compensate it through the aid programme. If South Africa——

Mr. Dickens: Will the hon. Lady give way?

Miss Lestor: No, I will not. If South Africa can destabilise Mozambique in that way, does the right hon. Lady not realise that sanctions imposed on South Africa by Britain and other countries would have the same effect?

Mrs. Chalker: The hon. Lady will have to sort out one or two things before she comes to see me tomorrow. Many Mozambicans have told us that it is precisely the denial of jobs in South Africa, which sanctions would cause if they were implemented, that would deny their families the income on which they depend so heavily. We shall go on aiding Mozambique in a positive way, just as we shall continue to aid black people in South Africa in a positive way, but I can tell the hon. Lady that she and I will have a lot to say to each other tomorrow.

Mr. John M. Taylor: Is my right hon. Friend aware of any instance of sanctions achieving the objectives that they were intended to achieve?

Mrs. Chalker: No, I am not.

Mr. Anderson: Even if the Government reject economic sanctions, will the Minister consider sending a signal to the South African Government? First, will she instruct our ambassador in South Africa to ask for permission to visit Nelson Mandela in prison near the time of his birthday and convey to him a tribute from this House? Secondly, will she issue an ultimatum to the South African Government about Zwelakhe Sisulu, a former official guest of the Government, who is now starting his third year of detention without trial and who is now in hospital? Will she inform South Africa that unless he is released from prison we and our European partners will order the withdrawal of senior South African diplomatic personnel?

Mrs. Chalker: The hon. Gentleman is well aware that I do not believe that ultimatums will bring about what he and I seek, which is the humane treatment of Mr. Sisulu, who, we are sad to know, is now in hospital. I assure the hon. Gentleman that Her Majesty's ambassador in South Africa will make such visits as he can to those who need our help there. The hon. Gentleman should await the continuation of our policy, which has always been to represent to the South African Government our view that Nelson Mandela and other political prisoners should be released without any conditions.

Afghanistan

13. **Mr. Brazier:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps his Department is taking to monitor the actions of Soviet troops towards the indigenous population in Afghanistan during their withdrawal.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: There have been persistent allegations about violations of human rights by Soviet troops. We look to the Russians to withdraw quickly and end the misery that they have inflicted on the Afghan people.

Mr. Brazier: May I draw my right hon. and learned Friend's attention to the recent article by Bernard Levin on the massacre of Afghan children by Soviet forces in the village of Kolalgu? May I put it to him that there are two lessons in this for the West? The first is that the West must continue to support and arm the Mujahideen until their country is free? The second is that we must continue to strengthen our own armed forces, as the Soviets are strengthening theirs, at the same time as talking to the Soviet Union.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: My hon. Friend does well to draw attention to that article, because it serves to remind us of how quickly the horrors of that kind of denial of human rights can be disregarded and overlooked. The most important text is the report from the United Nations' special rapporteur, which, for 1988, identified more than 14,000 civilian deaths last year. Even the regime admits to more than 3,000 political prisoners, and torture is still being used in interrogation. It is plainly right that the world should continue to support the heroism of the Afghan people during implementation of the agreement for the withdrawal of Soviet troops. It is important also for us to continue to monitor that process carefully.

Mr. Cousins: Will the Secretary of State hold urgent discussions with the Government of Pakistan, in order to have an orderly run-down of refugee camps, and to prevent the Central Intelligence Agency from creating there yet another generation of well-armed extremist gangsters who will haunt the world long after the Afghan conflict is over?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I think that the hon. Gentleman has a bizarre and distorted idea of what goes on in refugee camps in Pakistan. Pakistan deserves the admiration of the world for the part that she has played in accommodating a large proportion of the 5 million people displaced by Soviet occupation of Afghanistan. From my own experience of visiting those camps, I know that the overwhelming majority of those people want only one thing—the right to return to their own country. Their willingness to do that will be the best judgment of the effectiveness of Soviet withdrawal.

Drug Trafficking

15. **Mr. Barry Field:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what further measures he is considering to curb the international trade in narcotics.

Mr. Eggar: We shall continue to play a leading role in promoting effective international co-operation. We are providing drugs-related assistance to more than 20 countries and expanding the vital network of drugs liaison officers. We are discussing assets and confiscation agreements with more than 40 Governments and signed the third such agreement, with the Bahamas, on 28 June.

Mr. Field: I am sure that the whole House welcomes the success that the Government have had in curbing this pernicious and evil trade. Can my hon. Friend tell us how many agreements he has with customs enforcement agencies in overseas countries?

Mr. Eggar: I thank my hon. Friend for his comments. It is only through international co-operation that we can help to defeat the internationally organised crime of drug trafficking. Co-operation between customs works differently between different countries and in different circumstances, but, as a result of co-operation, we have with the Soviet Union recently made a very significant haul of cannabis. We have also been very successful in our co-operation with Spain, which has led to more than 60 arrests of drug traffickers.

Mr. Tony Banks: Does the Minister accept that the real problem arises from the demand and the criminal activities surrounding the supply of illegal drugs? Are any discussions taking place within the British Government and, indeed, internationally, on the possibility of legalising soft drugs to eliminate the criminal activity associated with the trade?

Mr. Eggar: No, Sir. I imagine that the hon. Gentleman is alone in the House if he really believes that that is the way to send the correct signal to drug traffickers and abusers. Drugs pose a major threat throughout the developed and developing world. The only way to hope to defeat that threat is by a combination of international co-operation and tough measures against drug producers and traffickers.

Toronto Summit

17. **Mr. Favell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the Toronto summit.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I refer my hon. Friend to the statement made by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister on 23 June.

Mr. Favell: Can my right hon. and learned Friend say something about the discussions that must have taken place about how best to react to recent remarkable developments in Russia? Does he agree with the view expressed in today's leader in *The Times* that Western leaders have a hard job ahead when deciding how best to applaud Mr. Gorbachev's efforts?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: There was certainly a good deal of discussion of the events that have been taking place in the Soviet Union. In the concluding declaration the Heads of Government stated:

> "In the Soviet Union greater freedom and openness will offer opportunities to reduce mistrust and build confidence. Each of us will respond positively to any such developments."

Chile

18. **Mr. Maxton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made regarding the presence of foreign observers to monitor the impending plebiscite in Chile.

Mr. Eggar: We suggested to the Chilean authorities earlier this year that they might consider inviting foreign observers. The Chilean Government have since made it clear that, while foreigners may visit Chile at the time of the plebiscite, and be present during voting and scrutiny, they will not recognise such foreign visitors as having the status of "observers". I understand, however, that the democratic opposition parties will be able to appoint their own observers at polling stations. I am also aware that a number of hon. Members have received invitations to visit Chile at the time of the plebiscite, from the organisers of the Parliamentary Assembly for Democracy.

Mr. Maxton: In view of the appalling civil rights record of the Pinochet regime in Chile, surely the Minister must do much more to ensure that there are foreign observers to make sure that the plebiscite is carried out fairly by a Government whom the whole world distrusts on that issue?

Mr. Eggar: We have already asked the Chilean Government, who have given us their response. At the same time, they stated that foreign observers in an unofficial capacity will be welcome to attend the arrangements for the plebiscite. I am sure that if the hon. Gentleman wanted to go he could arrange an invitation.

Child Abuse (Cleveland)

3.31 pm

The Minister for Health (Mr. Tony Newton): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I wish to make a statement about the report by Lord Justice Butler-Sloss on the findings of her inquiry into the handling of suspected child abuse cases in Cleveland in the early part of last year. Her report, and her own short version of it, are available in the Vote Office, as is a statement that she is making in Middlesbrough this afternoon.

The whole House will be united in its condemnation of sexual or other abuse of children, and in its support for proper action to protect children from it, but it will be no less united in insisting that this must be achieved in a way that does not trample on the rights of parents and inflict unnecessary distress on the very children we wish to be helped.

It is clear from the report that this balance was not achieved in Cleveland during the period in question, even though many children received the protection they needed. The House would wish me to express the deep regret of all of us to those who have suffered as a result. It is perhaps hard to imagine the shattering effect on those parents who were innocent and on the children.

The report contains substantial criticism both of individuals, including the consultant paediatricians, Dr. Higgs and Dr. Wyatt, the police surgeon, Dr. Irvine, and the child abuse consultant, Mrs. Richardson, and of important aspects of the managerial response to the situation as it developed. It confirms that there was an overall failure to achieve essential communication and co-operation between police, health and social services.

It is for the authorities involved in the first instance to address those criticisms and take the necessary action. The Government expect that action to be thorough, speedy and effective. The help of the Government's medical advisers, of the Social Services Inspectorate and of Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary will, of course, be made available to assist those authorities.

At the same time, the Government are taking immediate action to ensure that the more general lessons of the report are applied not only to prevent a recurrence of similar events but to improve the handling of child abuse throughout the country.

First, as I have already said, the report confirms the fundamental importance of the professional people and agencies concerned with child abuse working closely together within agreed guidelines. It underlines the need for a balanced assessment of different strands of evidence, and for action to be judged in the light of all the circumstances of the family as a whole. It stresses the need to listen carefully to what the children have to say and to take it seriously, and it re-emphasises the need for parents to be kept informed, consulted, and given reasonable access to their children unless that would be against the best interests of the child.

Those lessons, including the report's recommendations for the creation of special assessment teams, are reflected in comprehensive guidance that is being issued today by my Department and the Welsh Office. Guidance circulars are also being issued today to the police by my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary, and to the education service by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science. Detailed professional guidance on social work practice is now being tested in the field and will be issued shortly.

On the specific point of ensuring effective co-operation between different agencies, I am also publishing today a survey by the Social Services Inspectorate of current arrangements. I am glad to say that it shows a generally satisfactory picture. In the few cases where this cannot be said, we are asking the inspectorate to monitor the position closely and see that it is improved.

Secondly, the report indicates that medical examination is only one aspect of assessment, and in particular that the test of reflex anal dilatation should not on its own be taken as conclusive evidence of sexual abuse. That view is confirmed by the report of a sub-committee of my right hon. Friend's Standing Medical Advisory Committee, which we asked to consider these matters in parallel with the inquiry. Its guidance for doctors on the diagnosis of child sexual abuse is being published today and sent to every practising doctor. We are also publishing today, and distributing to the nursing profession, guidance for senior nurses on the management of child abuse work from my right hon. Friend's Standing Nursing and Midwifery Advisory Committee. Copies of all the reports and guidance to which I have referred have been placed in the Library.

Thirdly, the report shows a clear need for better training for those who handle child abuse work. We have already included in the Health and Medicines Bill new powers to cover specific grants for social work training in this field. We intend to make available in 1989-90 a grant of 70 per cent. in support of expenditure of £10 million. We shall ensure that this major new programme means not merely more training but better training which takes account of all the lessons learnt from the report.

Lastly, I am glad to say that the report gives general support to the proposals for reforming the law contained in the White Paper on the law on child care and family services, published last year. The aim of the proposals is to make the law simpler and clearer and to strengthen the rights of parents and children. They include the replacement of place of safety orders by a new emergency protection order with stricter criteria and more limited duration. In addition, where an emergency protection order is obtained without the parents being involved, they will have a new opportunity to challenge the order after 72 hours. The Government are firmly committed to a Bill to implement the White Paper proposals, modified as may be agreed in the light of the report. That Bill will be brought before Parliament at the earliest practicable opportunity.

What I have announced covers the great majority of the report's recommendations. Others are being examined urgently. In particular, my noble and learned Friend the Lord Chancellor intends to issue a consultation paper before the House rises on the report's suggestion for an Office of Child Protection, with powers which could include scrutiny of local authority applications in care proceedings and calling for additional investigation or reports.

We are extremely grateful to Lord Justice Butler-Sloss for the thorough and comprehensive work that she has done, and to her three assessors—Professor Hull, Mr. Chant and Mr. Soper—who have supported her in her conclusions and recommendations. The issues with which they have had to deal are immensely complex, and the report reflects the inescapable fact that there is no single simple answer. In acknowledging that, it is right also to balance the picture that has emerged from Cleveland with recognition of how much valuable and successful work is done in this difficult field by doctors, nurses, social workers and police throughout the country. But the plain fact is that what happened in Cleveland should not have happened, and must not be allowed to happen again. The measures announced today are designed to see that it does not.

Mr. Robin Cook (Livingston): I begin by joining the Minister in expressing the gratitude of the whole House to Lord Justice Butler-Sloss for her exhaustive and authoritative report. Her objectivity and skill in conducting the inquiry are confirmed by the fact that, in a situation marked by strong hostilities, she managed to command the respect of all parties to the dispute.

The full report commands more thorough debate than it can receive in the next half hour, and perhaps more careful study than it will receive in tomorrow's instant headlines. Those who study the report will find it a balanced report, which presents on the one hand a vivid and candid account of the nature of child sexual abuse, and on the other an account of the harrowing experience of those families when no abuse has been confirmed but who were set apart for months by the allegation of abuse.

Given the severe trauma caused by sexual abuse and by the false accusation of abuse, all parties in the House must regret the evidence in the report of the collapse of communication between those agencies with statutory responsibility for detecting abuse, and the inadequate communication within those agencies between middle and senior management.

The most effective way in which we can show appreciation of Lord Justice Butler-Sloss's work is to act on her recommendations. I draw the Minister's attention to five heads of recommendation. I appreciate that some of these issues go beyond his departmental responsibility, and in view of the gravity of the matter I shall be happy if he wishes to reflect on his response and write to me afterwards.

First, may I pick up the Minister's point about the White Paper on child care, which is strongly endorsed in the recommendations? As the Minister will be aware, Lord Justice Butler-Sloss stresses that, in her opinion, it is urgent that the White Paper is turned into legislation. The Minister said that legislation would be brought forward at the earliest practicable opportunity. He will recall that the White Paper, in its foreword, contains the commitment of the then Secretary of State that it would be implemented

"as soon as the Parliamentary timetable allows".

That was in January 1987.

I understand that it was not possible to legislate this Session while the inquiry was in train, but we now have the report of the inquiry. It stresses the urgency of legislation, and, while I understand that convention prevents the Minister committing himself to legislation this year, I note that he has on one side of him the Leader of the House and on the other the Prime Minister. I am sure that he will recognise that the public would not understand it if another Session were to pass without the House legislating on that White Paper.

Secondly, in preparing that legislation, will the Minister note the judge's support for family courts? Is it not clear that one factor in the Cleveland crisis was the rapid way in which it generated a bottleneck in court procedures? Therefore, will the Minister reconsider the Government's decision to amend the law first, and only then tackle the structure by which it is enforced? Would it not be more sensible to act on both fronts together?

Thirdly, will the Minister reflect on the stress placed in the recommendations on avoiding the necessity of removing the child from the home? Will he therefore consider whether it might be more in the interests of the child, and less disruptive to the family, to bar the suspected perpetrator of abuse from the family home, rather than always removing the suspected victim of abuse—a power that is now frequently available to states in America?

Fourthly, I was disappointed to learn that only £7 million is to be made available for additional training. That is doubly disappointing, as it is only two months since the Minister failed to find £40 million to extend the social work training period from two to three years. As a result, in 1992 Britain will be the only European country with a two-year period of training for social services. Lord Justice Butler-Sloss places particular stress on the importance, in basic training, of training to deal with child sexual abuse. It is difficult to see how yet another topic can be covered adequately in basic training when the Government have already resolved not to extend the period of that training. It would be regrettable if child sexual abuse were to become another example of local authorities being given extra responsibility, with no extra resources and no additional training to deal with it.

Finally, may I put it to the Minister that, with the passage of time, the real significance of Lord Justice Butler-Sloss's report, the real point for which it will be remembered, is the way in which it has documented the reality of child sexual abuse within our society? Her most important recommendation may remain her very first recommendation, which is the need to recognise and measure the extent of that abuse. We must not let our revulsion at the practices that she describes find refuge in the belief that they do not exist; nor must we let the fact that grievous mistakes were made in Cleveland discourage us from finding and protecting the victims of real abuse.

I draw the Minister's attention to the conclusion of Lord Justice Butler-Sloss, that one of the dangers of the Cleveland experience is that it may demoralise the very people whose duty it is to detect abuse. I invite the Minister to associate himself with her observation, which is of particular significance to those who write about our proceedings this afternoon:

"Social workers need the support of the public to continue in the job the public needs them to do."

It is time that the public and the press gave it to them.

Mr. Newton: I am grateful to the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) for the way in which he introduced his questions and for the spirit in which he has approached the subject, and I associate myself with his concluding remarks. That is one reason why I recognised at the end of my statement that a great deal of valuable and successful work is being done around the country by all the people who are involved.

To answer the hon. Gentleman's questions in reverse order, I accept that it is desirable to have a clearer understanding of the scale of the problem. He will perhaps recall that when I announced the establishment of the inquiry I also announced our intention to make use of the experience of the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children in running child abuse registers,

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covering about 9 per cent. of the country's children, to generalise the system for collecting statistics and to build up a national picture. That work is proceeding. We are now receiving the returns for 31 March 1988, and we shall be putting them together with a view to having a clear national statistical return in place as soon as possible, which I hope will be helpful.

When I responded to the Central Council for Education and Training in Social Work's proposals only a month ago, I made it clear that one of the reasons why we were unable to accept them in that form was that we believed that the first priority was to bring about a number of improvements—I think I used the phrase "a balanced package of improvements"—covering some of the most obvious and immediate problems. Training was one of the problems that I had in mind. The expenditure that I have announced today will bring about immediate improvements in social work training, including that for existing social workers as well as future ones. I also made it clear that we wished to make improvements in social work training generally, including the crucial gap of inadequate practice placements. We shall provide additional resources for that purpose.

The guidance that we have published today makes it clear that the removal of the child is not the first and only resort in every case. That, I hope, will be clear to all from this experience. I shall also reflect on the other suggestion that the hon. Gentleman made.

My noble and learned friend the Lord Chancellor is hoping to make an announcement about the Government's approach to family courts later in the year. The Cleveland report considers that family courts could help in some respects, but it did not cover all the issues relating to family courts. However, the report recommended that there should be an Office of Child Protection, to which I referred in my statement. There is no doubt that such an office, together with the reform of child law, would be an important step towards the establishment of such a court. My noble and learned friend the Lord Chancellor intends to issue a consultation document before the summer recess.

The hon. Member for Livingston kindly recognised the constitutional conventions surrounding the translation of the White Paper into legislation. I have to tell him, especially with my right hon. Friends the Leader of the House and the Prime Minister sitting on either side of me, that I could hardly go further without falling over the edge of the constitutional conventions, but I am sure that they heard what he said.

Mr. Stuart Bell (Middlesbrough): I associate myself with the remarks of both the Minister and my hon. Friend the Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook), and congratulate Lord Justice Butler-Sloss on her work and on her report. She spent five months in my constituency of Cleveland and thereabouts, and a further five months preparing her report. We all welcome its recommendations, and the unanimity of the House indicates that Lord Justice Butler-Sloss has an opportunity, linked with last year's child care law reform White Paper, to mould our child care legislation into the next century.

I welcome the Minister's remarks and his expression of deep regret on behalf of the Government to those innocent Cleveland families who, through no fault of their own, were caught up in a horrible vortex, which swept them all down and almost destroyed their lives. For months those families have said, "No one has listened and no one has said sorry." Today, the Minister and my hon. Friend the Member for Livingston, with the Prime Minister in attendance, have indicated that the House associates itself with the agony and plight of those families and expresses to them its deep regret.

My final statement to the House is that all the people of Cleveland wish to put this sad tale behind them. The steady, effective and thorough action to which the Minister referred will, I hope, be welcomed by the agencies concerned, so that we may all learn the lessons of Cleveland and learn to live with the future.

Mr. Newton: I welcome very much the hon. Gentleman's remarks and the welcome that he expressed both for my comments today and for the action that we have put in hand. In return, perhaps I may say that the hon. Gentleman has earned the respect, and will receive the thanks, of those of his constituents who feel that they suffered so much injustice.

Mr. Richard Holt (Langbaurgh): I, too, thank my right hon. Friend and associate myself with the remarks of the hon. Member for Middlesbrough (Mr. Bell). Those of us in Cleveland who have lived through the situation there for the past year know how much sorrow it has brought. We are grateful to the Government for their statement today. We also ought to place on record our thanks to the Middlesbrough *Evening Gazette* reporter who first brought this issue to light, and to acknowledge that the press has played a powerful and meaningful part in the whole saga.

We now look forward to the implementation of the Government's proposals. However, over the years we have seen the publication of the Jasmine Beckford and other reports, all of which caught the emotion of the day, but then died away. Now that Lord Justice Butler-Sloss's report has been published, and once the Government's legislation has been enacted, my right hon. Friend ought seriously to consider some form of continuous monitoring at a Butler-Sloss level so that never again will we find ourselves in the situation that Cleveland has over the past year.

Mr. Newton: I associate myself with my hon. Friend's remarks about the responsible way in which certain newspapers and other sections of the media helped to expose the injustice, and I thank my hon. Friend for the responsible approach that he has adopted throughout in seeking to resolve the problem.

I hope that my hon. Friend does not feel that the results of the Jasmine Beckford and Tyra Henry cases have been in any way ignored. On the contrary, they have helped to shape and inform the actions and proposals that I put before the House today and the guidance that we have issued, and in other ways.

As to future inquiries, I am not sure that I would wish to ask Lord Justice Butler-Sloss to sit in permanent session, and I am not certain that she would wish to do so. We have included in the guidance issued today arrangements relating to proper inquiry procedures within and among the agencies concerned in the first instance. I am considering what further guidance we can issue about independent and external inquiries where those are needed.

Mr. Merlyn Rees (Morley and Leeds, South): I should like to be associated with the congratulations to Lord Justice Butler-Sloss. I say to the Minister and to my hon. Friend the Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) that today's approach can do nothing but good for those of us who face a similar problem in Leeds. One police station in my area and that of my hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, Central (Mr. Fatchett) has received reports of 400 children, involving 150 alleged abuses. The stories are horrific, and we are only glad that we have not hit the headlines as Cleveland has. All the authorities there, led by the social services department—a much maligned department in other parts of the country—have done extremely well, and the balanced approach shown there ought to be taken into account in other parts of the country.

Let us consider the legislation that the Government will require, and the White Paper, which is a year old. In my time in the House I have known both sides to get together to get constitutional legislation through quickly. There is an urgent need for this legislation, and I hope that something can be done through the normal channels. Occasionally, a Special Standing Committee has also been set up to look at special issues such as these circulars because knowledge is spread throughout the House on the problems that arise. Could that also be considered?

My last point concerns both my hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, Central and myself. I find it difficult to advise parents who come to see me, because I am not trained to help. It is my job to stand up for the parents and write to people, but parents need much better advice. Many are terrified. They are frightened of authority. Perhaps some voluntary organisations could be funded to help and we could guide parents to them. It is very sad for us that when people leave our advice surgeries we wonder, "Have I said or done the right thing on this traumatic occasion?".

Mr. Newton: I am grateful for the way in which the right hon. Gentleman has spoken. He will know that a study of events in Leeds is being undertaken locally at the appropriate level. I have asked to see a copy of the report and will consider whether there is anything that I can do to assist.

The right hon. Gentleman's offer about the way in which the legislation might be dealt with will have been heard by those with responsibilities for the management of the business of the House, and I note it in the spirit in which it was offered.

I agree that advice to parents is important. I can tell the right hon. Gentleman that, among the training initiatives that we have already set in hand—quite apart from what I have announced this afternoon—one is with a voluntary organisation called the Family Rights Group, which I think will be familiar to a number of hon. Members. We are helping the group to prepare a guide to child protection procedures. It is now at draft stage, and we hope that it will be possible to press ahead with it. We are anxious to help responsible voluntary organisations, among others, to help parents with problems of this kind.

Mr. Roger Sims (Chislehurst): Is my right hon. Friend aware that the NSPCC welcomes the report, in that it shows, alas, that the extent of child abuse is considerable and that it affects children of all ages? Is he also aware that the society will warmly welcome the emphasis that the report places on the recognition of the needs and views of the children themselves—those who are most affected? Does he accept that, while the society will support the provision of enhanced services in child care and will be pleased to play its part, it is essential that adequate resources are made available for such services?

I welcome my right hon. Friend's reference to the provision of guidelines for the various professional services to be issued on a national basis. Does he agree that the fact that those guidelines have been issued—coupled with what is said in the report—emphasises the need for a national child abuse register and the desirability of co-ordinating child care services on a national as well as a local basis?

Mr. Newton: I pay tribute to my hon. Friend's work with the NSPCC and, indeed, to the work of the NSPCC in this respect, which is reflected in the fact that we have used its expertise and experience in trying to build up such a register. I also welcome what he said about the NSPCC's response to some of what I have said this afternoon. We in our turn will try to respond by ensuring that we continue to use the invaluable experience and work of the NSPCC in every possible way.

Mr. Frank Cook (Stockton, North): I record my sincere gratitude to the Minister for the great courtesy that he displayed to my hon. Friend the Member for Redcar (Ms. Mowlam) and me when we visited him to make representations on behalf of our hon. Friend the Member for Hartlepool (Mr. Leadbitter) and ourselves. I thank him for his prompt response to our request for the establishment of an inquiry of this kind. That response was so comprehensive, and was executed so capably, sensitively and responsibly by Lord Justice Butler-Sloss that we all commend her and her team.

I remind the Minister of the point that I made when we saw him. No matter what we do about these issues in Cleveland, we are lifting only one veil from the stages of childhood. These practices are being established in society and are lasting into further stages of life. What legislation will the Minister introduce to deal with the Grieveson brothers? They are three adult males, all articulate and intelligent, all willing to submit to cross-examination, who discovered in adulthood that in childhood they had been systematically buggered by their father, or so they allege. The social services, the police, the medical profession and the churches, and everyone else in Cleveland, know of the allegations, but there is no mechanism to deal with that sort of case.

Richard Johnson of Incest Crisis Line tells of cases such as that of the 58-year-old woman who is visited three times a week by her 82-year-old father. That may be funny in music hall, but it is not funny in real life.

These things are important—the recommendations are crucial and we welcome them wholeheartedly—but we must go further. We cannot stop here. I ask the Minister to give us the assurance that the House needs and to heed the pleas of the others out there in society who are waiting for some sort of lifeline.

Mr. Newton: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman, both for the way in which he sought to help at the outset, when the inquiry was being set up, and for what he said today.

I cannot respond in the same way to the second part of what he said, for reasons that I hope will seem reasonable. He appeared to be alleging possible offences that might be

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going on now, in which case there are proper ways of investigating them. He also seemed to be alleging offences that have come to light only after an enormous lapse of time. Such cases would have to be subject to proper standards of proof, which would be difficult to achieve after such a long time. I am more than happy to look further into what he said in the latter part of his remarks, but I cannot go further than that this afternoon.

Mr. Michael Fallon (Darlington): I thank my right hon. Friend for the prompt and sensible way in which he has dealt with the entire affair. He has been a model Minister in that respect.

Although my right hon. Friend has praised the majority of social workers and announced further improvements in training, and so on, would he be prepared to reflect further on the way in which social work is organised and the apparent absence of accountability and performance criteria?

Mr. Newton: Yes, I would. One of the problems that we have considered is that there is relatively little authoritatively blessed guidance for social workers of the sort that we are preparing in this area. I said that it was being tested at the moment. In that context, I shall consider the points that my hon. Friend has raised.

Ms. Marjorie Mowlam (Redcar): I begin my associating myself with hon. Members who have thanked Lord Justice Butler-Sloss for the fair-minded and humanitarian way in which she has dealt with the problem. The conclusion that she reached is important, given what some of the media have said:

> "In Cleveland an honest attempt was made to address these problems by the agencies."

It is important to put that on record.

I associate myself with the Minister's comment that there is no single, simple answer to the problem. It follows from that that there is no case for making scapegoats of individuals or groups of individuals in response to the problem.

The Minister's concluding comment was that we must work so that this will never happen again, but the nature of the problem is such that, whatever we do about inter-agency co-operation and case conferences, mistakes will be made. Parents will be hurt again and children will again be left with abusers. Unless we face the fact that we shall make errors, however hard we try to change things, we shall find ourselves in difficulty in the future.

Finally, will the Minister think about the implications for families of what he said today? In today's Britain families feel lonely and are suffering alone. Will the Minister consider the impact of this problem on other legislation, and think particularly about unfreezing child benefit, which relates mums directly to their children?

Mr. Newton: Of course I shall think about the impact on families. One of the reasons why I made some of my remarks, to which the hon. Member for Middlesbrough (Mr. Bell) kindly referred, was to assure some of the parents who are involved that we are aware of what they have suffered and want to acknowledge that firmly on the record.

I acknowledge that this is not an area in which it is possible to guarantee that every decision and action will be 100 per cent. right. I hope the hon. Lady will acknowledge in turn that mistakes on the scale that the report shows happened in Cleveland, without being properly tackled by management for too long a period, should not, and must not, be allowed to happen again.

Mr. Tim Devlin (Stockton, South): I thank the learned judge on behalf of my constituents who were bound up in this problem. If the result of the inquiry is that doctors are criticised for poor record keeping, and social services are criticised for weak management and for not following agreed procedures, could not the crisis happen again? I therefore congratulate my right hon. Friend on the commitment to bring in a Bill, and I say, on behalf of my constituents, that we regard it as high time the Government introduced legislation going beyond the White Paper, giving parents effective rights over their children, and social workers a range of alternatives to breaking up families, thus reversing the current unpleasant situation in which an over-zealous local authority that suspends disbelief finds it easier in law to take away a man's children than to freeze his bank account.

Mr. Newton: If errors of the kind that occurred in Cleveland, some of which my hon. Friend referred to, were not corrected, there would be a risk of comparable events elsewhere, although it would also depend on particular combinations of personalities coming together—one of the factors in this case. It was precisely to make sure that that does not happen, and that we do everything reasonably possible in that direction, that I made my announcement and issued the guidelines today.

As for my hon. Friend's proposals about legislation, if he studies the proposals in the White Paper together with my remarks today about further strengthening, for example, appeal rights in cases in which the parents have not been involved when an emergency protection order is granted, and the emphasis throughout the White Paper on reasonable rights of access, he will find that they go a long way towards achieving what he wants.

Rev. Martin Smyth (Belfast, South): I ask the Minister to accept our appreciation of the empathy that he has shown and of the report of Lord Justice Butler-Sloss. Will he assure me that the guidelines will go to doctors in Northern Ireland, too? There does not seem to be a Minister with responsibility for Northern Ireland on the Government Front Bench. One should bear in mind that only two weeks ago a young girl was brutally murdered in Rathcoole by an uncle.

Does the Minister accept that about three years ago the Northern Ireland Assembly recommended family courts, yet we are still being told that we must wait to see what happens in Great Britain?

Mr. Newton: I understand that the guidelines for doctors on the diagnosis of child sexual abuse, for example, would not, on the basis of what I have said today, go to doctors in Northern Ireland. I undertake to look immediately into doing that.

Mr. Geoffrey Dickens (Littleborough and Saddleworth): This is a distinguished parliamentary occasion. The whole House, in complete harmony, has been discussing child protection in a civilised way. Of course the mistakes of Cleveland should not have happened, and my right hon. Friend has said that he will do all in his power to minimise the chances of their happening again.

Over the years, the Prime Minister has made quite an input. The Criminal Justice Bill, which had its Third Reading last week, includes provisions to listen more to children. Corroboration rules are being relaxed so that children can be heard in the same way as adults, and video links are proposed so that they do not have to face the accused in courtrooms. We need to consider family courts so that parents can be represented. We need to consider changes in child care and services law, and these things will be done.

This is a big occasion for Parliament and I am grateful to everyone concerned, not least Lord Justice Butler-Sloss for her marvellous report, whose lessons I hope we will learn. I am grateful for having seen the day when the whole House has considered child protection, together and in harmony.

Mr. Newton: I am grateful to my hon. Friend, in view of his interest in these matters over a long period. Perhaps I might join with him in acknowledging the close interest that our right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has consistently taken in these matters, and not least in this case.

Ms. Hilary Armstrong (Durham, North-West): I am sure that all of us recognise that, at the heart of the matter, lies the fact that the majority of those children in Cleveland were abused and that——

Mr. Holt: They were not.

Ms. Armstrong: I am interpreting what I understand from the report.

Our main concern must be to ensure that fewer and fewer children are abused and that we are able to deal with the situation. I used to be a social worker, and I know what it means to make a place of safety order. Everyone concerned is making a judgment. It is our responsibility, and that of the Government, to ensure that in making those judgments the people concerned have the best possible back-up and support. That includes the best possible training, and I urge the Minister to think again about initial training, not just about in-service training. That is important, but unless the bedrock, the basic initial training, is of the right calibre, the social workers going into that work, and, indeed, the public, will not have the confidence that they will be able to perform and make those judgments in the way that, tragically, they frequently have to do.

Mr. Newton: I am not quite sure on what the hon. Lady based the first part of her remarks. The short version of the report states:

"We understand that out of the 121 children,"—

diagnosed by Dr. Higgs and Dr. Wyatt——

"98 are now at home."

Some of those children remain wards of court. It is simply not possible to make absolutely clear-cut judgments, but, just as I am not seeking to do, I hope that the hon. Lady will not make judgments as clear-cut as the one that she implied in her remarks.

In general—my statement sought to reflect this—I accept our responsibility to ensure that social workers have proper support. If I differ from the hon. Lady on the issue of training, it is because I think that there are better ways of spending additional sums of money on social work than on the specific proposals put forward by the Central Council for Education and Training in Social Work.

The lack of practice placements is a weakness and we wish to put more resources into that and to improve basic training in other ways. To say that we were not prepared to accept the specific CCETSW proposals for three-year training is not the same as saying that we are not interested in improving it.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley (Surrey, South-West): I congratulate my right hon. Friend, as other hon. Members have done, on responding so swiftly to what seems to be a new and growing problem, but I remind him that there is nothing new about the need for child protection. Over the past two decades there have been more than 30 inquiries into cases of children who have lost their lives, ironically, in situations where the authorities acted too slowly, rather than being over-zealous, as in this case.

The lessons to be learnt are always the same: better co-ordination, better training, particularly in child care law, and greater co-operation with the different professions. It is welcome that my right hon. Friend is moving forward on all those fronts, but does he agree that the child must always come first? When he comes to the proposals for legislation, will he consider the specific requirement that there should be a medical examination order, which would not give the authority the power to remove the child at that stage, but would simply ensure that the child was seen?

Mr. Newton: I pay tribute to my hon. Friend's well-known, long-standing and extremely well-informed interest in these matters and express my gratitude for what she has said. When she has had an opportunity to study what is admittedly a voluminous report, she will find that Lord Justice Butler-Sloss has made some comments on her proposal and that it does not find favour with her in exactly that form. Nevertheless, I will, of course, consider whether there is some way of combining what we have in mind with the useful thought reflected in my hon. Friend's suggestion.

Mr. Charles Kennedy (Ross, Cromarty and Skye): I wish to associate my right hon. and hon. Friends with the entirety of both the Minister's welcome and the House's welcome for the report, and particularly for the tone and substance of the Government's excellent response to it. I also wish to echo the plea for legislation at the earliest opportunity and, in that context, I stress to the Minister the broad cross-party support for the family court set-up. I hope that, given the Lord Chancellor's Scottish legal background, he will be able to exert the appropriate influence with the Government.

Finally, will the Minister say what implications, if any, today's statement and subsequent legislation will have within the Scottish legislative context?

Mr. Newton: Once again I am grateful for, in this case, the extension of all-party unanimity on this subject and for the hon. Gentleman's remarks.

The legal position in Scotland is of course different from that in England and Wales. My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland has recently issued guidance for authorities there on the handling of child abuse cases and is considering whether the report calls for any further action in Scotland.

Sir Peter Emery (Honiton): Will my right hon. Friend allow me to add my praise to my constituent, Mrs.

[Sir Peter Emery]

Butler-Sloss, for having given up a year of her private life and career to preparing her report, which is so excellent because of its comprehension and balance?

Obviously, any parents who have a court or safety order served on them are greatly concerned when they believe that it is unjustified. Therefore, my right hon. Friend's statement that that can be challenged in a court within 72 hours is of great importance and I am sure will be welcomed by all hon. Members. How quickly can my right hon. Friend bring that about? Does it really need legislation? Is it not possible for the practice to be introduced and accepted by magistrates before we have to go through the whole procedure of passing legislation through the House?

Mr. Newton: The nature of the present legislation, including the fact that it is currently place of safety orders that run for 28 days, rather than the emergency protection orders that we have in mind, which would normally run for a maximum of eight days, is such that it would require legislation to do what my hon. Friend has asked. Clearly, we hope that, among other things, the practice of local authorities and others concerned with place of safety orders under the legislation will be affected in the interim period by the report's recommendations and the experiences of Cleveland.

Mr. Derek Fatchett (Leeds, Central): Does the Minister accept that the strength of the report is that it tries to strike a balance between the rights of parents and of children, but does he recognise that, in striking that balance, a child has an inalienable right not to be sexually abused and that our concern should always be in that primary direction?

Does the right hon. Gentleman recognise that it is crucial to maintain the high morale of the staff dealing with these extremely difficult issues? Does he also accept from those who have been working in the field, and who have told me, that the constant hysterical, malevolent and often ill-founded reporting by certain newspapers undermines staff morale and makes it much more difficult for them to deal with these difficult issues?

Does the right hon. Gentleman accept that in Leeds there is the sort of co-ordination between the police, the health authorities and social services that is recommended in the Cleveland report? Does he also accept that there is widespread support from the public for the work of the paediatricians Dr. Hobbs and Dr. Wynne? They have my support and they have made a tremendous contribution in bringing the important question of child sex abuse to the public's attention.

Mr. Newton: I do not think that it would be right for me to add anything to what I said earlier about Leeds to the right hon. Member for Morley and Leeds, South (Mr. Rees), but I recognise the force of what the hon. Gentleman has said. As to morale and the media, I hope that those to whom what he has said applies will study carefully the words of the report about the role of the media in some respects. We all agree about the inalienable right of the child not to be abused, but against that children have an inalienable right not to be snatched from their parents without proper evidence and due process. We are simply revealing the difficulty of the balance that has to be struck.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I realise the importance of this statement to the House, but, today we have two important Supply debates for the minority parties. I shall allow questions to go on for a further 10 minutes, and I hope that most hon. Members will be called. However, I ask them not to repeat questions that have already been answered.

Dr. Michael Clark (Rochford): Both my children were born in Cleveland and I know how I would have felt if, 25 years go, they had been removed from us. Is it right that children should, so suddenly and so completely, be taken from their parents? Will there be any measures in the steps that my right hon. Friend has announced today to ensure that children are not taken away without co-ordinated deliberation by a variety of interested parties? Bearing in mind that many of the children were not abused, and that the parents were therefore innocent, is it not appropriate that there should be some form of speedy appeal whereby parents can apply to have their children back? Will he take steps in that direction?

Finally, will my right hon. Friend undertake to ensure that Doctors Higgs and Wyatt are never again allowed to have independent responsibility and authority so that this cannot happen again?

Mr. Newton: The first two points are interrelated. Our proposals for an emergency protection order are designed at one and the same time to make it considerably less likely that children can suddenly be taken away from their parents without proper cause, in the way that my hon. Friend implied, and that where that happens—it will sometimes be necessary in a genuine emergency and the need is to confine it to that—parents will have early rights of appeal. I referred to the 72-hour point earlier.

I should not want to go beyond what I said in my statement about the doctors and others. I am not the employer of the doctors—the Northern regional health authority is—and in certain circumstance they would have the right of appeal to my right hon. Friend on any decisions that the health authority might take. In those circumstances, my hon. Friend will understand that it would not be right for me to comment.

Mr. David Hinchliffe (Wakefield): I am somewhat lonely today, as I find the Minister's statement complacent and disappointing. Perhaps the reason for that is that I spent 20 years in social work at local authority level before I came to the House. It surprises me that the Minister has failed to recognise why social services departments have been pushed on to the defensive on this issue. The difficulties that they face because of increased demands are the direct result of Government policy, while at the same time resources, through the rate support grant, have been slashed.

I am surprised that the focus of the statement was on the management of the cases. The right hon. Gentleman did not give his views on the causes of sexual abuse—sexual roles, sexual attitudes in society, the treatment of women and girls and the role of men. Those are the issues about which we should be talking. It surprises me, although perhaps it says something about the Government's priorities, that parliamentary time was found to legislate for all-day drinking and for the import of South African coal, but not for the urgently needed reform of child care law.

Mr. Newton: If the hon. Gentleman studies the report he will find that I have not emphasised a number of the points that he has raised because it is clear that in Cleveland the principal problem was one not of resources but of management and the way in which cases were handled. The crisis caused some pressure on resources, but that is not the same as saying that a lack of resources created the crisis.

Mr. Andrew Rowe (Mid-Kent): Speaking as the chairman of the parliamentary panel for health and social services, I can say how much social workers will welcome the support that my right hon. Friend has given them and his recognition that a great deal of the work that they do is very good, particularly given the enormous dilemma that they face of the need to be partly an authority figure and partly a friend. It is manifest that thousands of young people are entering adult life with no model for, or understanding of, how to be parents. Will my right hon. Friend consult Ministers in the Department of Education and Science to find ways in which we can break that vicious circle by preparing people to be parents?

Mr. Newton: The latter issue is one to which Ministers collectively have been giving some consideration, and it is a subject that is likely to be further discussed in a group chaired by my hon. Friend the Minister of State, Home Office. I acknowledge its importance. We have also sought to finance, with the National Children's Bureau, some important and useful projects in this sector.

As to social workers and their morale, I am grateful to my hon. Friend for what he said in his role as chairman of the panel. I hope that what I have said this afternoon will go some way to redress the disappointment that I know some social workers felt over my statement on social work training a few weeks ago. I hope that what I have in mind for the way forward is now clearer.

Mrs. Rosie Barnes (Greenwich): Where it is considered necessary to remove children from their home to assess whether physical or sexual abuse has taken place, would it not be better to provide facilities so that mothers can accompany their children into temporary care while they are being assessed? This would avoid the trauma of suddenly removing children from their families. Would it not be better for treatment to be given to whole families, to overcome difficulties that can be better tackled within the family, rather than removing the child permanently from its natural parents?

Mr. Newton: Essentially the answer to those questions is yes, but with the obvious proviso that it entails a judgment about what is the right way to deal with the matter in each and every case.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett (Pembroke): As one who worked in the education service for many years and has experience of facing the dilemma of dealing with such accusations and getting the right balance, I congratulate my right hon. Friend. His statement has got it right. In view of the accusations that were made in Cleveland last year, could not proper monitoring be carried out to ensure that we notice these blips in the graph and take action straight away, because something is going on? Secondly, can we ensure that an independent second medical opinion is available to parents and that they have some help in makeing appeals if they are not able to make them themselves?

Mr. Newton: Monitoring of the kind that my hon. Friend suggests should be part and parcel of the day-to-day work of any properly run social services department, and if that is not taking place I am sure that it will be instituted as a result of the experience in Cleveland. As to second opinions, my hon. Friend will know of the arrangements made in the specific circumstances of Cleveland. I do not know whether they would be right in all cases, but I note his suggestion.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing (Moray): On behalf of the Nationalist parties, I associate myself with the welcome that has been given to this report and to the Government's response, but I wish to make a point about funding.

Is the additional money for 1988-89 new money rather than recycled money that is being taken from other social care sectors that are also under severe pressures? Will that funding continue beyond 1989, because we want, not a piecemeal approach, but continual funding to ensure that our services can respond to needs in society? The Minister said that there is to be legislation, but does not legislation impose pressure on those who work within agencies, and does this not re-emphasise the need to review the training policies that the Government are looking at?

Mr. Newton: With some hesitation, I think that the answer to the last question is yes. The answer to the second question is also yes. It is intended that this should be a continuing programme, although, with our concern to improve social work training generally, I would not propose no further change in the programme as a whole over a long period.

I should make it clear that the money that I have announced is related to 1989-90, not to the current year. At the moment we do not have the legal power to make a specific grant in this sector. That is why the grants have been included in the Health and Medicines Bill, which is in the other place. It is our intention that this should bring about an increase in social work training, although clearly the form of the grant that I have announced means that the judgment that the hon. Lady wishes to make will have to await the Government's announcement of the rate support grant at a later stage.

Mr. Spencer Batiste (Elmet): Does my hon. Friend agree that the heart of the Cleveland problem is the breaking up of innocent families without any obvious means of recourse? Will he assure the House that families in other parts of the country with similar complaints will not have to wait for his new legislation, but will be able to achieve speedy redress or review of their cases if they feel that they face the same problems as the innocent parents in Cleveland?

Mr. Newton: I cannot promise to bring about legal changes that would change the law without an Act of Parliament. I can say, or repeat—I think that I said it earlier—that I hope very much that authorities throughout the country will learn the lessons that are set out in the Cleveland report about the way in which they should handle these matters and deal with the rights of parents.

Mr. Frank Doran (Aberdeen, South): Those of us who have experience of another legal system feel strongly that what happened in Cleveland could have happened in Scotland, mainly because of the existence of the children's hearing system and the independence of the report of the children's panel. Before the Minister commits himself to

[Mr. Frank Doran]

legislation along the lines that are set out in the White Paper, will he examine again the Scottish system and consider its virtues in the light of the Butler-Sloss report?

Mr. Newton: When the hon. Gentleman has had a chance to examine this thick report he will find that the judge has discussed those matters to some extent. The Office of Child Protection, on which my noble and learned Friend is to issue a consultation paper, has some strands in it that are relevant to the thought that the hon. Gentleman has put forward.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am sorry that it has not been possible to call all those who wished to ask a question.

Mr. Roland Boyes (Houghton and Washington): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: No. I shall take the hon. Gentleman's point of order at the proper time.

Linda O'Callaghan

4.31 pm

Mr. Alan Williams (Swansea, West): I beg to ask leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 20, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the plight of Linda O'Callaghan under the new social security regulations."

First, I wish to emphasise that I lay no blame with the officials of the Department of Health and Social Security in Swansea. They want desperately to do all that they can to help Linda.

Secondly, while this is a specific case—I am glad that the Secretary of State for Social Services is present—I believe that it will become the first of many similar tragic cases if it is not acted upon.

The matter is specific because it involves 17-year-old Linda O'Callaghan. She had her 17th birthday within the past few days. Both her parents were tragically and recently murdered. She has a brother who has been charged and is awaiting trial.

In the eyes of that young woman, only the family home remains of her family life. The city council has agreed that Linda can keep the family home, despite her youth. However, because it has been deemed to be a penalty under the new social security regulations to be 16 years of age, or under 17 years of age, she may not be able to keep the home. Had the tragedy occurred before April, Linda would have received £30·40 in benefit. Under the new regulations, she will receive £11 less as a 16 to 17 -year-old. She will receive £19·40, and, in addition to financing her food, clothing, heat and light, she will have to pay part of her rates and water rates. The officials cannot help because compassion has been legislated out of the social security system by the Government.

This is a special tragic case, but it is important generally because any youngster in the 16 to 17-year-old group who is orphaned could find himself or herself in the same predicament. All parents should realise that the tragedy of a car accident or a fatal illness involving them could lead to their youngsters finding themselves in this dreadful situation.

Linda realised that little could be done to help in her case, but she wanted the matter raised in the hope that even this compassionless Government will respond to public opinion.

The matter is urgent because a tragic young girl is trying to cope with an emotional trauma that would knock sideways most mature adults. She is trying to cope with it in the penury that has been imposed deliberately by the Government. She needs urgent action to save her home.

Mr. Speaker: The right hon. Gentleman asks leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 20, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that he believes should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the plight of Linda O'Callaghan under the new social security regulations."

I have listened with great care to what the right hon. Gentleman has said, but I regret that I do not consider that the matter that he has raised meets the criteria laid down under Standing Order No. 20 and I cannot, therefore, submit his application to the House.

Child Abuse (Cleveland)

Mr. Roland Boyes (Houghton and Washington): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I know that you will understand when I say that it is with deep regret and full appreciation of the difficult nature of your position that I raise this point of order.

I informed you in advance, Mr. Speaker, that I was probably the only Member who had worked with Mr. Michael Bishop, the director of social services at Cleveland. Much has been made this afternoon about management. No one has had the same opportunity as I, having been the assistant director of social services with Mr. Bishop, to comment on the management at Cleveland and on his experience, qualifications and extremely caring attitude towards children. I think that it would have been appropriate for someone to speak for and defend a director who has been badly abused by the press and commented on in the most destructive way by some hon. Members. Mr. Bishop and other directors should be allowed now freely to get on with their job. Fewer comments should be made in the press—comments made by the press and by hon. Members—on what is a delicate situation. I apologise, Mr. Speaker, for having to raise these matters on a point of order.

Mr. Speaker: I thank the hon. Gentleman for the way in which he raised his point of order. Perhaps I should have included him among the hon. Members whom I called to put questions to the Minister for Health. There is a difficult balance to achieve. I do my best to include hon. Members who have Opposition Front-Bench responsibilities among those I call to ask questions following the making of a statement.

Mrs. Audrey Wise (Preston): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Lady is, I believe, also an Opposition Front-Bench spokesperson. We cannot continue now with the questions on the statement.

Mrs. Wise *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Does the hon. Lady wish to raise a point of order on a different matter?

Mrs. Wise: I am not an Opposition Front-Bench spokesperson, Mr. Speaker. I wish to pursue the matter that has been raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Houghton and Washington (Mr. Boyes), but I shall do so from an entirely different viewpoint. I did not seek to catch your eye during the questioning of the Minister for Health.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I do not think that the hon. Lady rose during that questioning.

Mrs. Wise: No, Mr. Speaker, I did not.

Mr. Speaker: Then what is the point of order for me?

Mrs. Wise: I am raising a point of order that is a matter for you, Mr. Speaker. I am rising on behalf of all those who were not seeking to catch your eye, but who wanted certain issues pursued because of the thought that we have all had to give to the important matters that were raised by the statement. I rise now not because I had a personal wish to be called, but because I wanted to hear the Minister's response to the question that my hon. Friend intended to ask. The House did not have the opportunity to hear that, and I urge you——

Mr. Speaker: Order. We must all have consideration for one another in this place. I have stated already that this is a Supply Day for the minority parties. Whenever hon. Members are unable to be included in Question Time, or in questions following statements and debates, I receive letters from them saying how bitterly disappointed they are. If I were to allow questions on statements to continue until everyone who wished to ask a question had been called, I would then receive legitimate complaints from those cut out of the subsequent debate. That would be extremely unfair.

Greenham Common (Strip Searches)

4.37 pm

Mr. Tom Pendry (Stalybridge and Hyde): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I wish to bring to your attention and to the attention of the House what I consider to be a serious breach of ministerial and parliamentary conduct. On 24 May 1984 I asked the Secretary of State for Defence

> "for what purposes the Ministry of Defence police are carrying out strip searches at Greenham common; how many strip searches have taken place there; what was found; and if he will make a statement."

The answer was supplied by the Minister of State for the Armed Forces, the right hon. Member for Tonbridge and Malling (Mr. Stanley), who is now the Minister of State, Northern Ireland Office. He stated:

> "No such strip searches have been carried out at RAF Greenham common."—*[Official Report, 24 May 1984; Vol. 60, c.552.]*

I was prompted to ask the question by a constituent of mine who alleged that six months earlier she had been strip-searched at Greenham common. As I believed that the Minister's word was honourable, I told her that I could not pursue the matter in a parliamentary sense. Fortunately for her, she persevered. Yesterday, at Newbury county court, she was awarded £2,000-plus damages and about £6,000 costs at the expense of the Ministry of Defence because she had been strip-searched at Greenham common.

I believe that the Minister should account for his misleading answer from the Dispatch Box. He should apologise to me, and, more importantly, to my constituent, Stella Mann-Cairns, and all other women who have had to put up with this indignity. Although he has moved to another Department, he should assure the House that the Government no longer pursue that policy.

I have given notice of this matter to the Minister and to the Leader of the House, and I am surprised that neither of them is present. I hope that the Minister will apologise. If he does not, he should do the honourable thing and resign.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Gentleman has made an important point. I am sure that it will have been listened to with care by those present on the Government Front Bench.

Taxi-cabs (Control of Smoking)

4.39 pm

Mr. Frank Cook (Stockton, North): I beg to move,

> That leave be given to bring in a Bill to authorise the prohibition, by notice displayed alongside the meter, of smoking in taxi-cabs.

In January 1985, Richard Carless, a cabbie from Basildon, refused to take a pipe-smoking passenger at London airport. Richard Carless suffers from acute bronchitis. The passenger was quite happy to wait for another cab but the incident was seen by a traffic warden who called the police. The police prosecuted Mr. Carless, and he appeared at Uxbridge magistrates court in May 1985. The alleged offence was that he,

> "being a taxi driver at an authorised standing or in portion thereof failed to be available and willing to be hired immediately contrary to Article 9(5) of the Heathrow Airport London byelaws 1983 and Section 9 of the Airport Authority Act of 1975."

He was fined £20, which he refused to pay, and he appealed against the conviction and sentence. He appeared at Southwark Crown court where the fine was increased and he was ordered to pay costs. He refused, and in July 1986 he went to prison for seven days. He appealed to the European Court of Human Rights, but the case was ruled inadmissible. It is ironic that the passenger who wanted to smoke his pipe in the taxi wanted to do so because he had been prohibited from doing so on the airline that brought him to Heathrow.

A cabbie has as high priority the comfort, safety and security of his passenger and all future passengers. Two thirds of the adult population of this country are non-smokers who, according to the Fourth Report of Her Majesty's Government's Independent Scientific Committee on Smoking and Health, have a 30 per cent. enhanced risk of contracting lung cancer due to the effects of passive smoking. That means that it is 50 times more dangerous than exposure to asbestos in buildings. The same passive smoking unquestionably exacerbates existing health complaints, such as coronary artery disease, asthma, tuberculosis, emphysema and bronchitis, adding greatly to the consequential demands on Health Service resources and finance.

In the light of such scientific comment, the public should be able to protect their health from the increased risk of passive smoking. The cabbie has a personal right to working conditions that are free from this risk. By designating the cab as a non-smoking zone the cabbie can offer two thirds of the adult population carriage in a relatively smoke-free atmosphere. By declaring such a designation by a sign displayed openly alongside the meter, prospective passengers would be able to choose whether to enter the cab and, if boarding the vehicle, whether they would have to refrain from smoking during the journey. Such freedom of choice would bring taxicabs in line with other forms of public transport in providing an atmosphere untouched by tobacco fumes and much freer from the risk of passive smoking.

The proposals are supported by Radio Taxicabs (London) Ltd. and the publishers of the *Cab Driver*, who say:

> "Like many of the laws appertaining to the cab trade, which were formulated as long ago as 1832 and which are still very much extant, they seem to consider the importance of the vehicle and the passenger in detriment to the health and well-being of the driver. Altering, adapting or even bringing in new laws, like yours, that would go some way in making the professional taxi driver's job much less stressful, are not just logical but crucial. Not only are taxi drivers subject to the continuous inhalation of toxic vehicle fumes, to be bombarded too with tobacco smoke, and without the legal redress with which to ask the passengers to refrain from smoking, is an imposition which should be removed as quickly as possible."

The Licensed Taxi Drivers Association Ltd. supports the Bill, saying:

> "Whilst not wishing to dictate to those caught up in drug-like habits of smoking, it seems reasonable to me that likewise the non-smoker should have the right, where practicable, to work in an area free from the killer nicotine."

It goes on to say:

> "I pray that your fellow Parliamentarians, whatever their relationship may be with their connections outside the House, will see this Bill as one of national importance and do not oppose it for narrow motives."

The cabbie section of the Transport and General Workers Union said:

> "we are 100 per cent. behind you in your endeavours to obtain for cab drivers the right to designate their own working conditions."

The British Medical Association goes further. It says:

> "The BMA would like to offer its support for the principles of the Bill.
>
> The BMA has long been aware of the potential health risks involved in passive smoking. We believe that the publication of the Frogatt Report leaves the Government no choice but to take realistic action and that means legislation which will protect the health of the non-smoker, allowing people to breathe clean air at work and in public places.
>
> The Government must acknowledge, in the face of the evidence of its own scientific committee, the undisputed fact that passive smoking is harmful. Talks with the tobacco industry are beside the point and if consultation is needed, it should be with organisations like ours . . . which can discuss the health aspects of this report and how the report's recommendations can be introduced.
>
> No smoking is the norm and non-smokers should be protected at their place of work and in public places. Protection should be made for people who need to smoke while the majority who are non-smokers should be free to breathe air unpolluted by the toxins in tobacco smoke."

This is not a non-smoking measure, any more than it is a pro-smoking measure. All I am suggesting is that cab drivers should be allowed to designate their vehicles as smoking or non-smoking vehicles and that that designation should be displayed alongside the meter. If a smoker comes to a cab designated as a non-smoking vehicle he will know that for the duration of the journey he must refrain from smoking and put his pipe in his pocket. If a non-smoker finds a cab designated as a smoking vehicle offering itself for hire, he will realise that he will have to undertake the journey in the atmosphere of a stale ashtray. The choice is there for fare and driver. There is no compulsion on anybody. In that spirit, I hope that the Bill will be supported.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill ordered to be brought in by Mr. Frank Cook, Ms. Harriet Harman, Mr. Roger Sims, Ms. Joan Ruddock, Mr. Sam Galbraith, Mr. Eddie McGrady, Mrs. Gillian Shephard, Mr. George Foulkes, Mr. Andrew Mitchell, Mrs. Maria Fyfe, Mr. John Home Robertson and Mr. Keith Mans.

TAXI-CABS (CONTROL OF SMOKING)

Mr. Frank Cook accordingly presented a Bill to authorise the prohibition, by notice displayed alongside the meter, of smoking in taxi-cabs: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 8 July and to be printed. [Bill 190.]

Opposition Day

[17TH ALLOTTED DAY]

Scotland (Political Situation)

Mr. Michael Fallon (Darlington): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. We are about to begin a debate in Opposition time on the political situation in Scotland. I wonder whether you have noticed that only 12 of 60 Opposition Members representing Scottish seats are present.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): That has nothing to do with the Chair. It is a waste of time on this Opposition day.

Before we proceed, I have to inform the House that Mr. Speaker has selected the amendment in the name of the Prime Minister.

4.48 pm

Mrs. Margaret Ewing (Moray): I beg to move,

That this House, aware of the rejection by the Scottish nation of the policies of the Conservative Party at the General Election of 1987 and the further decline of the Conservatives into third place behind both the Labour Party and the Scottish National Party at this year's district poll, believes that the Government has no mandate to continue to impose its alien values and divisive programme upon an unwilling population; notes the Government's refusal to allow the Scottish people to determine their own constitutional future by the holding of a referendum or the establishment of a constitutional convention; further notes the developments in the European Community towards a single market; and considers that it is in the overwhelming interests of the people of Scotland to seek full independent status within the European Community, rather than accepting continued colonial status within the United Kingdom.

In the motion we have attempted to reflect what we feel is the dynamism of the political situation in Scotland. Those of us involved in politics do not believe that the political dimensions close at the end of one general election and do not reopen until there is another general election. Political life is not static. The political tides ebb and flow. There are changes in opinion and differing attitudes that occur in the electorate between elections. If we did not believe that those changes occurred, we might well argue that there was no need to hold elections. Because we believe in those changes, we hold elections to gauge the political opinion of our electorate. Between elections we have a responsibility to take account of the change of opinion in the intervening years.

Our motion clearly reminds the House of the voting pattern in Scotland in June 1987. The Government amendment tries to deny that the last election in Scotland showed a demand for constitutional change. That seems to be a habit of the Government, who, it is worth noting, have managed to muster for this debate only 50 per cent. of Scottish Conservative Members. The Government always deny that there is a demand for constitutional change in Scotland, and their amendment clearly ignores the fact that in June last year 76 per cent. of the Scottish people voted for parties that are clearly committed to the idea of constitutional change within the United Kingdom. Sixty-two Members of this House are from parties that demand such constitutional change.

In their amendment, the Government speak about their mandate. It will come as no surprise to the Secretary of State for Scotland to hear that we feel we have the intellectual right to challenge the issue of the mandate because as nationalists we clearly stand for an independent nation state of Scotland. What does the Secretary of State see as a mandate? Surely a moral as well as a political issue underpins a mandate. Do 10 hon. Members out of 72 constitute a mandate for the imposition of Government policies? Surely the Secretary of State recognises the fragility of the position in which his party finds itself. He must be worried about so few people in Scotland supporting his party and his policies. Our motion clearly says that the lack of a moral as well as a political mandate gives Scotland colonial status. That means that the Government are governing a country without popular support.

If we look at what the Government have done with the mandate that they claim, we see increasingly an acceleration of policies that were rejected at the last election. We think, for example, of the school boards legislation. In all the consultation processes that took place, there was a clear majority against the Government's legislation, but it was forced through the House by hon. Members who do not represent the Scottish people. We think also of competitive tendering. Our health boards and unions have worked closely together over the years to provide a service, and have now had imposed upon them policies that they wish to reject.

The Government cannot even muster enough troops to set up a Select Committee in Scotland to monitor what the Scottish Office is doing in the name of the Government. It is surely a condemnation of the Government's lack of mandate that they have not been able to establish such a Committee to enable us to scrutinise the work of our Ministers in the way that every other Government Department is scrutinised.

Mr. Dafydd Wigley (Caernarfon): Does my hon. Friend recall that, following the referendum in 1979, people who were opposed to the setting up of a Scottish assembly said that a Scottish Select Committee down here would do the work that such an assembly would have done? Does she agree that that argument is now patently without foundation, and does it now show how impossible it is for Scotland to get proper government from Westminster?

Mrs. Ewing: I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley) for that clear and precise intervention. Many of us do not think that a Scottish Select Committee is an alternative to an assembly. As long as the Government claim a mandate on a minority of the Scottish vote, it is their responsibility to ensure that Scottish Office legislation is monitored as effectively as possible. That does not happen. We have seen a lack of will by the Government to try to establish such a Committee.

It is not surprising that support for the Government in Scotland has remained virtually static since the general election. The opinion polls show very little movement. There has been no sudden swing by the Scottish people towards the Conservative party, even though the chief executive of that party, one of the many ex-Members of this House, keeps telling us that we need more Thatcherism.

More Thatcherism is showing that there is no rising support in Scotland for the Conservatives. It is the Scottish

[Mrs. Ewing]

National party that has increased its share of the vote. The opinion polls show that our support has risen from 14 per cent. at the last general election to 23 per cent. Some Conservative Members smile at that, but I suspect that they would smile more if there had been a swing of nine percentage points to their party.

The people of Scotland are seeing a crystallisation of the options that are open to them. They see that it is either more of the same or an independent Scotland. That is an honest option, and the people of Scotland are facing up to it. That is reflected in an opinion poll conducted by MORI and published in *The Scotsman* on 13 April. It showed that 35 per cent. of people wanted a completely independent Scotland, 42 per cent. wanted an elected Scottish assembly within the United Kingdom and 20 per cent. wanted the present system to continue. That recognition of reality is evident in Scotland, and there is growing support for the concept of independence. Not all the votes are yet coming directly to the SNP, but there is the potential in Scotland for the recognition that the SNP can deliver a Scottish Government to our nation.

I should now like to deal with the need for a constitutional convention or a referendum in Scotland on constitutional change. These ideas are not propounded only by the Scottish National party or by other Opposition Members. That was shown by the support earlier this year for my ten-minute Bill on a referendum in Scotland. These ideas have a broad consensus of support throughout Scotland. The campaign for a Scottish assembly covers a large variety of organisations that wish Scotland to have the opportunity to discuss the future of Scotland within Scotland—a debate among ourselves about the opportunities that are open to us.

The Government are running scared; that is shown by their amendment, which rejects the idea of a Scottish constitutional convention and a referendum. If they are as confident as they claim in their amendment and about their support for the Act of Union, why are they so afraid to put it to the constitutional test in Scotland? Why not allow the people of Scotland to cast their vote, especially as we have argued that a referendum or a Scottish constitutional convention would operate in an advisory capacity and that we would work together to try to find the best resolution? At the end of the day I am sure that the Government would accept that. Why are the Government afraid to put the issue to the test? It is not just a question of the ostriches in the Conservative party in Scotland burying their heads in the sand. They seem to be prepared to tie their necks before they can even find the sand.

Brian Meek, a respected member of the Conservative party in Scotland, spoke about the rather desperate situation in which Scottish Conservatives now find themselves. He said that they seem to accept Thatcherism and that there was no questioning, no fight and no will power. He said that if the Prime Minister asked Scottish Conservative Members to jump into the Clyde the only question that they would ask would be whether they should take their trousers off first.

I turn now to Scotland's future, which the SNP sees as independence within Europe. We see that as much more challenging.

Mr. David Lambie (Cunninghame, South): The hon. Lady talks about an independent Scotland within Europe. I would have voted for her motion if that phrase had not been contained in it. How could an independent Scotland gain freedom and support from Brussels and Strasbourg if it cannot get it from London? Does the hon. Lady not recognise that the golden triangle stretches from the south of England into northern France, Germany and Belgium? No matter what happens, as long as the European Community is run on present rules, Scotland would always be on the periphery. Surely an independent Socialist Scotland would follow the policies of the independent countries of Norway, Sweden, Finland, Austria and Switzerland and not the Conservative policies which, unfortunately, have been carried out by both Conservative and Labour parties.

Mrs. Ewing: I am interested to hear the hon. Member for Cunninghame, South (Mr. Lambie) give yet another reason for not supporting the Scottish National party in the Lobby. He comes up with a different argument each time. If he listens carefully to my argument about independence within Europe, he will see why we are taking a clear stance. I realise that that is an aspect of our motion at which the Social and Liberal Democrats and the Labour party may balk. However, I ask them to consider carefully why we argue for it.

The Labour party's proposal is for a devolved assembly with restricted powers. With the advent of the common internal market in 1992, what opportunity would a Scottish assembly have to argue the case for Scottish industry within the European Community, as the representative of a country in its own right? We should still be hanging on to the coat tails of Britain, British Ministers, the Foreign Office and all those who are sent to represent us at the moment. We would not have the right of access with a devolved assembly, but we would if we were independent.

Our future is in the international community, not as part of the sterile backwater of the British system. I want Scotland to play her part in the international community and to face the challenges. A devolved assembly would not ensure representation at the Council of Ministers, where vital policy matters such as marginal hill farming, fishing and steel are discussed, but an independent Scotland would have that representation.

Taxation is vital as we look forward to 1992 and beyond. How would a Scottish assembly break the stranglehold of the Treasury if the Treasury still controlled block grant? How would a Scottish assembly break the stranglehold of the Ministry of Defence with its massive expenditure programme and ensure that defence procurement contracts came to Scotland and were allocated fairly? An assembly would not give us such representation in Europe, but Scottish independence would. We need full independence if we want to be at the top table in international affairs. It is not good enough to complain that the Scottish voice is not heard and then lack the courage to look to the only method of making it heard. Only independence can make it heard.

Scotland could become a country where ideas and skills are readily available, and it could offer opportunities to the rest of the world. Thinking of Scotland as an independent nation within Europe brings a challenge and an excitement which would not exist in further decades of sterile political debate in this Chamber. The majority of Scottish Members want constitutional change, but they are denied it by the very processes of this place. Let us have the courage to look forward to challenge and excitement rather than sticking with the boring status quo.

Increasingly, decisions that affect our people are taken not here, but in Brussels and Strasbourg. The future of Scotland lies in bypassing London and going direct to Europe. In many ways, the House has become a clearing system for legislation passed elsewhere. We must be there at the top table. We do not want to spend our time rehashing arguments about legislation that has already been passed elsewhere. We want to be where the decisions are taken. We could have a place in the Council of Ministers—at the top table—and increased representation in the European Parliament.

Our motion challenges hon. Members to think of the responsibilities of being a Scot in modern society. It challenges them to think of themselves as internationalists and not merely as British. It challenges them to accept that with that responsibility will come self-respect and dignity. It is far too easy to blame, as many do, all that is wrong on the English or on London or on somebody else. Let us have the dignity and self-respect of being able to say that if mistakes are made, it is the Scots themselves who make them. Scotland must be an independent nation to attain the responsibility and self-respect that every other nation takes for granted. Why should we be different? I trust that those who see themselves as Scots, with responsibility and self-respect, will join us in the Lobby tonight.

5.7 pm

The Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Malcolm Rifkind): I beg to move, to leave out from "House" to the end of the Question, and add instead thereof,

'recognises the benefits to Scotland of being a free partner in the United Kingdom and the contribution which the Scottish people continue to make in many fields to the life of the United Kingdom; notes that the Government has a clear mandate to govern following a General Election fought on a United Kingdom basis, and that in the 1987 General Election more than four people out of five in Scotland voted for parties which support the Union; notes that in that election the Scottish National Party was the least popular party in Scotland and received the least support from the Scottish electorate; believes that Scotland can best meet the challenge of the single European Community market as part of the United Kingdom; acknowledges that many decisions affecting Scotland are already taken in Scotland by the Secretary of State and the Scottish Office; considers as absurd references to Scotland's alleged colonial status; rejects completely calls for a constitutional referendum and independence; and reaffirms its support for the Act of Union.'.

I begin by complimenting the hon. Member for Moray (Mrs. Ewing) on the style of her speech. My hon. Friends and I find her style and approach considerably preferable to that of the infant Robespierre, her hon. Friend the Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. Salmond), who takes a different approach to the conventions of the House and who consequently fails to impress.

While I admire the hon. Lady's style, I hope that she will forgive me for saying that I suspect that many of us found the content of her speech sadly lacking. This is the first time that we have had a debate initiated by the Scottish National party. Apart from a few ritual rhetorical comments about the alleged desirability of breaking up the United Kingdom, there was little in the hon. Lady's speech to which one could draw specific attention. It is significant that neither the motion nor the hon. Lady's speech made any reference to the Scottish economy. I feel sure that until recently the hon. Lady would not have been responsible for such an omission.

Mr. Alex Salmond (Banff and Buchan): Will the Secretary of State give way?

Mr. Rifkind: I shall certainly give way to the infant Robespierre.

Mr. Salmond: If the Secretary of State cares to contain himself, the infant Robespierre will have a few things to say about the Scottish economy at the end of the debate.

Mr. Rifkind: The hon. Gentleman appears to be saying that, such is the excellent state of the Scottish economy, it is sufficient for it to be referred to in the wind-up, and to have no mention either in the motion or in the main speech on behalf of the SNP. No doubt it is indicative of the rapidly falling unemployment, excellent economic growth and other economic improvements that we are enjoying in Scotland that in its single speech of this Session the SNP felt if unnecessary to make a single reference, complimentary or otherwise, to the economic issues facing Scotland.

There were two themes in the speech of the hon. Member for Moray. One was independence and the other was the mandate.

Mr. Norman Buchan (Paisley, South): Does the Secretary of State agree that the most rapid growth in our economy at present is in rent arrears, as a result of the housing benefit changes?

Mr. Rifkind: No, I do not. There will be other opportunities, particularly in the housing debate, for the hon. Gentleman to deal with rent matters if he wishes to do so.

The hon. Member for Moray suggested that Scotland should seek independent status, but she forgot to mention that the SNP put that issue before the electorate at the last general election. The House will happily remind her that at the last general election the SNP was clearly shown once again to be the least popular party in Scotland. It received fewer votes than any other major political party, and had the fewest Members of Parliament elected. The SNP's election manifesto carried the slogan "Play the Scottish Card", and on page 2 there is a photograph of Gordon Wilson, its chairman, wearing a badge which says "Play the Scottish Card". Clearly he did play it. It turned out to be a joker, and he lost his seat. If the hon. Lady and her colleagues are concerned to speak for Scotland, she should bear that factor in mind.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: I said that we were talking about the dynamism of the political situation in Scotland. If we want to concentrate on the last general election, we should remind the right hon. and learned Gentleman of his loss of 10 colleagues. More importantly, will he pay attention to the results of the district elections—the most recent trial of opinion in Scotland—at which his party declined even further and the Scottish National party showed a 10 per cent. increase in votes?

Mr. Rifkind: I am afraid that the hon. Lady has to live with the fact that, even if opinion polls suggest that her party may have made some progress during the past few months, that is only progress from fourth to third place. If that is of great comfort to her, she is easily satisfied.

[Mr. Rifkind]

Independence has been rejected consistently by well over 80 per cent. of the Scottish electorate at virtually every general election in the past 10 years, and the hon. Lady failed to give her reasons for believing it would be of benefit. She concentrated on Scotland having a place at the top table, but if she ever has the opportunity to attend any meetings of the Council of Ministers she will discover that the countries that determine the direction of the European Community are inevitably France, Germany, the United Kingdom and Italy. It is very rare—if ever—that the Republic of Ireland, Greece or Luxembourg has a decisive role to play in any of the major issues that affect the Community.

The hon. Lady constantly refers to the benefits that independence might bring to Scotland. I am always puzzled that she and her colleagues never refer to that part of the United Kingdom that opted for independence some 60 years ago. The Republic of Ireland today has unemployment running at 19 per cent., which is substantially greater than is found in any part of the United Kingdom, and it has a gross domestic product of only two thirds of that which Scotland enjoys. The suggestion that somehow independence will be the cure-all for economic or other problems finds little support in the experience of southern Ireland, which opted for independence, which is what the hon. Lady would recommend for Scotland.

Mrs. Ray Michie (Argyll and Bute): I am sure that the right hon. and learned Gentleman agrees that not all the money in China, wealth creation or the lack of it would induce the people of southern Ireland to give up their independence. Nothing would induce them to do that.

Mr. Rifkind: The hon. Lady is right. What led to independence for southern Ireland was a deep sense of national oppression, which had existed for several centuries. Nobody in Scotland seriously suggests that that is a basis for independence or a break-up of the United Kingdom. The argument constantly used by the SNP refers to economic issues and implies that Scotland suffers somehow as a result of being part of the United Kingdom. If economic considerations are thought to be the relevant ones which justify breaking up the Union, which is the finest example of European integration during the past 250 years, we are entitled to draw attention to that part of the United Kingdom that opted for independence and does not enjoy the economic benefits which we are sometimes told flow from independence.

Rev. Martin Smyth (Belfast, South): Does the Secretary of State acknowledge that the former joint chairman of the Anglo-Irish Conference has the new task of preparing for the 500,000 southern Irish people who will enter the United Kingdom in the next decade?

Mr. Rifkind: I accept that.

Dr. Dafydd Elis Thomas (Meirionnydd Nant Conwy): It may have escaped the Secretary of State's attention that, yesterday, the Greek Foreign Minister made an important speech to the European Parliament, setting out the agenda for the Greek presidency during the next six months. Does he accept that smaller member states now play an equal role in the creation of the European Community?

Mr. Rifkind: I invite the hon. Gentleman to compare what the Greek Foreign Minister said yesterday with what the Greek delegation may have achieved in six months' time. Making speeches is remarkably easy, but results can be achieved only if the three or four larger members of the Community are prepared to endorse the proposals.

The motion raises the question of mandate. During the past few months the SNP has berated my party, the Labour party and others in Scotland, because it claims that only those who have a mandate from the Scottish people are entitled to put forward certain policies, to implement them and to argue certain cases.

That is an interesting proposition, and the hon. Member for Moray argued that it must be justified on legal and moral grounds. We can use her own criteria and ask her and her colleagues to review the claim about a need for a mandate, bearing in mind the policy which the SNP has advocated during the past few months. That party now advocates that the people of Scotland should break the law on the community charge and, by pursuing a policy of non-payment, frustrate an Act of Parliament. I think that the hon. Lady will agree that, whatever one thinks of that policy, that is a fundamental change in the SNP's stance. Hers is the first party in Scotland openly and without reservation to call on people to break the law. Several members of the SNP have said that they will break the law.

We are entitled to ask what mandate the SNP has for such a proposition. I have had the benefit of looking through the election addresses of the three SNP Members.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing *rose*——

Mr. Rifkind: I have a copy of the hon. Lady's address. I have gone through it in detail, and nowhere can I find any suggestion that, if elected, she would call upon the people of Scotland to break the law.

I have here also the election addresses of the hon. Members for Angus, East (Mr. Welsh) and for Banff and Buchan. In neither is there the slightest suggestion that, if elected, they would encourage non-compliance with an Act of Parliament and illegal behaviour by themselves or their colleagues.

Mrs. Ewing *rose*——

Mr. Rifkind: I shall give way to the hon. Lady if she will tell me that her election address was not an accurate reflection of her views.

Mrs. Ewing: The Scottish National party is not instructing anyone not to pay the poll tax. It is asking the people of their own free choice to consider that option. That is a moral stance for them to take. I believe that individuals have every right to question laws when they are bad, as this undoubtedly is.

The election was fought when there was a hope that the poll tax would not be implemented. In the past year, the Government have refused to listen to the coherent arguments against the community charge, presented not just by the SNP or other opposition parties, but by a wide range of opinion in Scotland. I remind him again of the votes cast in the district elections for the Scottish National party.

Mr. Rifkind: The hon. Lady cannot escape her responsibilities in that way. She knows that, by the last general election, the proposals for the community charge had become an Act of Parliament. She knows that in her party's manifesto there was a suggestion that, if elected, the SNP would repeal the legislation. There was not the slightest suggestion in its members' election addresses that they would wish to encourage, as they are doing now, the breaking of the law and non-compliance with an Act of Parliament.

Mr. Salmond: I know that the right hon. and learned Gentleman is interested in historical perspective—that is really all that is left for the Conservative party in Scotland. It cannot have escaped his notice that, in the district elections, far more votes were cast for non-payment—our platform—than for payment of the poll tax, which was the Conservative party's platform.

Mr. Rifkind: We are talking about the basis on which the hon. Gentleman was elected. The hon. Gentleman invited the people of Banff and Buchan to vote for him. He has gone on regularly, and with boring monotony, about the need for a mandate to put forward certain policies. Not only is there no reference to breaking the law in the SNP's manifesto, but there is a most interesting proposal in the section on law enforcement and reform.

The House will enjoy hearing what the policy of the Scottish National party was when it was put to the electorate. In its section on law enforcement and reform, the SNP stated:

"The population"—

presumably the Scottish population—

"will be encouraged to cooperate in upholding the Law."

[Laughter.] Yes, it is an interesting statement of policy. The mandate on which those hon. Members were elected was one of encouraging

"the population . . . to cooperate in upholding the Law."

However, once those hon. Members are elected, we find that they do not encourage the population to co-operate in upholding the law; they go out of their way to encourage the population to break the law. That the hon. Member for Moray can say, "We are not instructing them to do so," is self-evident. The hon. Lady does not have any power to instruct the population. There is a fundamental conflict between what was said in the manifesto and the policy that those hon. Members are putting forward.

This is not a trivial matter. The fact that a political party, which is seeking power and the endorsement of the electorate, adopts a policy of illegality for the first time in contemporary Scottish politics is an important watershed. I advise the hon. Lady and her hon. Friends that in adopting that policy they are putting an albatross around their necks and that of their party as a whole. I know perfectly well that the hon. Members for Angus, East and for Moray do not really believe in that policy of illegality. I know perfectly well that the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan has forced them to support a policy which they personally repudiate. They must realise that their party is now indelibly tarred with that brush.

That policy of illegality has been adopted by those other than SNP Members of the House. The rector of Edinburgh university, Miss Muriel Gray, a prominent Scottish nationalist, recently made some worrying remarks in an interview reported in an Edinburgh monthly magazine entitled *Cut* when she stated:

"If I could advise the Scottish people to do anything, I'd advise them to get down to the plant where the newspaper The Sun is printed and firebomb it. Seriously, if I had to have any terrorism in this country, I would aim it at Murdoch. I'd like to see journalistic terrorism where they'd just keep setting fire to his newspaper printing plants, all over the country, all the time."

I notice that the Scottish National party has not shown any desire to repudiate that remark or to dissociate itself from what has been said on its behalf by a prominent supporter.

I advise the hon. Member for Moray, and especially her hon. Friend the Member for Angus, East, that if they now say that they wish to support a policy of breaking the law or of non-compliance with it, such being the "unacceptability" of the community charge, all hon. Members wait with interest to hear why the one district council which is controlled by the SNP is not implementing nationalist policies. We know that the people of Scotland as a whole are being encouraged not to comply in any way with that Act of Parliament, yet we were informed on 22 January that on 21 January,

"Angus District Council, at a specially convened emergency meeting last night, agreed to act as a collecting agent of the poll tax for Tayside Regional Council."

Mr. Andrew Welsh (Angus, East): It was an emergency meeting, and I should like to make it quite clear that a gun was held to the head of Angus district council by Tayside regional council—*[Interruption.]* Would the Secretary of State for Scotland wish to have as a result the complete sacking of the housing staff of Angus district council? The SNP council in Angus creates employment and jobs—it does not destroy them. It was the withdrawal of support and the threats from Tayside regional council, which rushed to implement that tax, that posed the problem. I notice that the Secretary of State is quite happy to have a policy of sacking housing staff and increasing rents in Angus and in the other districts which would have been in a similar situation.

Mr. Rifkind: The hon. Gentleman has given an awful reply. He has a legal obligation to pay the community charge, but he says that he will break that legal obligation and the law, such is his distaste for that Act. He knows that Angus district council has no legal obligation to co-operate in implementing the community charge. It could easily decline to do so, without breaching the law, yet the hon. Gentleman seeks to justify breaking the law.

Mr. Welsh: To have done so would have led to the sacking of almost every member of the housing staff and a massive increase in rents. If that is the right hon. Gentleman's policy, I must advise him that I disagree with him. Conservatives have always said that they keep rents down and encourage employment. When people vote nationalist in Angus, which they do, they get the rewards of doing so. They do not get the reward of unemployment which they would if they voted Conservative. That is a strange turnaround for the Secretary of State for Scotland.

Mr. Rifkind: The fact still remains that the one council controlled by the SNP is to comply with an Act of Parliament although all its councillors belong to a party which is encouraging the Scottish public as a whole to break the law and defy the Act. If that is not an example of extreme hypocrisy, it is difficult to see what is.

Mr. John McAllion (Dundee, East): Before the Secretary of State leaves his point about Tayside regional council and Angus district council, I should explain that Tayside regional council, as is the wont of every regional council in Scotland, pays a certain sum of money to the

[Mr. John McAllion]

district councils which collect rates for it. If Angus district council chose not to collect the rates or the poll tax for next year, it would not be paid by Tayside regional council because it would not have done that job. The hon. Member for Angus, East (Mr. Welsh) may refer to that as blackmail, but it is not blackmail. It is simply that the district council is not being paid for a job which it refuses to do. I think that that is a reasonable position.

Mr. Rifkind: I rarely agree with the hon. Gentleman, but I am bound to say that he exposes yet again the absurdity, inconsistency and hypocrisy of the SNP position, of which the hon. Member for Angus, East has been unable to explain even one tiny whit.

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): Before my right hon. and learned Friend leaves that point, may I draw his attention to the fact that the Scottish National party provost of Perth and Kinross district council said after the election that he would advise people in Perth and Kinross to obey the law and ignore the advice of his own party?

Mr. Rifkind: I believe that the SNP provost of Perth and Kinross district council has gone on record as saying that he believes that all Acts of Parliament should be obeyed and that those who encourage breaches of the law should be ashamed of themselves. In that respect, his comments are entirely to be supported.

I noted that, some weeks ago, the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan was quoted as comparing the Scottish National party with the so-called National Rainbow Coalition in the United States, which is led by Senator Jesse Jackson. The hon. Gentleman is reported as saying that

> "the links between the SNP and Mr. Jackson's National Rainbow Coalition showed they had a great deal in common."

I can entirely understand the comparison that the hon. Gentleman wants to make. The Scottish National party is a party with a coat of many colours. It seeks to——

Mr. Salmond: I shall be interested to know why the Secretary of State finds the National Rainbow Coalition so amusing. It represents a substantial section of public opinion in the United States, with which the right hon. and learned Gentleman and his Government always claim a special relationship.

Mr. Rifkind: I understand that it has lost the battle for the Democratic nomination, but that is another matter on which the hon. Gentleman might like to reflect. There is an obvious comparison because, as many of us have had cause to comment over the years, the SNP is a party which, apart from its desire for separatism and the break up of the United Kingdom, does have a coat of many colours. It uses a moderate voice in rural areas, anti-Socialist policies in areas where it believes that that would be popular, and a radical Left-wing Socialist policy elsewhere.

The hon. Gentleman expresses puzzlement and points to himself, but since he has been allowed to return to the fold of the SNP he has been less noticeable for his propositions of Socialist policy than he was some years ago. Perhaps that has something to do with representing Banff and Buchan.

Mr. Salmond: This will be my last intervention. I started the debate as Robespierre and end by being a moderate. The right hon. and learned Gentleman will have to decide in what role he wishes to place me.

Mr. Rifkind: The hon. Gentleman has not changed in the slightest. He remains someone who wishes to put forward extremist policies and to adapt the SNP's extremist position as a party of illegality, which seeks to advance its cause by advocating ignoring or breaking Acts of Parliament——

Dr. Lewis Moonie (Kirkcaldy): Except in Banff and Buchan.

Mr. Rifkind: Yes, perhaps except in Banff and Buchan. That is an important qualification that one should always make.

In conclusion, hon. Members representing the Scottish National party had an opportunity today to put forward a consistent and well thought-out alternative strategy on either economic or social issues. Instead, we have had simply a ritual incantation of a nationalist policy which was rejected by 86 per cent. of the electorate at the last general election and which is almost certain to be rejected by a comparable proportion at the next.

5.29 pm

Mr. John Maxton (Glasgow, Cathcart): I rise with a certain reluctance to involve myself in the wrangle between two of the minority parties in Scotland which, between them, represent less than 20 per cent. of the available seats in Scotland. All that we have heard so far from both sides have been fairly cheap attacks on each other. No one has had a go at the Labour party, and perhaps we should be grateful for that. It is a bit rich for the Secretary of State to attack the SNP for failing to deal with the Government's policies in Scotland and the Scottish economy and then to indulge in cheap attacks—some of them personal—on the SNP. Apart from a brief reference at the beginning of his speech, he failed to mention anything that the Government have done in Scotland, or rather have not done.

When the right hon. and learned Member for Edinburgh, Pentlands (Mr. Rifkind) supported devolution I had a certain respect for him—*[Interruption.]* Perhaps reluctant respect. Since becoming Secretary of State, the way in which he has spoken and used his office in Scotland for cheap political purposes has made himself and his office the subjects of considerable contempt. It is fairly obvious that the right hon. and learned Gentleman is prepared to cover up matters and to mislead the House, either directly or through other Departments, about what happens. He wants to mention the economy, so I shall mention what the Labour party and even some Conservative Members consider to be of most importance to the Scottish economy—the Ravenscraig——

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): Order. If I heard the hon. Member correctly, I think he said that the Secretary of State was misleading the House. If so, I ask the hon. Member to find another form of words and withdraw that remark.

Mr. Maxton: I withdraw the remark and I shall allow the House to draw its conclusions from my comments as to what the Secretary of State has done.

Mr. Buchan: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Maxton: I should like to be brief, so I apologise to my hon. Friend for not giving way.

Ravenscraig is considered to be a vital part of the Scottish economy. The Secretary of State for Scotland, his Minister of State, the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and his junior Ministers have said repeatedly that there is a seven-year guarantee for Ravenscraig within the Scottish economy. In an interview on BBC radio at lunchtime today Sir Robert Scholey, chairman of the British Steel Corporation, said that he had informed the Secretary of State for Scotland, before the Government announced their plans for privatisation, that a privatised British Steel Company would probably—not possibly—close the Ravenscraig strip mill in 1989, just one year from now. I hope that the Minister of State will take the opportunity to tell the House whether that is true. It is no use the Secretary of State boasting about the Government's achievements in the Scottish economy—we dispute that—and at the same time essentially colluding in the closure of the strip mill at Ravenscraig, which would end steel production at Ravenscraig four or five years thereafter.

I congratulate the hon. Member for Moray (Mrs. Ewing) and the SNP on at least giving the House the opportunity to debate this matter. I congratulate the hon. Lady also on attacking the Government. It is rather unusual these days for the SNP to do that, and I hope that the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. Salmond) will show the same self-discipline, as he spends all his time attacking the majority party in Scotland—the Labour party. It is to the hon. Gentleman's long-term political benefit to ensure the continuation of a Conservative Government, in the hope that at some time the SNP will thereby gain votes. The hon. Gentleman does not give a damn about what happens to the people of Scotland because of the Government's policies, provided SNP votes increase.

We do not intend to support the motion. The Labour party is not in favour of an independent Scotland. We did not stand for election on that proposal, and it is not in any Labour party manifesto, so we cannot vote for any motion that puts it forward. Equally, it is not the policy of the people of Scotland, who clearly rejected the only party that put up independence as an option at the general election.

Whatever happens in district elections and opinion polls, it is the general election that counts. At the last general election, 14 per cent. of the Scottish people voted for the SNP and returned only three Members of Parliament. That was a massive rejection of the idea of independence for Scotland. Even the modest increases by the SNP in the district elections—the largest part of which was due to the modest number of candidates put up and had little to do with an increase in the number of votes—and in recent opinion polls give the SNP no right to say that the people of Scotland want independence.

Mr. Salmond: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Maxton: I want to be brief and the hon. Gentleman has intervened four times. The Secretary of State threw out his line four times and every time the hon. Gentleman caught the hook with alacrity. I shall not throw out lines to him. I am not trying to hook him, although it would be remarkably easy to do so.

The Scottish people voted overwhelmingly at the last general election for a devolved Scottish assembly within the framework of the United Kingdom. The largest number of votes went to the Labour party. The Scottish people also voted for the alliance and, I accept, for the SNP. Seventy-five per cent. of the people of Scotland voted for a devolved assembly in Scotland. They say that there is separate Scottish legislation and a separate Scottish administration within the United Kingdom, but that it lacks the democratic structure that should go with it.

It is all right for the Secretary of State to say that there is no desire in Scotland for independence, but equally there is no desire there for this Government. The people of Scotland have said repeatedly that if there is to be the continuation of a separate Scottish entity within the United Kingdom, the Government of the day—whatever their colour—should recognise morally, if not constitutionally, the democratic care for ensuring that the Scottish people have a right to say how their education, housing and transport systems, which are administered and legislated for separately, should operate.

At the last general election the people of Scotland rejected both the SNP's futile, narrow nationalism and the Tory party's arrogant centralism. They voted for a devolved assembly. The Labour party understands the frustration and anger of many Scottish people at the Government's treatment of them. Most Scots despise the get-rich-quick, greedy society of the Government. They reject the poll tax and the income tax cuts, which are designed to give to the rich and take from the poor. They object to their Health Service repeatedly being cut so that increasing pressure is put on people to seek private medicine and thus line the pockets of Tory party supporters. They object to their public housing being returned to grasping private landlords in order to increase profits. They object to the cynicism of a Government who starve public services of essential funds and then denounce those services because they can no longer provide the help to public that they once did, so that they can hand over the provision of those services to private companies, which are interested only in maximising their profits.

We understand and agree with the Scottish people when they reject Tory greed and self interest, but we know that the only way to get rid of this despicable Government is to defeat them at a general election within the United Kingdom. The Labour party will do that at the next general election.—*[Laughter.]* I thought that that might raise a cheap laugh. Only one party in the United Kingdom and Scotland is capable of doing that—the Labour party. A Labour Government will give the Scottish people what they want, which is the right to control their own affairs through a Scottish assembly within the United Kingdom. I urge my hon. Friends to vote neither for the motion nor against it, because one would be a vote for national independence, and the other would be a vote in support of the Government.

5.41 pm

Mr. Allan Stewart (Eastwood): The hon. Member for Glasgow, Cathcart (Mr. Maxton) regretted that so far in the debate there had been not much comment on the Labour party's position. Perhaps I can repair that by making one or two positive and helpful comments for the benefit of Opposition Members.

[Mr. Allan Stewart]

It is not true that Opposition Members always say silly things about Scotland. One recalls in particular the splendid speech by the right hon. Gentleman the Leader of the Opposition at Perth, where he not only failed to praise Scottish Labour Members for their great victory, but, absolutely sensibly, in a 50-minute speech, said nothing about devolution. That showed a real appreciation of its importance to the people of Scotland. Subsequently, when asked why he had omitted any such reference, he said to an interviewer;

> "Well I did not talk about weather conditions in the Himalayas either".

The hon. Member for Cathcart is a Front-Bench spokesman for a fairly disparate band of 50 Labour Members of Parliament.

Mr. McAllion: Desperate Dan.

Mr. Stewart: They are probably fairly desperate as well. I thought that the hon. Member for Cathcart sounded remarkably confident, given that the front page headline of today's edition of the *Glasgow Herald* states:

> "Labour slump now 11 points."

It was remarkably good timing for the Scottish National party to choose this debate on a day when there is a clear swing to the Conservatives in the opinion polls. In the past year there have been a number of tendencies in the Scottish Labour party.

Mr. Maxton: Conservative Members always claim that the only poll that matters is the one on polling day. The opinion poll in the *Glasgow Herald* today shows the Labour party 2 per cent. down on the general election and the Conservative party 1 per cent. up. I assume that the hon. Gentleman considers that to be a remarkable turn around.

Mr. Stewart: I agree with the hon. Gentleman that one cannot read too much into any one opinion poll. I never suggested otherwise.

Opposition Members have divided into a number of tendencies during the past year. Initially there was what might be described as the headbanger tendency, led by the hon. Member for Falkirk, West (Mr. Canavan). He is not here today, and in the light of recent events he is rather a moderate exponent of headbangerism among Opposition Members. He has become an elder statesman headbanger.

The other tendency is what might be described as yuppie Socialism. The chief yuppie in Scotland, Bearsden's answer to Dagenham, who, unfortunately, is not present on the Opposition Front Bench, is unquestionably the hon. Member for Strathkelvin and Bearsden (Mr. Galbraith). I pay tribute to him. Where do we read his thoughts about the Scottish economy and the Scottish political scene? We do not find them in the *Morning Star*, nor in the *Labour Weekly*, but in that splendid newspaper the *Sunday Post*, a well-known non-union newspaper. I hope that his initiative in writing for the *Sunday Post* will be followed by other Opposition Members.

There are some signs of common sense on some Scottish issues. The paper on the Health Service by the hon. Member for Strathkelvin and Bearsden, which is in the press today, rightly points out the importance of giving patients the chance to choose their own doctor, surgeon and hospital and to choose between area health boards. It is a pity that, having described an internal market in the National Health Service, he went on to say that the Labour party was not in favour of it.

The hon. Member for Cathcart, who on this occasion is speaking from the Front Bench, has had a rather difficult time recently within his own party. Perhaps he will reassure me that that is not the case, but, following his article in the *Glasgow Herald* entitled,

> "Non-payment campaign a dangerous diversion",

he was assailed by all fronts of the Labour movement. A leading assault on him came from the hon. Member for Glasgow, Maryhill (Mrs. Fyfe) who, if she manages to catch your eye, Madam Deputy Speaker, will continue her attack on the position taken by her Front Bench, as no doubt will many activists in the Labour movement.

I understand that 7,000 of them will be attending a conference because they believe that the Labour party's fragmented battle against the poll tax will fail. According to today's press, they will be addressed by another leading Member of the Scottish parliamentary Labour group. The Labour party is fundamentally divided on its tactics in Scotland.

In opening the debate, the hon. Member for Moray (Mrs. Ewing) concentrated on constitutional change. I shall make two points about that. First, it is important to remember that each of the Opposition parties wants something different. They are not in any sense united in their proposals. There is a theoretical argument for independence, and I believe that independence would be a lesser evil than devolution, if that were the unfortunate choice, as devolution would lead to continuing chaos. There is a theoretical Right-wing argument in favour of independence, in that it would lead to the defeat of Socialism on both sides of the border. Without the Scottish Labour Members, Labour would be finished for ever in England and Wales, and north of the border, after 1992, and independent Scotland could not pursue Socialist policies. If it tried, people and companies would vote with their feet and move to Tory England. I hasten to add that I do not accept that argument, because I believe that independence would lead to considerable chaos, considerable economic problems and, fundamentally, a loss of influence, as my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State pointed out.

The hon. Lady mentioned the Scottish Select Committee, and the record must be corrected. The Government have not failed to set up a Select Committee. That is not the Government's responsibility. The Leader of the House wished to set up a Scottish Select Committee but Back Benchers do not want to serve on a Scottish Select Committee and cannot be forced to do so.

My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland was right in what he said about breaking the law, which action is advocated by the Scottish National party. Its election manifesto contained no suggestion that law breaking should be encouraged. The Abolition of Domestic Rates Etc. (Scotland) Act 1987 was already on the statute book. Furthermore, the Scottish National party forecast that the Conservatives would win the general election. The campaign against the community charge is failing, as the regional registration figures amply demonstrate. I believe that most of the people of Scotland will obey the law, will want to obey the law and will not be seduced from that path by the wholly spurious arguments of Opposition Members.

The economy is fundamental to the wellbeing of the Scottish people. My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State rightly pointed out that all the forecasts are favourable. Unemployment is still too high, but it is steadily coming down. Opposition Members cannot deny that fact. Manufacturing productivity in Scotland has been rising since 1979 at the rate of 5·6 per cent. per annum. It is higher than elsewhere in the United Kingdom, and it is higher than in seven other OECD countries. That is a sound foundation for the future, as is the fact that the number of self-employed has been rising consistently and that 15,000 new companies have been registered since 1979. My right hon. and learned Friend's policies are fundamentally sound. We must continue to pursue them in the interests of the Scottish people, who will benefit from them. The Scottish people will not be seduced by the Opposition parties' spurious campaigns.

5.51 pm

Mrs. Ray Michie (Argyll and Bute): I welcome the opportunity once again to draw the attention of the House to the democratic rights of the Scottish people. I congratulate the hon. Member for Moray (Mrs. Ewing) on her speech and on the sincerity of her purpose. Today we are debating the political situation in Scotland. Despite what the Secretary of State said, I want to concentrate on the political rather than the economic situation.

I have to admit, albeit reluctantly, that there is a certain constitutional legitimacy in having a Secretary of State, backed up by three or four Ministers, charged with running the Scottish Office in Edinburgh, but it is a poor substitute for a Parliament of our own, particularly when the five Ministers oppose their own people and, in order to hold on to their own ministerial posts, rely on support from south of the border—from another country.

The Secretary of State has made a series of speeches in Scotland in which he has tried to spread the gospel of Thatcherism. I am told, because I hardly know him, that he is a nice man and that he is intelligent. I am sure that he is, but that is puzzling when one looks at what he has said.

The United Kingdom requires constitutional reform to meet the needs and aspirations of all its people. A federal United Kingdom has been the policy of my party for many years. The Secretary of State acknowledges the arguments in its favour but says that it is not on, as there is no demand for it, particularly in England. But has he ever asked the people of England? He has never asked them. I believe that the ordinary Englishman would not deny the right of Scotland to look after its own affairs. England would lose nothing. I believe that it would gain a great deal. I am certain that this House would gain a great deal if it had more time to deal with its own affairs. That would be possible if we were able to do our own thing in Scotland rather than in this place. If the Government want to keep the United Kingdom together, federalism is the only option. It is a better form of government and it is practised by sensible countries.

I do not intend to argue the need for single-tier local authorities and proportional representation. That has been well rehearsed time and again. I do not want the Minister who is to reply to the debate to say anything about the imposition of another tier of government. That is not a necessary prerequisite.

The Secretary of State contends that unilateral devolution is impossible. That is rubbish. A precedent has already been set in Northern Ireland. He says that there is no evidence of a desire for home rule in Scotland. That myth has already been punctured. The evidence is there, from the referendum of 1979 to the most obvious evidence of all—the lonely 10 from Scotland who sit on the Government Benches.

The greatest canard of all is that a Scottish Parliament would mean higher taxes and that all the businesses would flee the country. I ask the Secretary of State: where is the evidence? Is he telling us that businesses run from state to state in all the federal countries of the world if taxes are raised or lowered? Such a contention presupposes, first, that the Tories would never expect to form a Government in Scotland and their fear that the Labour party would. Surely that is defeatism.

Mr. Maxton: The hon. Lady is absolutely right about companies, but the biggest threat facing Scottish companies is the Government's failure to tell Scottish businesses exactly what is happening about the uniform business rate and to bring Scotland into line with the rest of the United Kingdom.

Mrs. Michie: I accept what the hon. Gentleman says about the Government's failure to tell Scottish businesses what is happening about the uniform business rate.

Secondly, the Secretary of State contends that the members of a Scottish Parliament would not be elected by a fair system. If the Government were sensible, they would set up a Scottish Parliament, but I do not believe for a minute that they would introduce proportional representation. That would prevent domination by a minority party. As the Secretary of State is so fond of telling us, all the parties in Scotland are minority parties.

Mr. John Home Robertson (East Lothian): The Labour party is not a minority party.

Mrs. Michie: The Labour party is a minority party, because it gained only 42 per cent. of the votes cast at the last general election. The majority of the people of Scotland voted for other parties, not for the Labour party.

I do not want to be completely unfair to the Government. It would be foolish to deny the worth of reforms such as ballots before industrial action. People should be allowed to buy their own houses and business and industry should be run successfully and competitively. But that should have been done long ago. Successive Tory and Labour Governments have kept Scotland and its people shackled for so long that they have prevented Scotland, as a nation, from releasing the initiative and enterprise that we see in Scots the world over. The sad thing is that in the past our people have left our shores, and they continue to do so, for jobs in London and in other parts of the world. One of the reasons why they do that is that in Scotland they are not allowed to express themselves in a nation that they can recognise as their own.

The Government imagine that they are passing power to the people by allowing them to buy their own houses or to sit on school boards, but they are at the same time taking more and more power to the centre. Scots are allowed to take a little individual responsibility but not political responsibility in shaping the destiny of their country. They are allowed to take the small decisions but

[Mrs. Michie]

not the big ones. I find that patronising and arrogant. I must tell the House that without our own Parliament we shall disappear as a nation.

When a small country lives alongside a large and domineering one, there are risks and it is always difficult for it to survive. Without a forum and a focal point giving leadership, the battle to preserve our culture, identity, values and way of life will become well nigh impossible. It so happens that England is the domineering country in this case. It could easily have been Canada, France or Germany. I stress that I do not object to England or to the English. Many of the most ardent proponents of devolution are English people who have settled in Scotland. My argument is with the House, which, over the years, has consistently denied Scotland her political birthright.

I would feel a great deal more confident if I heard Scottish Ministers defending their country at the Dispatch Box, particularly during Scottish Question Time, when they face questions put by hon. Members representing English constituencies. Scottish Ministers always sound apologetic. The only exception is the hon. Member for Edinburgh, West (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton), who at least stated during Scottish Question Time the other day that Caledonian MacBrayne provided a lifeline to the highlands and islands and that the Government are prepared to defend it. I should like to see Scottish Ministers being much tougher and harder in defence of their own country.

My party has no hang-ups about reducing the number of Scottish Members of Parliament elected to the House of Commons, provided that we have our own Parliament in Scotland. Nor would I contend that, having such a Parliament, everything in the garden will be rosy. That would be foolish in the extreme. However, we would not have introduced, for example, an unfair and regressive poll tax that is contrary to our sense of democracy and fairness. We would not have witnessed the staggering daily reports of attacks being made on our ancient and proud universities. Nor would we be contemplating the English idea of allowing schools to opt out of the education system. Instead of taking power away from local government, we would increase and give it back. We would extend it to community council level. We would also have more control over the activities of the Nature Conservancy Council and the Crown Estate Commissioners. There is a long list of what we ought to be doing in Scotland but which we are unable to achieve in this House.

Given a Scottish Parliament, many more Scots—in particular, women—would be able to participate in governing their own country instead of having to travel 500 miles to work in another country every week. Of course, we were all elected to attend a United Kingdom Parliament, but every Scot on this side of the House came to London with a view to removing some of the power of the United Kingdom Parliament and returning it to our own country. The only way in which that can be achieved legitimately and legally is through this House. That is why we came here.

Meanwhile, the Government deny us a Select Committee for Scotland. They bunch Scottish Estimates days into a couple of weeks. We sit on a Scottish Grand Committee in Edinburgh discussing education, but we are not allowed to pass our own laws. We must come to this place to do that, and that is humiliating.

Although concentrating mainly on the political aspects, I wish to say a few words also about economic matters. It is the Government's belief that if they get the economy right and if everybody has money in their pockets, we will all be happy in Scotland. The Government believe that money is all that matters, but we care about other values.

I must tell the SNP that my party will not be supporting this motion because it does not wholly reflect what the Scots want. However, I warn the Government again, and I do so with good will and sincerity towards Scottish Ministers, that by their persistent refusal to listen, it is they and not the SNP who will bring about the break-up of the United Kingdom. One needs to know one's history to understand what is likely to happen in the future.

I conclude by quoting Professor Gordon Donaldson, Her Majesty's historiographer in Scotland, introducing the Scottish *Sunday Mail's* "Story of Scotland":

> "I don't know whether any of you have ever stood, as I have so often done, on the bridge of a ship leaving Aberdeen Harbour.
>
> If so, you may have wondered why the skipper keeps looking back over the stern.
>
> He does this because the channel is marked by two white beacons among the buildings of the town and, in order to keep in the channel, he must have those two beacons lined up.
>
> It is by looking BACK that he can be sure of his way FORWARD.
>
> I wonder if this is the case for knowing history. Do we need to look back sometimes to make sure we are on the right course ahead?
>
> Can we know where we are heading for without knowing where we have come from?
>
> I remember once hearing a man say: 'I'm not interested in the past, I'm only interested in the future.'
>
> I have often thought that a peculiarly silly remark.
>
> The man who made it is now a member of Parliament.
>
> The truth is that the past has shaped the present and the past and the present will shape the future."

I believe that our Parliament will be restored sooner rather than later and that, in the end, it is the Scots' inalienable right to have it and to make a kirk or a mill of it.

6.8 pm

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): I welcome the opportunity to speak in this important debate on the Scottish political situation. The hon. Member for Argyll and Bute (Mrs. Michie) said in her concluding remarks that one must look at history to understand and possibly to plan for the future. To judge from recent events in her merged party conglomerate, I should have thought that there was a lesson in her remarks for herself and her party.

Recent events have shown very clearly that if the SLD party is coming forward with a proposal, as the hon. Lady seems to be saying, which it thinks that it can deliver, for some form of federal structure within the United Kingdom, it must first win the hearts and minds of eight out of 10 people and have its representatives elected to this Chamber in order to achieve its aims. Eight out of 10 people who live in the United Kingdom live in England, and until those people are persuaded there is no likelihood of such a measure getting through the House. That must be taken on board by the hon. Lady and all who propose theoretical programmes for constitutional change.

It is easy enough to go to a few people in any part of the country and present a package that those few will accept, but such a package—whatever it contains—will be for only a few people. That applies to all the various devolution packages that are on offer. We are talking about making proposals to one out of 10 of the United Kingdom population and the representatives in this place, but those proposals must make sense to the eight out of 10 before they can get through the House.

The hon. Lady expressed an interest in the recent history of difficulties in getting motions and legislation on devolution through the House. That clearly shows that, regardless of the political persuasions of hon. Members representing English seats in this and previous Parliaments, the important thing is to win the hearts and minds of eight out of 10 representatives. Until that is done, such proposals will remain theoretical.

It is important for any hon. Member speaking from these Benches to recognise that the Conservative party did badly in Scotland in the 1987 election. It would be wrong to pretend otherwise. We must ask ourselves why, when what we are doing south of the border is accepted by so many people there—those whom I would describe as the hard-working, law-abiding, taxpaying citizens of England —we find it so difficult to obtain the same support in Scotland.

Part of the answer must lie in the way in which we have put our message over, or rather failed to do so. There is no doubt that we have failed, and again it would be wrong to pretend otherwise. But that does not mean that the message is wrong, or that the policies are wrong. It means that Scottish Conservatives have not done their job as fully or as effectively as they could have or should have. I accept, as I must, my share of that criticism.

Mr. Maxton: I am only sorry that the Secretary of State for Scotland, who after all led the party in the years up to and into that general election, is not present to hear such a vicious attack on his appalling leadership.

Mr. Walker: I hope the hon. Gentleman understands that my comments are not made frivolously. I happen to be a Unionist. I make no apology for that, and I will stand aside for no one in my support for this unitary Parliament. That is much more important than my personal feelings or those of any of my colleagues. What is at stake is the Union, and the Union is not something on which we should take a frivolous or light-hearted view. It has taken a long time to create this United Kingdom, and to produce a parliamentary democracy that functions and is the envy of almost every other country in the world. We ought not to take lightly the success that has been achieved.

If we have run into failures, which we have, we must look closely at them and see what we should be doing better. I do not say that we should be doing things differently, but we should be doing them better. I could give a number of examples, but because of the limited time available, and because Opposition Members wish to speak, I shall not go into too much detail. Let me simply try to put some specifics on the record.

We need to look at developments since 1979 on the Scottish political scene. The Conservative party must recognise that our decisions in the House, for instance on Ulster, will have an impact on Scotland. Anyone who disagrees with that is not living in the real world. That is what I mean by the Union and a unitary Parliament.

Mr. William McKelvey (Kilmarnock and Loudoun): I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his analysis. I am sure that he does not mean simply that the Conservative party is failing to get its message across in Scotland and that that is why it does so badly there and Labour does so well. If that is the case, conversely, the Labour party in Scotland can claim that it is not getting its message across in England because it is so successful in Scotland. If we reverse the position, we will win the next election, even if our position in Scotland diminishes somewhat.

Mr. Walker: On any mathematical analysis, if a party is getting its message through to one tenth of the population extremely well and doing very badly with eight tenths, something is not quite right about its message. What I am saying is that our message is getting through to eight tenths. What is wrong with getting through to one tenth?

We are the Government, and we must therefore be accountable and acceptable. We must recognise that the decisions that we make will be seen as such by the people of Scotland. But modern government is very complex, and much of what goes on is carried out by quasi-governmental bodies an arm's length away. Those bodies often disburse vast sums of taxpayers' money, while the Government determine the amount that they are to disburse and the policies on which they operate.

The Scottish Development Agency, the Scottish tourist board and the Highlands and Islands Development Board disburse vast sums from the public purse, but if we wander around Scotland and chat to the individuals who have been in receipt of those sums, we find that the majority believe that the money is coming from those benevolent bodies and not from the Government. We are not getting the credit for what we are doing. Similarly, the health boards are non-elected, anonymous bodies, and generally speaking the public have no idea who they are, yet the Government carry the responsibility for their activities. Scotland has other quangos that operate on a United Kingdom basis, making decisions in Scotland about various important aspects of Scottish life.

The hon. Lady touched on the subject of the universities, and on that issue I agree with her. I have always been a strong supporter of a United Kingdom arrangement for our universities. Recent events—by which I mean events that have taken place in the past year, and in particular in the last few months—have caused me to review my position. I am extremely worried about some of the decisions that have been made, and may be made in future, by the University Grants Committee.

In particular, I see no sense in a decision which I am told is likely to be made tomorrow affecting the dental hospital in Dundee. On any objective criterion, it cannot be said that that is in accordance with Government policy. I defend the Government's policy of asking for the best possible value for money—we should get what we pay for —and I believe that the policies that we have introduced to achieve that have been largely successful, but I cannot, and will not, support a decision that cannot be defended on that criterion. According to the Fraser of Allander Institute, which produced an impartial objective report, Dundee dental hospital is top of the league for value for money, so it should be the last place to be considered for closure.

I agree that there is a Scottish dimension. We Scots are proud of our history and culture and of what has happened in our universities and education establishments. We have every reason to be. We have led the world

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in many things and we want to retain that—and our Scottishness. To do that, we must have bodies that are understanding of and sympathetic to what we are trying to achieve.

I have examined this matter with some care and I believe that if the University Grants Committee decides tomorrow that the Dundee hospital should close—because the Government have said that they want fewer dentists to be trained—and if the committee cannot justify closure on objective criteria of value for money, it is time we wound up this quango. It is of no use to us in Scotland. In 1979 I never believed that I would say things like that, but experience has taught me that there is a lack of sensitivity and understanding of what is required.

I do not know what deals have been made, or which university or school is being protected, but I know that if part of the whole is left out of a review, the review is not complete. I have never been afraid to stand up for what I believe is right, and this matter is vital. This is probably the most important speech that I have made since my speech on Guinness. I was unhappy about the Guinness affair, and I am equally unhappy about what is happening on this matter. I leave it to hon. Members to judge whether Scotland's best interests are being served by the way in which these matters are being conducted.

6.22 pm

Mr. Harry Ewing (Falkirk, East): The logic of the argument advanced by the hon. Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) about Dundee dental hospital leads him down the road that the Labour party has taken in respect of devolution. The University Grants Committee and the universities in Scotland are under the control of the Department of Education and Science, not the Scottish Office. If the hon. Gentleman did not understand that before, perhaps he does now.

This morning in the Dundee *Courier and Advertiser*, under a banner headline two inches high, there appeared a story given to the paper by the hon. Member for Tayside, North, claiming that the Secretary of State for Scotland and the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland, the hon. Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth), support the retention of Dundee dental hospital. Whether or not the UGC decides tomorrow that the hospital is to close, the Government will win. If the hospital closes, that will be the fault of the UGC; if it is retained, that will be to the credit of the Ministers. That was the import of the briefing that the hon. Gentleman gave the Dundee *Courier and Advertiser*——

Mr. Bill Walker: The hon. Gentleman has the advantage of me, in that I have not read the article. What I gave the Dundee *Courier and Advertiser* was a verbatim report of what took place at a meeting that the hon. Gentleman's hon. Friend the Member for Dundee, West (Mr. Ross) and I attended. We were advised by the people representing the UGC—the secretary and two others—that the Secretary of State for Scotland had had two meetings and that his advice was that the Dundee hospital should remain open. The hon. Member for Dundee, West can confirm this. He and I were horrified at what we discovered.

Mr. Ewing: I mean no disrespect to the hon. Member for Tayside, North, but when Ministers commit themselves to the retention or closure of anything, I prefer to hear it from their mouths, not from a message boy. Whatever the UGC decides tomorrow, the Government will win. It would have been far better, if the Secretary of State and the Under-Secretary of State were in favour of retaining the dental hospital at Dundee, that they should have told us.

I see that the Under-Secretary of State is in his place; if he wants to confirm the words of the hon. Member for Tayside, North—that he is in favour of retaining Dundee dental hospital and has made that view clear to the University Grants Committee—I shall gladly give way to him. Is he prepared to confirm what the hon. Gentleman has just said? His silence is eloquent testimony to the value of the headline in today's Dundee *Courier and Advertiser*. We owe a debt of gratitude to the hon. Member for Tayside, North for raising this matter. I suspect that he was scarping around for something to end his speech with and used an example that will be unfortunate for the Minister.

The hon. Member for Tayside, North also said that the Tories' problem in Scotland is that they are not getting their message across. I have news for him: the problem is not that they are not getting it across—they are getting it across only too well, and the people of Scotland understand it fully. That is why the Tories lost 11 seats at the last general election and were returned with only 10.

I enjoyed the speech made by the Secretary of State today—it was good knockabout slapstick stuff—but it lacked serious content and did not recognise the problem in Scotland. On both occasions since the 1987 election when I have heard him speak on the political problems of Scotland the right hon. and learned Gentleman has done himself less than justice. He should study rather more seriously the tensions that are developing there.

The Secretary of State said that unemployment was falling: of course it is. When the Conservatives came to power in 1979, unemployment stood at 133,000; now it is more than 300,000. The hon. Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart) conceded that that was too high. To listen to the Secretary of State, one would think there was no problem, but there is, and the people of Scotland recognise that it has been caused by an unwanted Government forcing unwanted policies on an unwilling population. The people of Scotland do not identify with the policies imposed on them.

To be generous to Scottish Office Ministers, I must say that there have been times when they have wanted to act differently. They did not want to intervene in the school closures issue in Strathclyde. They did not want to go along with some of the social security provisions. But the leaks of the letters between No. 10 and the Scottish Office showed conclusively that the Ministers were instructed by the Prime Minister's office—in the case of the Strathclyde school closures, encouraged by the hon. Member for Stirling—to change their policies.

Let us not think for a moment that the people of Scotland did not notice this. They noticed that the Scottish Office Ministers wanted to do one thing but the Prime Minister told them that it was not on. They had to do something completely different to bring themselves into line with the rest of England and Wales—Northern Ireland must be excluded.

If the problem continues in this way, the role of the Scottish Office, far from being strengthened, will be diminished, and many of the powers that it enjoys and which have been devolved to it down the years will be sucked in by central Government Departments such as the Department of Trade and Industry, the Department of Education and Science, the DHSS and all the other mammoth Departments that make up the Whitehall complex.

That is the road down which we are travelling. That is the road down which the people of Scotland understand we are travelling better than we do here. That is why there are so many tensions in the Scottish political scene. It is a matter of judgment for each Member of Parliament whether he or she wants to respond to the tensions in the Scottish political scene or whether he or she wants to do what the Secretary of State and his colleagues do and turn their back on those tensions, ignore them and hope that they will go away.

I have bad news for the Conservative party. Those tensions will not go away. I have bad news for other hon. Members who would like to see them go away too. If politicians do not lead those tensions in the proper direction, other people will step in from other areas to lead those tensions in a bad direction. That will not be the fault of the people. That will be our fault. It will be our responsibility if something goes wrong in Scotland. It is almost as if a democracy has to stand still.

The hon. Member for Tayside, North claims that he is a Unionist, and I respect that claim. That does not mean to say that the constitutional make-up of the Union has to be constant. It can be changed, and that is what Labour Members are saying should happen. It should be changed and there should be devolution. I do not go down the separatist road. It is a credible position for the SNP, but SNP Members have no right to table a motion and then criticise those hon. Members who do not support them on issues in which they do not believe. We shall not stand on our heads merely to satisfy three hon. Members who came here on very small majorities and are likely to be out at the next election. They are not representative of Scottish opinion. We are, and we had better respond before the people of Scotland take the lead and are led down the wrong path. The matter is in our hands, and I beg the House to act.

6.32 pm

Mr. Andrew Welsh (Angus, East): The Secretary of State, in responding to the motion, completely failed to answer the positive points raised by the motion and by my hon. Friend the Member for Moray (Mrs. Ewing). If his was the case for the Union then it is most certainly a lost cause.

The SNP motion puts forward a positive and dynamic role for Scotland, both within the nation and as part of a wider world. That contrasts with the nation's present stagnant and subordinate role within a London-dominated political system. That contrasts with the SNP's positive view of Scotland and its future. The Government amendment simply sums up the Government's arrogant misguided attitude towards Scotland. The Government amendment is simply misinformed, misstated and inaccurate. It states, for example:

"in the 1987 General Election more than four people out of five in Scotland voted for parties which support the Union."

They want us to act upon that assumption, but they also neglect to say that 76 per cent. of Scots voted for a return of governmental decision-making powers to Scotland. The Government will not act on that assumption, but they cannot have it both ways.

The Scottish Grand Committee is no substitute for proper legislative machinery for Scotland. The Committee has no powers. It rarely votes, and, even then, it votes only on technical motions. It can never be in any way a substitute for a real Parliament for Scotland, but that is all that the present Government are prepared to offer the people of Scotland. The Government amendment states that the SNP was, in their view,

"the least popular party in Scotland and received the least support from the electorate".

That is not true, although no doubt the Green party, for one, wishes it were.

However, things have moved on. Since then, the local government elections have confirmed the growing pattern in Scotland of the rejection of the Conservatives and the arrival of the SNP as the main challenger in Scottish politics. In the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities, the Conservatives cannot even get a seconder when it comes to regional matters with regard to proposing members for top regional posts. They can barely do so when it comes to similar matters with regard to the districts. The SNP is now the second largest party in COSLA.

When the Scottish people vote for independence, it will happen because, unlike the Unionist parties, Scotland has a political party that owes allegiance only to Scotland and will deliver the goods whenever it is given the mandate. The Government claim that Scotland can best meet the challenge of the single European Community as part of the United Kingdom. They should tell that to Scotland's decimated fishing industry and to its agriculture, both of which were once told by the Conservatives that they had nothing to fear from entry into the Common Market. They now know the truth, when Scotland's vital fishing, agriculture and oil interests have been used as bargaining counters to suit the superior British interests within the EEC. Scotland, with direct EEC participation and representation, would ensure that that ceased to happen in the future. That would be a far better system of representation and would meet the needs of the Scottish people far better than the present situation.

The Government again reject a constitutional referendum because they are clearly unwilling to face the people. Ultimately, only Scotland will decide its own future. We will not be given independence. No country is ever "given" independence. Scotland will take independence as and when the Scottish people so decide. It will be done through the ballot box, unlike the sad situation in many other strife-torn parts of the world. The Scottish solution rests with the ballot box and the SNP has, throughout its history, firmly and correctly rejected violence as a suitable way of ever delivering independence for Scotland. We have correctly said that it is up to the Scottish people, and to them alone, to decide their own future through the ballot box and in their own good time.

In the amendment, the Government reaffirm their belief in the Act of Union, yet they reject or neglect that Act whenever it suits them. Part of the deal written into the Union was that there would be uniform taxation throughout the country. The Government's main flag-carrier, the poll tax, breaks that principle and,

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according to Professor McCormick, it breaches one of the major items within the treaty of Union. It is the old story —the Government accept the treaty when it suits them and reject it when it does not.

The Government have no Scottish mandate for many of their major items—school boards, their attack on local government and so on. Indeed, there is outright and obvious Scottish opposition to those measures. We are seeing the English mandate applied to Scotland, irrespective of the wishes of the Scottish people. That is at the heart of the Union because, ultimately, in the House, England will rule and England will decide. It would not matter if there were unanimity throughout the Scottish people and among our representatives, because, ultimately, England will decide. That is the price of the Union, and it is a price that anyone loyal to Scotland simply will not pay.

Why should Scotland remain subsumed within England and within the new European Common Market? Why should Scotland not be directly represented in Europe, rather than subsumed within the broader English interests, any more than Denmark, which has the same population as Scotland, or Luxembourg, which is tiny in comparison with our country? To assume that we can see Europe only through English eyes or that Scotland can act in Europe only while subsumed within England shows extreme arrogance and is a poor deal for Scotland. Why should we expect the majority English interests to get a better deal for Scotland in the EEC than direct representation from Scotland of our views? It is an absurd proposition which no Dane, Greek, Irishman, Spaniard or Luxembourger would accept for one minute, yet Scots are expected to accept such a deal as a permanent arrangement.

The Government object in their amendment to the description of colonial status when it is applied to Scotland, but how else can one describe the present Scottish situation? Scottish legislation is simply being tagged on to English Bills. Major Scottish amendments are shoved in on Report without proper discussion. When Scottish universities, including the Dundee dental hospital, were discussed as part of a general English Bill, Scottish Members with university interests were queuing up to have two minutes to discuss those matters that are vital to Scotland.

Again, the only major Department of State that does not have a parliamentary Select Committee is the Scottish Office. That is lack of control, through this Parliament, of those who control Scotland. All this goes on while the Scottish assembly building lies empty in Edinburgh.

We are asking only for basic democracy. Of the three arms of government, Scotland already has its own executive and its own judiciary. All that we are asking for is the third arm of government—a Scottish legislature, democratically elected and able to control and influence the fabric of our society, our economy and our life and to get Scotland on the move. Montesquieu rightly pointed out that the three arms of government spell the difference between despotism and a democratic system. We are asking for the fundamental right that every other democratic country takes for granted.

Edinburgh is a city with two parliamentary buildings and no Parliament. It is a city waiting for the return of parliamentary powers. Scotland is a nation awaiting the rebirth of its identity in Europe and in the wider world. It is to this that the SNP motion addresses itself. It is a pity that the House will not do the same.

6.40 pm

Mrs. Maria Fyfe (Glasgow, Maryhill): I believe that, as a nation, Scotland has a right to self-determination, but that does not mean that I am about to apply for an SNP card. Correctly, the Labour party believes that Scotland has determined that its wants it own devolved assembly. It has shown that in its votes at the general elections and in opinion polls again and again. Clearly, the Scottish nation has spoken and wants what the Labour party in Scotland and the United Kingdom has been saying it wants.

The Scottish people do not want the status quo. That is why the Government's amendment begs the question: why is it that the Tory party does not want a constitutional referendum? Could it be because it is afraid of the answer? Suppose the referendum reaffirmed what the Labour party says—that the majority of Scottish people want devolution and their own assembly. Would the Government accept that result and implement it? I do not believe that they would, because they do not recognise Scotland as a "free partner" in the United Kingdom, as they claim in the amendment.

A "free partner" would have the right to decide whether to continue the partnership or to withdraw, or, as we would suggest, offer a change in the terms of the partnership. The Government are refusing to allow the people of Scotland to have a choice, and we are convinced that if the people of Scotland had a free say they would vote for Labour party policy. Labour recognises Scotland as a nation and as a "free partner" in the United Kingdom. For that reason we offered that policy at the general election, and for that reason, we shall continue to offer that policy. There is no doubt about this policy, from which we have not deviated one iota.

I have recently returned from a short visit to Nicaragua, a small country of only 3 million people with a young parliamentary democracy that has been in existence for only a tiny speck of time when compared to the long existence of this noble House. That young Parliament of a small nation has already accepted that two areas of its country, because of different culture, history, language and development, deserve devolution. The National Assembly has already passed the law to bring in devolution so that the areas can have their own economic development, education system and so on. Will this ancient and honourable Parliament take the opportunity to learn from that small nation something about democracy in action?

6.44 pm

Mr. John McAllion (Dundee, East): I agree with the hon. Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) about the Dundee dental hospital. There is no case for its closure. If the University Grants Committee makes that recommendation tomorrow, it will be a disgrace. I hope that every Scottish Member of Parliament will object to such a decision. In particular, I hope that the Ministers in the Scottish Office will lead a campaign against any such decision. As the recommendation of the working party that was set up by the UGC had to have been influenced by Scottish Office instruction, that working party could not take into consideration the position of the Dundee dental hospital but looked only at Edinburgh and Glasgow dental hospitals. That had to prejudice the working party's recommendations. It is up to the Scottish Office to stand up for Dundee dental hospital, as there is no case for closure, and to say that it will not accept the recommendations of the UGC working party.

In the Dundee dental hospital case, we see a classic example of the Scottish interest being squeezed between a United Kingdom Department that treats Scotland like another region of a unitary country and a Tory-dominated Scottish Office that will not stand up for the national rights of Scotland within the United Kingdom. It is time that Ministers in the Scottish Office began to argue the Scottish case rather than meekly accepting what is handed down to them from the Cabinet or the Secretary of State for Education and Science.

We can legitimately argue about the merits or demerits of the no-mandate case within the unitary Parliament of the United Kingdom, but no hon. Member can quarrel with the fact that Scotland has overwhelmingly rejected the Government's approach, which is generally termed Thatcherism. Scotland did not reject Thatcherism only in the 1987 general election. It did so in both the 1983 and 1979 general elections. Ever since Thatcherism came into being as a political creed, it has regularly been rejected, with an ever-increasing majority, by the people of Scotland. That has happened in every general election since 1979, and there is no case for the Scottish Office, or any other Tories, trying to impose on the people of Scotland the policies that constitute the Thatcher consensus.

Conservative Members would do well to reflect that, since the war, the Conservative party has been the only political party in Scotland to win an absolute majority of Scottish votes in the general election. It did that a generation ago in the 1955 general election. It should learn from its decline, which leaves it, 30 years on, with only an embarrassed rump of Scottish Members of Parliament and the lowest share of the vote in any general election since the war. The Tories must ask themselves why that is, and they must realise that if they continue down the road that they have been pursuing since 1955 the only end will be the break-up of the United Kingdom. That will be their fault, and their fault alone.

At the next general election, in 1991, the Scottish people will have to vote for the party that can deliver them from the yoke of Thatcherism. The hon. Member for Angus, East (Mr. Welsh) said that, if the Scots want independence, they will vote for it. However, the SNP must make clear what they mean by Scotland voting for independence. A leaflet from the SNP has come through my door since the last general election. It says that 37 SNP Members of Parliament equals independence. That is nonsense. The Labour party has 50 Members of Parliament but only 43 per cent. of the vote in Scotland. Even if the SNP were to get into the Labour party's position, the majority of Scots would still be voting against independence, and for the continued link with the United Kingdom. The Government would ignore the fact that 50 SNP Members had been elected to Parliament and would go on as they are now, saying that there is no mandate for independence. A mandate for independence must be based on more than half the votes that are registered in Scotland at a general election, and the SNP could not achieve that.

I was staggered to learn that the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. Salmond) has referred to the SNP as the equivalent of the Rainbow Coalition in the United States. I come from Dundee and I know about the SNP members on Tayside regional council. Only a few months ago, a prominent member of the SNP group on the council caused a sensation locally by referring, during a debate on the multicultural education policy of Tayside regional council, to the danger of Scotland being swamped by ethnic minorities. He used the very remark which the Prime Minister used disgracefully some years ago, a remark that will not be welcomed by any rainbow coalition on either side of the Atlantic. I hope that the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan will denounce members of his party who use that sort of language in arguing against a proper multicultural approach to education in areas such as Tayside.

6.50 pm

Mr. Alex Salmond (Banff and Buchan): The debate has been notable for a number of factors. Probably the most notable is that virtually all hon. Members who have contributed to it, with a few honourable exceptions, have failed to address the perspective which was set out in the speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Moray (Mrs. Ewing) and in the motion—the exciting new perspective of an independent Scotland playing a full role within the European Economic Community.

It seems that the Secretary of State for Scotland has not graduated beyond university debating tactics. There was nothing in his speech that told us where he thinks Scotland is going. There are few enough opportunities in this place to debate the future of our nation, and the right hon. and learned Gentleman, in a disgraceful speech, failed to take advantage of the opportunity that was presented to him. His speech contained no analysis of his own position in favouring the Union. It was purely a debating speech, worthy, perhaps, of a university debating chamber. It was not worthy of a Secretary of State for Scotland.

I shall analyse the positions of the three other parties in Scotland apart from my own. It is interesting that there is no Labour party amendment on the Order Paper. In a way, that is appropriate. The problem that the Labour party faces is that devolution, as proposed by the party which won the last general election in Scotland, is no longer on the political agenda. That is because it will not be conceded. It is not available and it will not be delivered. It is not on offer.

The Scottish National party supported the devolution Bill that Labour Members introduced last year on the ground that even half a slice of bread was better than no loaf. The reality, however, is that the Government will not concede devolution. With the Labour party 10 or 12 points adrift in the United Kingdom opinion polls a year after the general election—at the same stage after the 1983 election the Labour party was either level or ahead in the MORI polls—there is no realistic prospect in the foreseeable future of a Labour Government being able to implement Labour party policy, even if we accept as genuine the commitment of the Leader of the Opposition to the policy of devolution.

Mr. Harry Ewing: I accept that the reality is that the Government will not concede devolution. That is accepted also by the Labour party. The reality also is that the Government will not concede independence. That is the problem in Scotland. The people of Scotland are reacting to an obstinate Government who ignore every plea that is

[Mr. Harry Ewing]

made by every political party. Every branch of society in Scotland is being ignored. There is no point in the hon. Gentleman concentrating on the fact that the Government are ignoring one political party. Everyone in Scotland is being ignored. That is causing the problem.

Mr. Salmond: I want to deal directly with that question later in my speech.

The hon. Member for Falkirk, East (Mr. Ewing) and his right hon. and hon. Friends should listen carefully to the convoluted explanations of the Secretary of State when he is asked why he changed his position on devolution. I have heard the right hon. and learned Gentleman offer an explanation on several occasions in the past year. It seems that he changed his position because he thought 10 years ago that the Union was under threat. He was prepared to concede devolution only if there was a substantial vote in Scotland for independence. That is a lesson that the hon. Member for Falkirk, East should learn from the Scottish political scene.

As I have said, it is significant that the Labour Opposition have not placed an amendment on the Order Paper. I believe that they have chosen not to do so because devolution is no longer on the political agenda in Scotland. During the count in the 1983 general election, I remember the hon. Member for Glasgow, Cathcart (Mr. Maxton) roaring like a lion, declaring what he would do with this Parliament after that election to ensure that an assembly was delivered. Since then, the hon. Gentleman has been as quiet as a mouse on the issue. During this period he has graduated towards a Front-Bench job. I can understand hon. Members being bought and sold for English gold, but to be bought and sold for the prospect of Opposition Front-Bench spokesmanship at this moment places a low price on the hon. Gentleman's abilities.

I was struck by a quote in *The Scotsman* of 16 January from the hon. Member for Cathcart. He was explaining then—as he has since in the *Glasgow Herald*—why the Labour party could not countenance a campaign of non-payment in opposition to the poll tax. The hon. Gentleman wrote:

> "At the end of the day, it would be a campaign about the right to govern Scotland, aimed at ending Conservative English rule in Scotland. That is the nationalist case which the Labour Party does not accept."

I congratulate the hon. Gentleman. It has taken him five years to understand the full implications of the mandate argument. Unfortunately, after five years he has come to exactly the wrong conclusion. If the hon. Gentleman graduates to a further elevation in the Whips Office, he will find a new generation of younger Labour Members willing to take his place. They will not challenge the "right" of the Government to run Scotland either. That is the position generally of the Labour party. I say to Labour Members that if they continue to accept the "right" of the Government to run Scotland on English votes, they will relegate themselves to the fringes. In the end, they will find that they are spectators of Scottish politics. The argument will crystallise between those who are prepared to accept that the Government have a right to pursue their policies on the back of the English majority and those who are prepared to reject that so-called mandate.

As far as I can understand the position of the Social and Liberal Democratic party, as expounded by the hon. Member for Argyll and Bute (Mrs. Michie), it seems that it is sympathetic to the SNP analysis. It is clear from the SLD's amendment that it accepts our analysis. The only difference is that it proposes another solution.

The case for federalism is in the same difficulty as that for devolution—it will not be delivered in the immediate future. The hon. Lady should consider the relative merits of federalism compared with independence within the European Community. The Liberal party—now the SLD—has had a variety of views on a variety of issues. One consistent theme, however, has been a belief in the European dimension. It is strange that the quarrel that the SLD has with the motion is on the need, as the SNP sees it, for an independent status within the wider community. The federalism which the SLD proposes would automatically deny Scotland access to representations at the top table of the Community. That is a strange position for a party which has long espoused the European ideal.

The hon. Member for Argyll and Bute should remember that we have supported motions and amendments, tabled by her party, that have set out its solution for Scotland. That was because we believed they represented an improvement on the status quo. The SLD should give serious consideration to whether it prefers the SNP's solution to the Scottish question or the solution that is put forward by the Government.

The Government's position was predictable. As I have said, the Secretary of State's speech did not make clear the position for the Union. I welcome the attacks that were made on the SNP by the Secretary of State. My colleagues said to me, "It is just like old times." When the SNP is under attack, that is a sure sign that it is rising and that the Government are frightened.

An attack was made also on Muriel Gray, the rector of Edinburgh university. Muriel Gray is not a political activist. She is not involved in politics. I do not know whether she is a member of the SNP, but I hope that she is. She is not part of the political debate in Scotland. She is most certainly not here to answer the charges that the Secretary of State made against her earlier this evening. It is demeaning for the right hon. and learned Gentleman to be so reduced that he is driven to level such charges against a lady who is not able to reply to them.

Unlike the Secretary of State, I want to look at the amendment tabled by the Government.

Mr. Maxton: The hon. Gentleman made an attack upon my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) in a London hotel recently. Did he invite him to be present so that he could respond?

Mr. Salmond: The hon. Gentleman must forgive me, but I lost his question in the general hubbub from his hon. Friends.

As I was saying, I want to look at the content of the Government amendment. As I understand it, there are four principal arguments for opposing our motion set out in the Government's amendment. The first is the substantial role which, according to the Government amendment, individual Scots have to play within the United Kingdom. When I saw the amendment, I thought that they were referring to the "sudeten Scots" on the Government Benches who come to disrupt Scottish Question Time at regular intervals. The argument misses the point entirely. We are not arguing whether individual Scots should play a role within English society, or French or German society, or vice versa, but whether Scotland, as a national entity, will have the chance to play a collective role not on the British stage but on the wider stage of the European Community.

Secondly, the Government make the mandate argument most explicit—I refer to the question raised by the hon. Member for Falkirk, East. Basically, the Government say that as long as Scots vote for Unionist parties—the Labour party, the Democrats or the Conservative party—the votes are counted as being for the Union. The Secretary of State put it clearly in an interview in *Radical Scotland* of December 1986. He said:

> "I think as long as the vast majority of Scots vote for unionist parties and by that I mean Conservatives, Labour, Liberal, or SDP, anything other than the Nationalists—and thereby express a clear political desire to remain a part of the United Kingdom—then the only mandate that matters is the UK mandate."

That is a development of the Conservative party's position. In the 1979 referendum they wanted to count only non-voters on their side. Now the Conservative party's position is to count the votes for the other Unionist parties to recruit them in the Conservative party's supposed mandate in Scotland.

The votes for the Labour party and the Democrats are being used, in terms of the Secretary of State's argument, as the justification for the Conservative party's position in Scotland. I do not know whether hon. Members who represent those parties are satisfied with that position, but I believe that the members of those parties in Scotland would be profoundly dissatisfied to know that their votes are being use as the justification for the Conservative party continuing to rule in Scotland on a minority vote.

The third argument from the Government is that the Secretary of State makes decisions in Scotland and that many areas of Scottish life are under his direct determination. Anybody looking at the celebrated exchange of memos on the school boards legislation will be able to give the lie to how much power the Secretary of State currently has in Scotland. There is a vast difference between being Scotland's man in the Cabinet and the Cabinet's man in Scotland, which is the sorry position of the present incumbent. Perhaps the Secretary of State or the Minister would like to tell us whether the decision on the future of the Ravenscraig steel plant is one of the "important" decisions that will be made by the Secretary of State or the Scottish Office. Sir Robert Scholey, introducing the British Steel Corporation's annual report today, said that it was "reviewing strip mill production," that there were

> "no more guarantees for Ravenscraig,

and that "nothing is for ever."

We want to know whether the future of the Ravenscraig complex will be decided in Scotland by the Secretary of State or by the BSC south of the border.

The Government's fourth argument rejects our claim that Scotland is a colony and has colonial status. When a country is ruled by a Government that it does not elect, when that Government make a comprehensive attack on Scottish values and institutions, when that country is denied the right of self-determination through referendum or constitutional convention, and when that Government are engaged in the pillaging of Scottish assets—I am talking about £70,000 million of oil revenues since 1979—that looks to me like a colonial position.

The Secretary of State was not always as averse to describing his position as that of a colonial governor. I shall quote from an article in *Scottish Field* of March 1986. Perhaps the Secretary of State drew courage from the fact that the readership of *Scottish Field* did not extend too far among the Scottish population. It quotes the Secretary of State as saying in respect of his position:

> "It is not at all a narrow field as some people might suggest. In fact, the powers of the Secretary of State for Scotland are not unlike those of a colonial governor."

It seems that the Secretary of State and the Conservative party were not always so sure that the analogy between Scotland's position and that of a colony was so absurd.

I want to reiterate some of the points made by my hon. Friend the Member for Moray when she introduced the motion and to deal directly with the Scottish economy. If we listened to the Government, we would believe that the Scottish economy was a great success. That is a remarkable argument given that industrial production in Scotland is up only 7 per cent. since 1980—less than half the average increase throughout the United Kingdom as a whole. Unemployment in Scotland is the second highest in mainland Britain. The House of Commons research officers have released a paper showing that, of the 10 worst constituencies in Britain with the highest percentage of youth unemployment as a percentage of total unemployment, no fewer than seven are Scottish constituencies.

The Government argue that the prosperity of the south-east of England will gradually spread throughout the rest of Britain—first, to the midlands, then to the north of England and then to Scotland—and that our salvation will come if we wait long enough. That argument is reminiscent of that used for Third-world countries. They were told that if they waited until the Western world was more prosperous, prosperity would eventually drip down to them. Just as it was fallacious in the Third-world context, so it is fallacious in the Scottish context. Far from prosperity spreading out from the south-east of England, inflationary pressures which have been generated in the south-east mean that economic measures will be taken to put the economy into restraint. Thus, we have had five increases in interest rates in the past five weeks. The reality is that economic restraint will be applied before the Scottish economy is even out of deep freeze.

I want to look at Scotland's real choice—whether we want to play a bit part on the British stage or whether we want to find a new role for our nation within the European Community. I find the British state fundamentally unattractive. It is unattractive in the attitude displayed towards foreigners and unattractive in terms of the breakdown of social cohesion. It is a depressing vision for the Scottish people to have to continue to play a subsidiary role within a declining and out-of-date Britain. Steinbeck once wrote that Scotland was not a "lost cause" but a "cause unwon". The Scottish National party gives notice to the House of Commons that it intends to win that cause.

7.9 pm

The Minister of State, Scottish Office (Mr. Ian Lang) *rose*——

Mr. Ron Brown (Edinburgh, Leith): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. As I understand it, no Opposition Member representing Edinburgh, Scotland's capital, has been called. Is that not a disgrace? Is that not strange, particularly as some of us want to support the anti-poll tax movements that are developing in Scotland and that intend to fight the Tories?

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Only the Minister sought to catch my eye, and I will call him.

Mr. Lang: I am sure that my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland would be happy to feel that his speech represented the Unionist parties from the Edinburgh constituencies. There have been few surprises in the debate and the speech by the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. Salmond) contained none. The debate has identified the alien values mentioned in the Scottish National party motion, because we support the rule of law. If the SNP believes that it is alien to the Scottish people to support the rule of law, no wonder it gained so little support in the last election.

It was interesting to note how the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan distanced his party from the other Opposition parties because that suggests that perhaps the SNP is the party that espouses alien values. That is underlined by the fact that 86 per cent. of the Scottish people rejected separatism at the last election in favour of the Union. The greater curiosity in the debate is not the behaviour of the Scottish National party, which is always sadly predictable, but the behaviour of the Labour party. We have a nationalist motion, a Liberal amendment and a Government amendment, but no Labour amendment.

What is even more curious is that, on this of all days, when a *Glasgow Herald* poll revealed the full extent of Labour's crumbling edifice and when the party has lost one fifth of its support in five months, the leader of the Scottish Labour Members, the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar), chose not to speak in the debate, and his party has chosen not to vote.

Perhaps that comes as no surprise to us, because last November, in a debate on a motion by what was then the Liberal party but which is now travelling incognito, the Opposition leader in Scotland, the hon. Member for Garscadden, decided not to speak. My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland said at that time that the debate was rather like Hamlet without the gravedigger. I am not as learned as my right hon. and learned Friend but in my version of Gilbert and Sullivan the Duke of Plaza Toro led his regiment from behind because he found it less exciting. But at least he led his troops. In this debate, the Scottish Labour party has had no leadership at all. No wonder that two thirds of them have not bothered to turn up and are hopelessly divided on these issues.

In its manifesto for the last election the SNP said:

> "Should the Conservatives win power again based on English votes, the SNP will cooperate with other parties to establish a Constitutional Convention as an immediate priority."

We have seen the measure of that co-operation in the debate. There has been much high-principled concern for devolutionary matters, but when it comes down to the detail, the parties shelter behind different approaches and different nomenclature. The Labour party wants an assembly, the Liberals want a Parliament and the Nationalists want a convention. Labour will not have an assembly if it has proportional representation, the Liberals will not have one without PR and the SNP says that it will take anything as long as it gives it a chance to move on to separatism.

What I discern in these postures is not high constitutional principle but low political calculation. Self-interest is the driving force behind the Opposition parties, and Scotland's true interests are secondary to that. I do not know whether self-interest drives the leader of the Labour party on this issue or whether he just does not know what his troops in Scotland are saying. At least on this issue he has been consistent, even if, as my hon. Friend the Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart) said, he is up in the clouds of the Himalayas. In 1978 he said that devolution

> "will smash beyond healing the unity of Britain."

In 1985 he said it

> "will not provide a factory, a machine or jobs."

As recently as last Thursday, he was quoted in the *Western Daily Press and Times and Mirror* as saying:

> "what was needed was government which was more accountable and efficient in serving people and communities.
>
> 'But those needs would not be met if they divided the country, and produced institutions with grand titles that were all dressed up with nowhere to go'".

Nothing better summarises the present state of the Scottish Labour party, which does not seem to listen to its leader any more.

To the vast majority of Scots, devolution is simply irrelevant. True devolution is the devolution of power that we have introduced. We have introduced the devolution that matters, because we have given power to the people through cuts in taxation, so that they may spend money as they think fit. We have done it through the sale of council houses, and that policy has enabled over 100,000 Scots to buy their own homes. Our privatisation programme has doubled the number of Scottish shareholders. We have given devolution by providing a stable economic base on which so many new companies have been able to start up. The economy is a sign of the devolution and the success that we have achieved.

It is a great pity that Opposition parties cannot speak up for Scotland but feel obliged to knock it at every opportunity and send out the sort of message that we heard in Dundee when Ford pulled out. The success of the Scottish economy is irretrievably bound up with the success of the United Kingdom economy, and the success of the United Kindom economy has recently been reflected in Scotland.

The report last week from the Fraser of Allander Institute said that the Scottish economy is now moving in line with that of the United Kingdom. Our economic success in Scotland is increasingly evident. The Scots are benefiting from the control of public spending and therefore from the control of inflation. They are benefiting from the reduction in taxation and are now sharing in the biggest fall in unemployment in recent times. All this has been achieved without the benefit of a Scottish assembly.

Looking ahead, we can see the prospect of this continuing, and the forecast is that 64 per cent. of construction firms expect to expand in the next few months. The Fraser of Allander Institute report predicts growth of almost 3 per cent. per annum over the next five years and the creation of about 100,000 new jobs. Scotland is more prosperous than it has ever been. Personal disposable income is up by 16 per cent. in real terms over the 10 years to 1986. Scotland had the highest average earnings outside the south-east of England and all this has been achieved without the benefit of a Scottish assembly.

Manufacturing output in Scotland is higher than ever, and over the last eight years Scotland's manufacturing productivity has come from the bottom to the top of the OECD league. We have seen our manufacturing productivity improve by more than that in America, Canada, France, Germany, the rest of the United Kingdom and Japan.

Now that we are competitive again, our exports have done well. They are better than for the rest of the United Kingdom and more per head than in Japan. That success has not been achieved by accident but because we have stuck to the policies that were needed to create success. We have taken the difficult decisions about getting Scotland back on the rails. We have been tackling the problems at their roots instead of going for cheap, short-term cosmetic solutions.

Scotland within the United Kingdom is now out in the world again and the world increasingly sees Scotland as a place in which to locate. We have put behind us the decline and despair of Socialist policies, and in the stable political framework of being part of the United Kingdom Scotland is seeing our policies bear fruit. Against that growth and success, how damaging and irrelevant is the posturing over devolution and separatism and the bickering over breaking the law on the funding of local government.

Scotland is where the vast majority of people want her to be—strong, prosperous and secure, and playing her full part in the United Kingdom. I urge the House to keep it that way, to throw out this irrelevant and damaging motion and to support the Government amendment.

Question put, That the original words stand part of the Question:—

The House divided: Ayes 5, Noes 206.

Division No. 399] **[7.17 pm**

AYES

Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Kilfedder, James
Salmond, Alex
Thomas, Dr Dafydd Elis

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Andrew Welsh and
Mr. Dafydd Wigley.

NOES

Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Ashby, David
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowis, John
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Hon Alan *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Emery, Sir Peter
Evennett, David
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Fearn, Ronald
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gow, Ian
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Ground, Patrick
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Harris, David
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayward, Robert
Heddle, John
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Hill, James
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Kennedy, Charles
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkwood, Archy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Loyden, Eddie
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
Maclean, David
Maclennan, Robert
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
Major, Rt Hon John
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Sir Hal
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Shersby, Michael
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Stanbrook, Ivor
Steel, Rt Hon David
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Summerson, Hugo
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Thatcher, Rt Hon Margaret
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Trippier, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Wallace, James
Waller, Gary
Walters, Sir Dennis
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Widdecombe, Ann
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. David Lightbown and
Mr. Richard Ryder

Question accordingly negatived.

Question, That the proposed words be there added, *put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 30 (Questions on amendments), and agreed to.*

Mr. Deputy Speaker forthwith declared the main Question, as amended, to be agreed to.

Resolved,

That this House recognises the benefits to Scotland of being a free partner in the United Kingdom and the contribution which the Scottish people continue to make in many fields to the life of the United Kingdom; notes that the Government has a clear mandate to govern following a General Election fought on a United Kingdom basis, and that in the 1987 General Election more than four people out of five in Scotland voted for parties which support the Union; notes that in that election the Scottish National Party was the least popular party in Scotland and received the least support from the Scottish electorate; believes that Scotland can best meet the challenge of the single European Community market as part of the United Kingdom; acknowledges that many decisions affecting Scotland are already taken in Scotland by the Secretary of State and the Scottish Office; considers as absurd references to Scotland's alleged colonial status; rejects completely calls for a constitutional referendum and independence; and reaffirms its support for the Act of Union.

Pensioners (Government Policies)

7.28 pm

Mr. Charles Kennedy (Ross, Cromarty and Skye): I beg to move,

That this House notes the increasing proportion of elderly people in society; views with great concern the failure of National Health Service funding to keep pace with the growing demand placed upon the Health Service by the elderly; believes that greater support and financial provision must be given to the field of community care; condemns the recent changes in Social Security regulations and in particular the cuts in the housing benefit budget which have caused hardship for many pensioners; recognises that the income of many pensioners is woefully inadequate; and calls upon the Government substantially to increase the real level of old age pensions.

One of the most profound demographic changes in Britain is the increasing number of elderly people, which number will continue to accelerate. There are now 3·7 million people over the age of 75 and by the year 2006 that will have increased to 4·1 million. By 1996, roughly 15·5 per cent. of the entire population will be over the age of 65. That presents a major demographic change which will have implications across society, not least for the welfare state, and especially for health and social services, social security and the caring services generally.

It is worth noting, not least in the context of the review of the Health Service, of changes in the system of social security and of developments in social policies generally, that the straightforward reality is that such a vast increase in our elderly population is due largely to the success of the welfare state. Improved health services, education services, housing, environmental and working conditions are a cause for celebration in any country, especially when moving towards the latter stages of the 20th century. They are a tribute to the achievement of generations since the industrial revolution.

The political and public policy problems that are generated by an increasing proportion of people in the non-working phase of their lives, who are not producing revenue but are more likely—and quite rightly—to be consuming it, are a fundamental product of the success of the nation in improving conditions. I hope that the review of the Health Service and the changes in social security will be viewed in the longer term. It should be remembered —this is one of our fundamental differences with the present thinking and policies of the Government—that the welfare state provision that has led to greater longevity for so many people has made it a victim of its own success.

That is one of the fundamental philosophical differences that have emerged between the Government and the various Opposition parties during the past eight years, and the motion draws attention to that fact. If my hon. Friend the Member for Truro (Mr. Taylor) is fortunate enough to catch your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker, he will say more about that.

I pay tribute to the hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field). Debate on the nature, extent and form of Health Service provision is attracting far greater political attention, and that is a tribute to his work as Chairman of the Social Services Select Committee, the reports of which have recently informed debate on the subject.

The changes in the Health Service are beginning to be discussed more openly by Ministers, not least by the Secretary of State in recent interviews. The Government are concerned about increasing choice. We do not differ from them on philosophical grounds, but choice is too often seen from the consumer' point of view. I do not want to dwell on that in view of yesterday's debate on this subject; but none of us wants the credit card type of health care that is to be found in North America, particularly in the United States, where there is enhanced consumer sense.

The figures are well known. The demand made by the elderly is high, especially in personal social services, compared with that of people of working age and the young. The elderly should not pay the penalty for any changes along consumerist lines which the Government may be contemplating. I hope that the Minister will be able to give us some reassurance about that.

I wish to concentrate on social security and the housing benefit changes. I welcome the fact that the Government have recently made concessions, but for many thousands of pensioners a total of £540 million has been taken from the housing benefit budget by the recent social security changes. That is a harsh price. In addition, everybody is now expected to make a minimum contribution of 20 per cent. to the rates no matter how low his or her income may be. In theory, people who receive income support have an extra £1·30 a week in benefit to cover that charge, but in practice 20 per cent. of the rates bill will often work out at considerably more than that. Here in Westminster, for example, 20 per cent. of the average rates bill works out at £3·12 a week, which is considerably more than the amount built into income support.

Many claimants on incomes just above the minimum level—perhaps occupational pensioners or people of pensionable age still in part-time employment—will lose benefit by the introduction of a higher taper for withdrawing help. Housing benefit is now being taken away at a rate of 65p in the pound for every £1 above the income support level, which means that benefit is withdrawn on the basis of net earnings. Therefore, people with low-paid jobs who have benefited from tax cuts will find that they lose most of what they gained in tax cuts through the reduction of housing benefit.

I am sure that the Minister and right hon. and hon. Members on both sides of the House have come across many such cases in their constituency surgeries. The figures are small in terms of the hundreds of millions of pounds involved in the Budget, but the result is great hardship and heart-rending for many pensioners who already live at the breadline. I welcome the fact that the Government raised the capital cut-off for housng benefit to £8,000. That was a small step in the right direction. My party takes the view that no cut-off point should have been introduced in the first place. I do not want to be unduly churlish about the changes that the Secretary of State has announced, but they were announced in haste and largely in response to Conservative Back-Bench pressure. I do not want to belittle the Opposition's contribution, but Conservative Back Benchers recognised that the people who were being hit were likely to be their voters. The change was made because of that rather than because of the merit of the case. That was their motivation, not the merits of the case. The Government are fond of preaching about morality, but there is a curious contradiction between what we hear said from the Dispatch Box and in other places and what influences the troops behind the Prime Minister.

Prior to last month there was no capital limit for claiming housing benefit. Instead, notional interest on any savings was taken into account. That was a much fairer system, as it meant that help was phased out more gradually. In other words, the severe loss at the point of that change was considerably cushioned or diluted, especially when compared with what happens now.

We have argued previously, and do so again tonight, that the cuts in housing benefit were wrong in principle and that the Government should now consider restoring them and act to do so. We should like the rate of the withdrawal taper to be reduced, as we believe that the system is particularly hard on low-income families and those with small pensions. We should also like consideration to be given to the abolition of the capital limit and the reinstatement of the system of notional interest. We should like a system which is generally more flexible and responsive to individual needs, instead of a system which forces people into crude and often arbitrary categories, regardless of their particular circumstances.

We should like a system which lives up to the fundamental, fairer and simpler reform of the social security system which the previous Secretary of State for Social Services hailed when he introduced the comprehensive review—and the public hearings which followed—and its implementation in legislation prior to the last general election. The Government's track record on housing benefit in particular, and social security provision in general, makes them extremely culpable.

Finally, I should like to refer briefly to the moves towards care in the community, which has commanded the support of successive Governments and of all parties. Elderly people face hardship because all too often the social services, local authorities, various other authorities and, for that matter, the voluntary sector do not receive the support from the Government, such as the rate support grant, that they require if they are to meet the demands of the central policy that is not just being encouraged but is being demanded by the Government.

Let us take as an example public sector housing. It has been estimated that to put right the backlog of repairs for such housing would cost about £10 billion across the nation. Elderly people suffer because poor housing affects their health. When broken down on a regional basis, that figure is well beyond anything that could be met from the budgets of even the truest blue, most loyal, Conservative local authority. It can be neither contemplated nor met at local authority level. It is the Government, centrally controlling the purse strings, who are causing so many of the difficulties.

Roughly 95 per cent. of the elderly live in their own homes. Therefore, an effective network of community services is essential. The Griffiths report recently emphasised the need for more money and support for community care; for example, for respite care. However, successive Select Committee reports, and other reports, have shown that the Government have not given as adequately or as generously as they should if they are to make that welcome policy become a reality.

I come now to a feature of community care which we have long advocated—improving support for the carers through the introduction of a carers' charter. We have still not seen adequate movement on that by the Government, despite encouraging signs from the previous Secretary of State prior to the last general election.

Taken in totality, those and the many other points that will doubtless arise during the debate point to a Government who are not meeting their obligation to distribute the tax revenues of the realm in a way that is

[Mr. Charles Kennedy]

appropriate to the priorities of most people, one of which would be provision for the elderly. The Prime Minister has frequently been quoted as saying that she considers that there is no such thing as society. I hope that that is an example of her being economic with the truth.

Surely, if one truth holds, especially for this subject, it is that in an interdependent, interrelated society such as we have in Britain at the moment a Government can best be summed up by looking at what they offer to those at the two ends of the age spectrum. They should offer a sense of idealism and opportunity for their young, and a sense of comfort and security for their old. In this country those things are available to many, but they are not available to a sufficient number. In many parts of the country substantial sections of the population, especially the elderly, do not enjoy comfort and security. The Government should at least try to create the conditions for those needs to be met. I hope that tonight's debate will be a reminder to the Government that more needs to be done in that policy area. I commend our motion to the House.

7.45 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security (Mr. Michael Portillo): I beg to move, to leave out from "House" to the end of the Question and to add instead thereof:

"congratulates the Government on the success of its policies for pensioners, in particular the control of inflation and the stimulation of the economy, which together have dramatically improved pensioners' total incomes; commends the Government for the increased resources now available to the National Health Service; concurs in the Government's determination to ensure that the considerable resources committed to community care are put to the best possible use; and endorses the recent reforms of social security, not least because they increase the choice of future pension provision.".

I am genuinely grateful to the hon. Member for Ross, Cromarty and Skye (Mr. Kennedy) for the opportunity to have this debate on the position of the elderly in our society. I agree with much of what he said. I agree that the working population of our nation has important responsibilities towards those who are retired, not least because when they were the working population those who are now retired made their contributions to pay for the people who were then elderly. However, more than that, we have a responsibility to the elderly because they are the generation who fought and suffered in the wars of this century and who lost a great deal in the inflation of the 1970s.

The debate is a good opportunity to reflect on the needs and worries of the elderly who face poor health, failing capacities, loneliness, cold and inflation. I believe that for many—not for all, but for many—the worst of those problems has been inflation. I say that because inflation dealt them a double blow: an almost lethal financial blow, with repercussions on their health and ability to face the other problems of old age; and deprived them also of their independence, pride and self-esteem.

I begin unashamedly, broadening the context of the debate, by declaring that there was no stronger duty upon the Government than to control inflation and no greater benefit has come to the elderly than the gain that they have received from our success in controlling inflation.

Under the previous Labour Government, we all know that inflation reached 27 per cent. However, to understand that, let me illustrate what that would mean today. If inflation over 12 months ran at that level, the basic single pension, worth £41·15, would be reduced by £8·75 over that 12-month period and the couple's pension, worth £65·90, would be reduced by £14 in just 12 months.

The effect on any occupational pension that a pensioner might have would be just as devastating. Most damaging of all would be the effect on savings. In fact, during the period of both the Labour and Lib-Lab Governments, the value of pensioners' nest eggs in building societies fell by a third, and their income from savings fell by 16 per cent. in real terms.

Today the position is very different. The House is well aware of our pledge to maintain the value of the retirement pension in real terms and of our success in honouring that pledge. However, the retirement pension is only one element in the income of most pensioners and, because of that, the average living standards of pensioners have risen rapidly as inflation has come under control.

Mr. Kennedy: As the Minister wants to broaden the context of the debate, I hope that, when considering the value of the retirement pension and the figures that he has quoted, he will not forget the decision of the Conservative Government in the early days after 1979 to break the earnings link. Can he give the House the equivalent figures for what the pension would be worth now?

Mr. Portillo: For the hon. Gentleman's sake, I am sorry to say that I intend to address that issue later in my speech. I am not sure that he will enjoy it quite as much as he thinks.

In 1985, 70 per cent. of pensioners had incomes from savings compared with 60 per cent. in 1979. Not only do more people now have income from savings, but this income in real terms has increased by about half. Over half of all pensioners, including 70 per cent. of recently retired couples, have income from occupational pensions. Only four out of 10 of all pensioners had such income in 1979. Not only do most pensioners have occupational pensions, but the real value of their average income from such pensions has increased by more than 7 per cent. a year from 1979 to 1985. As a result of those factors, average pensioner living standards rose by 18 per cent. between 1979 and 1985—a faster rate than for the population as a whole and for the working population. By 1985, the average pensioner couple had a gross income of about seven tenths of the wage of the average male manual worker. We have every expectation that the growth trend in living standards will continue strongly as more people retire with second pensions.

Mr. Archy Kirkwood (Roxburgh and Berwickshire) *rose*——

Mr. Portillo: If the hon. Gentleman is going to ask "What about the rest?", which is what he has asked before, I shall come to that.

Mr. Kirkwood: Will the hon. Gentleman give way, on a different point?

Mr. Portillo: I give way.

Mr. Kirkwood: I am following the Minister's argument carefully. He may be interested to know that I strongly support the move in the direction of occupational pensions, which, by the end of the century, will provide for the vast majority of people who have retired and enable them to sustain their living conditions. The problem is that, between now and then, people on supplementary pensions will suffer grinding poverty. It is no good the Minister talking about averages; he must address that problem as well. I agree that occupational pensions and state earnings-related pensions will iron out the difference in the long term, but we are worried about the short term.

Mr. Portillo: I cannot make my entire speech in four minutes, especially if I keep giving way. I am coming to the hon. Gentleman's point.

The motion calls for an increase in the real value of pensions. I understand that desire, but it misses the point, just as the hon. Member for Ross, Cromarty and Skye did when he intervened. In the past, when an attempt was made to raise the pension in line with earnings or prices, the result was not a rapid increase in pensioners' living standards. The increase was minimal—3 per cent. over the period 1974 to 1979—as thousands who had fended for themselves were brought down by inflation into reliance on state benefits. As usual, the real problem is more complicated than the hon. Gentleman or Britain's middle party is prepared to acknowledge.

I should like to say something about how we compare with the rest of Europe. In the past, simplistic comparisons between pensions in the United Kingdom and pensions in, say, Germany have been made most notably in press advertisements issued by the Labour party's Euro MPs. The difficulties of comparison are obvious. Here we have a basic pension, but no one is expected to live off that alone. A couple with nothing else would receive income support and housing benefit, lifting their weekly benefit from the state far above the pension of £65·90 to over £90 a week in an average case, to which could be added free prescriptions and dental treatment, social service support, concessionary fares, and so on.

In Germany, there is no basic pension—only earnings-related pensions—and no comparable system of housing benefit. Germany, therefore, has both richer pensioners, who were chosen for the Labour party's press campaign, and poorer pensioners, whom it ignored. It is ironic that, by implication, the Labour party embraces a system that involves greater inequality than ours, based on what people earn rather than what they need. This may be another appeal by the Labour party for the yuppie vote.

There is only one basis of comparison that the European Statistical Bureau is prepared to endorse—the proportion of GDP spent on the elderly. On that basis, Britain at 9·6 per cent. is third, just behind Denmark and France. The hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) has not risen because, I suspect, she is embarrassed by the Labour Euro MPs' campaign. The hon. Lady would, of course, appreciate the difficulties of comparison.

I want to turn to poorer pensioners because I recognise that there are people without savings, occupational pensions or SERPS. Even among that group there are observable improvements in living standards, and I ask the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) to recognise that fact. The luxuries of a few years ago—such as televisions, telephones and washing machines—have reached many of the very poorest. They have enjoyed increases in income. Between 1981 and 1985, the incomes of the poorest 10 per cent. of the population increased by more than 8 per cent. compared with 6·4 per cent. for the population as a whole. In the same period, the number of pensioners in that group—the bottom 10 per cent.—fell from 18 to 8 per cent. The proportion of pensioners requiring income support is falling.

The new income support system recognises the extra needs of the elderly. Income support for a single pensioner covers the value of his or her supplementary benefit scale rate, the standard heating addition, average water charges and 20 per cent. of average rates. A pensioner couple automatically receive £16·25 a week more than an unemployed couple who are under 60 and £18·60 a week more if they are disabled or over 80. The same rates form the basis of the more generous housing benefit provision for the elderly than for those under 60.

I know that the greatest concern to hon. Members—it was an important part of the speech of the hon. Member for Ross, Cromarty and Skye—arising from the social security reforms has been housing benefit. I remind the hon. Gentleman that those on income support continue to receive 100 per cent. help with their rents and get the maximum help—80 per cent.—with rates. Their income support contains £1·30 for the average of 20 per cent. of rates. Therefore, the starting point for the calculation of housing benefit also contains that £1·30. The new housing benefit system gives more help to many of those who have to pay high rents and far greater protection against future rises in rent and rates for all housing benefit recipients.

It was our aim to reduce the numbers on housing benefit because, with one household in three receiving it, it had been an extraordinarily distended benefit. But even today about 6 million people receive housing benefit. The savings made by the taxpayer on housing benefit, quoted by the hon. Member for Ross, Cromarty and Skye, are outweighed by the compensation for 20 per cent. of rates added to income support, by the extra money devoted to family credit and by transitional protection. The hon. Gentleman was wrong to refer to the 20 per cent. as an addition to the reductions in housing benefit. He did not refer to the fact that the reductions in housing benefit accounted for by the 20 per cent. of rates is then recognised in the income support rates.

Mrs. Margaret Beckett (Derby, South): The hon. Member for Ross, Cromarty and Skye (Mr. Kennedy) was too kind to the Government. Although he mentioned the £1·30 that the Government claim to have added to the rates of income support to compensate for what they say is the average amount of rates, he omitted to mention the £150 million that the Government clawed back from those basic rates before they added the £1·30. The real value is not £1·30 but 80p for a couple. The Government saved £150 million by that sleight of hand.

Mr. Portillo: I do not recognise the hon. Lady's figures. I was taking issue with the hon. Member for Ross, Cromarty and Skye about the fact that he made it sound as though £540 million had been removed from housing benefit without compensation and, in addition, 20 per cent. had been demanded of people in their rates. The record will bear me out, if the hon. Gentleman checks it.

Because those on income support receive maximum housing benefit, on the whole, the concern about large losses has centred on people whose income puts them some way above income support levels. It is worth stressing that, however large those losses have been for some, they still have incomes after meeting their housing costs which are

[Mr. Portillo]

higher than if they were on income support. The new housing benefit system guarantees that that will be so for everyone paying rent and rates.

We recognise that a drop in income is hard for the elderly to adjust to, and we have responded to the difficulties that have been brought to our attention. The transitional payments unit at Glasgow is up and running and the first payments have already been made. The elderly, along with the disabled, families with children and widow's pensioners, can apply for compensation for reductions in their housing benefits above £2·50 a week. Arrears will be met back to the start of the new scheme in April and payments will continue for as long as necessary. Payments will, of course, be disregarded in working out normal benefit entitlement. We have taken steps to publicise the scheme and will take further steps. I am glad to announce that later this month we will run a further national advertising campaign.

The best advice to those who think that they might be entitled is that they should apply. The form—RR4—is straightforward and available from post offices, local authorities, advice centres and, of course, DHSS offices. In addition, I know that a number of local authorities will be trawling their housing benefit records to trace those likely to qualify.

Pensions and other cash benefits do not tell the whole story. We are concerned not just with the income of elderly people but with their quality of life. For many, that means staying at home with their friends and relatives for as long as they can. Expenditure on NHS services and personal social services mainly used by elderly people increased in real terms between 1978 and 1986 by 22 per cent. and 15 per cent., respectively. The elderly have gained significantly from the major advances in surgery. For example, between 1979 and 1985, the number of joint operations increased by 14,000 and the number of eye lens operations —mostly for cataracts—by 19,000.

Within the social security budget, there is a wide range of benefits which support elderly disabled people in their homes. Attendance allowance is paid to more than 400,000 people over pension age, some two thirds of all those who receive it—and it is an important element in helping with the financial burden faced by elderly, severely disabled people when living in their own homes.

We have long recognised the financial sacrifice that many carers make, and invalid care allowance is paid to almost 100,000 carers to help mantain their income. None the less, I certainly recognise that many carers give up years of their lives to care for parents, wives, husbands, sons or daughters, whether they receive benefits from the state or not. Those carers probably make as big a contribution as social services or social security, and we should never forget them.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): What is the position of a man who retires under the age of 60 with a bad heart, who is not eligible for constant attendance allowance, whose wife is advised to give up her job to look after him and who, because he does not receive constant attendance allowance, cannot get a carer's allowance? What will happen to such people?

Mr. Portillo: I am wary about answering detailed cases, but in general, if that person were receiving invalidity benefit, he could receive an addition to his invalidity benefit in respect of his dependent wife. That would help to maintain their income.

In all the talk of the decline of the family, we should recognise that the family remains the most important source of support to the elderly, and we could never hope, and should never aim, to displace it—nor, indeed, the voluntary sector which supports the elderly and the carers.

Although we want as many elderly people as possible to live at home—and 95 per cent. of them do—we recognise that for some elderly people it is not possible or desirable. The House will be well aware of the very large contribution being made from supplementary benefit to support people who go into residential care or nursing homes. The figure has increased from £10 million in 1979 to £670 million in 1987. The number of people helped in that way has risen from 12,000 to 170,000.

That raises a serious point. If we spend too much on people in homes, we may be putting community support at risk and people may have to enter homes because domiciliary support is not available. At present, we are considering a number of reports, particularly Sir Roy Griffiths' report. We shall study them carefully, as they merit, and bring forward proposals in due course.

A point which underlies today's debate—it was certainly highlighted by the hon. Member for Ross, Cromarty and Skye—is the rapid rise in the numbers of elderly people. During the next century there will be one and half times as many pensioners as today, and broadly the same working population. Whatever levels of benefit are paid to the elderly in the next century, it must be sensible to encourage those of working age today to provide for their retirement, particularly at a time when participation in work by men and women is so high, when real wages are rising and unemployment is falling.

The thrust of our pensions reforms has been to broaden choice in pensions, to heighten awareness of the need to provide for the future and to increase the numbers covered by occupational pension schemes. There is increasingly little reason why retirement and poverty should be in any way connected. Our reforms will continue to break that connection, but without the risk of impoverishing the working population of the future and without choking off economic growth.

Our policies address every aspect of the pensioner's needs. Economic growth is essential if we are to support an increasing number of pensioners. That people should provide for the future alongside the state schemes is necessary, if high living standards are to be maintained into retirement. Inflation must be controlled if that individual provision is to hold its value in the years when it is drawn upon.

By pursuing those policies, there will be scope for families, on the one hand, and for the NHS, local authorities, social security and voluntary bodies, on the other, to provide support to the elderly: to enable them to remain in their homes while they can, and to take up residential places if they cannot.

Today's motion—which, obviously, I oppose—is in many ways sadly misguided, but it does have one merit to which I pay tribute. It recognises that the needs of the elderly are complex and are about much more than just the level of pensions. The Government have addressed every aspect of the question, and most importantly the need for economic growth which is the key to everything else. That is why I commend our amendment to the House.

8.4 pm

Mrs. Margaret Beckett (Derby, South): I listened with considerable interest to the Minister's observations, which echoed in their complacency the wording of the Government amendment. Perhaps at this point we should commemorate the fact that this week we are celebrating not only the 40th anniversary of the National Health Service, but the 40th anniversary of the establishment of national insurance benefits, of which the most well known and the most taken for granted is a reasonable income in retirement, a pension which should allow our fellow citizens to enjoy dignity and independence in their declining years.

Perhaps the most vital lesson that the Government should have taught us—although, sadly, some of us seem to be slow learners—is that nothing can be taken for granted. In recent years sneaking worries have become apparent, even on the Conservative Benches, that the Government were being so unwise as to undermine, and even threatening to demolish, the National Health Service.

With the exception of a few more expert or vigilant souls, the realisation has not yet become widespread that, at the same time as weakening the service to the sick, the Government are cutting back on the rest of the welfare state and are undermining that other post-war consensus. Pensioners who lived through at least one and in some cases two major wars have earned the right, not just to the lip-service of respect, but to financial support from us in their retirement, in the same way as they offered financial support to us in our childhood. What a tragic, wicked irony it is that those whose sacrifices helped to justify the establishment of the welfare state should be at the sharp end when, after 40 years, a Conservative Government start to demolish the welfare state, whose existence so many of them have silently resented for 40 years.

Ministers and Tory Back Benchers speak of rising numbers of elderly people as if they are nothing but a problem. As the hon. Member for Ross, Cromarty and Skye (Mr. Kennedy) said, they do not celebrate the success of better health care, housing and diet in an extended life span, let alone make available public funds even to maintain, let alone improve, the benefits for which so many have sacrificed so much.

I noted the Minister's observations about the level of spending on community care. I remind him again, as Opposition Members have reminded him so often, that most of the contributions to the Budget for which the Government like to claim credit in these debates is from Labour councils which the Government rate-capped and about whose expenditure on social services the Secretary of State for the Environment, the Prime Minister and Conservative Members complain.

The Government complain—as the Minister almost strayed into doing today—about there being more pensioners, as if it were news, as if the pensioners had been beamed down from Mars, and as if they had no right still to be around. They call them a burden on the working population—to use the Prime Minister's words. Surely it must have been clear, at the latest since 1928, roughly how many pensioners there would be this year. Those to whom apparently it comes as a surprise are guilty of culpable ignorance on a grand scale. But the Government are guilty of something worse than ignorance. They are guilty of deliberately rejecting that consensus about our duty to our elderly citizens.

The effect of the changes that the Government have made in pensions—to which the Minister referred hardly at all—is to reduce the provision made for pensions to well below the level provided today. I find it particularly disgraceful that at the same time as the Government are ensuring lower provisions for pensioners they are doing everything they can, for short-term political gain, to increase expectations.

In the comparative secrecy of Standing or Select Committee, or in this debate in the Chamber—in a speech that I suspect the Minister will not circulate to the pensioner organisations in his constituency—Ministers may talk about the need to reduce pension expectations, but the propaganda machine is working in entirely the opposite direction. The Government are deliberately encouraging the young in particular into the new, so-called personal pension schemes. In the process they are also encouraging disparaging comparisons with the state scheme. I imagine that hardly any of those who are attracted by this propaganda will realise until, unfortunately, too near their own retirement that the comparison is with a state scheme that has been halved in value by the Government and that, even if their investments are successful, and even if they never have a sustained period of unemployment or sickness, the pension that even the better off can expect to receive will be worth less than the basic state pension of today.

Mr. Tony Favell (Stockport): The hon. Lady denigrates the Government's efforts to encourage people to provide for their old age. Does she not agree that the vast majority of people take both pleasure and pride in providing for their old age?

Mrs. Beckett: Either the hon. Gentleman has not been listening, or he has not understood a word of what I am saying. I do not denigrate the idea of people providing for their old age. I hope that many people will be able to earn enough, despite the Government's encouragement of a low-wage economy, to do precisely that. The last Labour Government did far more than this Government have done to encourage the growth of occupational pension schemes. *[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Lancaster (Dame E. Kellett-Bowman) has clearly not looked at the record, if she thinks that that is amusing.

The last Labour Government put enormous effort, as the occupational pensions industry will tell her, into encouraging the growth of good occupational pension schemes, for the benefits of which the Government attempt to claim credit. I do not disparage provision for one's old age, but I condemn the deliberate reduction of pension provision. That is precisely what the Government are doing. If the hon. Member for Stockport (Mr. Favell) thinks that they are not, I recommend to him the technical annex to the 1985 White Paper. The Government are reducing pension provision, while at the same time talking up pension expectations. That is what is so dangerous and damaging, and that is what the Opposition condemn.

The Government have savaged the state pension scheme and the standards that have to be met by occupational pension schemes because they say that the cost of the scheme, unamended, was miscalculated, that it was spiralling out of control and that it could not be afforded. That is just not true. The cost of the state earnings-related pension scheme was not significantly different in 1985, when this Government tried to abolish it,

[Mrs. Beckett]

from the cost that was anticipated in 1975 when the scheme was introduced by the Labour Government, with the consent of the then Conservative Opposition. That is not just our judgment. It is the considered and publicly expressed view of the Government Actuary, who said, in words simple enough for even Conservative Members to understand, that it was the "political will" to meet the cost that had changed, not the cost itself.

Even if it had been true that in 1985 the Government found pensioners of whose existence we were all ignorant in 1975, with financial consequences then unforeseen, the cuts in pension provision that this Government had already made would have more than taken care of the problem. The Government claimed in 1985 to be worried about the level of the national insurance contribution that would be needed to meet the full cost of the state earnings-related pensions scheme, although they ignored again the Government Actuary's figures—not ours—which showed a decline in the overall ratio of those dependent on the working population for support because of the effect of a declining birth rate. However, the break in the link between earnings and the basic state pension had already wiped out the extra cost by the time the Government made these proposals in 1985.

The state earnings-related pension scheme—untouched and unmodified by the 1986 Act—would have done no more than make up for the dramatically declining value of the basic pension, leaving the pensioners of tomorrow at least no worse off, though no better off, than today's pensioners. But that was too much, too generous and too costly for this Government. In their determination to cut the cost of provision for retirement, in their dogmatic zeal to make a rotten buy—the Fowler plan for penury in retirement—look like a good buy, they halved the value of SERPS as well. They have deliberately legislated to reduce the standard of living of tomorrow's pensioners below that of today's pensioners, by whatever means their pension is provided.

The Government, who justified the case for this change by saying that it would mean raising too much money through national insurance contributions, are in this year alone raising, through those contributions—which hit the lowest paid the worst—£2,000 million more than they need for the national insurance benefits now in payment. They are making a profit of a cool £2,000 million this year at the expense either of the pensioner or of the national insurance contributor, depending on how one chooses to look at it. But no matter how one looks at it, it cannot be squared with the Government's concern for the national insurance contributor, as expressed in 1985.

Nor should we look too narrowly just at pensioners' incomes. The Government have taken to boasting—the Under-Secretary of State did it again today—that, thanks to the improvement in occupational pensions—fostered by previous Governments of all colours, even previous Conservative Governments, who were more sensible than this one, because of the post-war consensus of which I spoke but which the Government are so spectacularly breaking—the average standard of living for pensioners has risen sharply in recent years.

Mr. Favell: Does the hon. Lady accept the Government's figures that, without change, the cost of the SERPS scheme would rise from £200 million a year now to £23,000 million a year by 2033? How would that be paid for?

Mrs. Beckett: I am not sure that I accept the hon. Gentleman's last figure.

Mr. Favell: It was £23,000 million a year.

Mrs. Beckett: Yes, I heard it, but I am not entirely sure that I accept it. I cannot recall from memory whether it is correct. However, again I wonder whether the hon. Gentleman has been listening to me.

There has been no change in the cost of SERPS, to which the Conservative party agreed in 1975 when in opposition and then in 1985 when in government. There was no argument then about the fact that there would be a peak in the year that the hon. Gentleman quoted and that at that stage the level of national insurance contributions would need to be raised. However, we are talking about a period of 50 years. I hope that the hon. Gentleman accepts—perhaps it is not mentioned in the brief with which he has been supplied—that by 1985 that cost was well out of the window. The Government had more than saved on the damage that they had done to the basic pension, whatever might have been expected in the increased cost of SERPS.

That is the point that I am making to the hon. Gentleman and his hon. Friends, little though they like it. Whether or not they recognise it, their Government smashed the standard of living that could have been enjoyed from the basic pension, and now they have done the same thing with SERPS. The inevitable result, according to the Government's own figures, set out with admirable clarity in the technical annex to the 1985 White Paper, is that in future the total pension will be less than the basic state pension today. That is what the Government have legislated for, and that is what the hon. Gentleman and his colleagues have voted for. I am not surprised that they do not like it. They will like it even less as time goes on, but it is the pensioners who will like it least of all.

The Government boast of the improvement in the average standard of living of pensioners, but it is the Government who have done so much to claw back the benefit of those improvements. The Government penalise those with occupational pensions of over £35 a week—a figure that has remained unchanged for years. That penalty does not apply to pensioners whose extra money comes from investment. It applies only to those for whom it comes from their work. In nine years the Government have increased the basic pension by only 5 per cent. in real terms, compared with 20 per cent. in real terms under the last Labour Government in half the time. At the same time, they have doubled VAT, put special taxes on gas and electricity and scrapped the concessionary scheme for standing charges for fuel that the Labour Government introduced.

Mr. David Martin (Portsmouth, South): Is the hon. Lady able to explain why the electorate, so badly treated, returned a Conservative Government in 1983 and then in 1987 with such massive majorities? Why did the hon. Lady's party lose so resoundingly in 1979 if the Labour Government were treating so many pensioners so well?

Mrs. Beckett: The hon. Gentleman may have heard me comment earlier that some people appear not to have learnt the lesson that is taught by the figures. The Government won a victory, but does that make any difference to the figures that I have given? Does it mean that the Government are providing more money than I have identified? Does it mean that they are not basically cutting the cost of pensions and of SERPS? No; it means that they got away with it. It means also—and I do not know how long the hon. Gentleman thinks he will serve in the House—that some future Government, of whatever party, will live bitterly to rue the day that his Government took the action that they did. Comments of the kind that he has made will be utterly irrelevant then, as they are fairly irrelevant now.

This is the Government who—as the hon. Member for Ross, Cromarty and Skye commented—have cut £650 million from rent and rate rebates. Most of that has been at the expense of those having only small war or occupational pensions, about which the Under-Secretary of State has been boasting. This is the Government who offered nothing to the oldest and poorest pensioners, who—as was said by the hon. Member for Stockport—never had the opportunity to provide for their retirement because they never enjoyed a decent wage during all the years of their working lives.

Pensioners have been given no advice except, to be fair, that of the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie), who said that they should mortgage their homes, or give up holidays that they cannot anyway afford, to pay for operations that the Government will not fund because they choose instead to give the money to the wealthiest in the land. This is the Government who offer no extra help, no matter what the need, to the pensioner couple who have saved just about enough to pay for their funerals. This is the Government who have reintroduced into a system founded on hard won rights the need to beg for charity.

The Under-Secretary of State and his hon. Friends have been, and are, very complacent about the Government's record on pensions. To some of them I do the justice—although they may not care for it—of assuming that they are unaware of the consequences and implications of the Government decisions for which they voted. To them I say bluntly that the Government are betraying this country. They should be ashamed that those who have earned so much now receive so little. Unless the policies which the Government have been pursuing are reversed, in 30 or 40 years' time hon. Members, in whatever part of the House they may sit, will be as astonished as they will be aghast at the legacy of poverty and neglect that the present Government bequeathed to them.

We for our part remain convinced that it is the duty, as much as it should be the pride, of the family of the nation to care for its elderly members. It is a duty that we shall not shirk.

8.22 pm

Mr. David Atkinson (Bournemouth, East): I represent a constituency that has one of the highest proportions of pensioners in its population. When I was elected to the House nearly 11 years ago, one of the major issues then was the disastrous effect that the policies of the last Labour Government were having on pensioners, with the erosion of their savings by inflation, of their investment income by taxation, and of their dividends by control. At that time, Labour was being sustained in office by the party responsible for the motion we are debating this evening.

Today it is a different story, but as memories fade, pensioners should be frequently reminded of what they and their predecessors went through 10 to 15 years ago. Compared with their predecessor, this Government have a first-class record in responding to pensioners' demands and needs. My hon. Friend the Minister referred to some of those responses this afternoon. The conquest of double-figure inflation, which was the pensioners' worst enemy, has to be our major achievement, with an average of 5 per cent. inflation compared with 15 per cent. under the last Labour Government. There is also the continuing fulfilment of the Prime Minister's pledge that the Government will never allow the value of state pensions to fall behind the cost of living. There was also our response to pensioners' complaints, which brought forward the annual increase from November to April.

The Government's responses also included an entitlement by law to the annual Christmas bonus, which Labour abolished for two years because its economy could not afford it. The abolition of the grossly unfair domestic rating system, for which elderly owner-occupiers have been crying out for decades, is now in sight. As was mentioned in debate yesterday, pensioners in particular have also benefited from the real increase in resources to the National Health Service since 1979. That has brought a 20 per cent. increase in hospital nurses caring for geriatric patients, a 34 per cent. increase in consultant geriatricians, and an increase in the number of hip replacement operations from 28,000 a year in 1978 to 40,000 today.

Those are all achievements that cannot be ignored and for which the Government deserve full credit. However, I accept that none of that suggests that we should not be doing more for pensioners, because there is more to be done. Inflation is still far too high at 4 to 5 per cent. That represents a halving of the value of savings during the average period of retirement, and that is higher than the figure other countries have been achieving for several years. I hope that the Government will redouble their efforts to achieve their target of zero inflation.

Although the majority of pensioners have a second income and are doing well by it, 15 per cent. still rely entirely on the state retirement pension. Many of them have been unable to afford to invest in a second pension, with war service and the post-war years denying them the opportunities which exist today. The time has come for those pensioners to enjoy a better share in the economic success achieved under our Government, and I want all future annual increases in the basic state pension to be at least 1 per cent. higher than inflation.

The Government continue to provide extra help to the over-80s—with, for example, the extra allowance in last year's Budget and a higher premium of income support—but I ask them now to replace the historic 25p increase, which has to be an insult, with a better deal for those reaching the age of 80.

Another anachronism is the earnings rule, which the Government pledged to abolish in each of the last three elections. Maintaining a rewarding occupation is one of the best incentives to a healthy old age. To remove all remaining restrictions will cost about £85 million, and I hope that the Chancellor of the Exchequer will do so in his next Budget.

Thanks to the prosperity generated by the Government's policies, in which the majority of pensioners have shared, income is no longer the problem that it was.

[Mr. David Atkinson]

Today, many old people are more in fear of bad health, of loneliness, and of the immobility that often results from having no family, friends or neighbours who really care —bearing in mind that 30 per cent. of all pensioners live alone and that 80 per cent. of them are women. I should like the Government to present a package of policies complementing their pension strategy and offering new incentives and encouragement to provide for health and housing needs in old age. For example, I hope that the Treasury will, as part of my right hon. Friend's NHS review, concede tax relief to pensioners wishing to take out private health insurance.

I hope that we have not heard the last of attempts to help the elderly to retain their financial independence by realising the asset value of their homes, as was proposed by my hon. Friend the Member for Bournemouth, West (Mr. Butterfill), with his scheme for this year's Finance Bill, giving tax relief on home annuity loans, which the Government have declined to accept. I hope also that further thought will be given to schemes bringing the private provision of sheltered accommodation for the elderly with supporting health services—such as that pioneered by McCarthy and Stone in my own constituency —within the means of all who have the asset of a home to realise.

Finally, I make a plea on behalf of those pensioners whose investments in Barlow Clowes are now so obviously at risk. They have been asked to register their interests with the liquidators and to report to FIMBRA where financial intermediaries have been involved. Many elderly people will be confused by all that. Will my hon. Friend ensure that special advice and assistance will be made available, perhaps at post offices, to those elderly people who need it in respect of Barlow Clowes?

8.29 pm

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones (Ynys Môn): As we have heard already tonight, the problems faced by the elderly must be seen in the context of the tremendous growth in the proportion of elderly people in society. An OECD study referred to in today's *Financial Times* notes that the percentage of the population aged 65 and over in the United Kingdom will increase substantially from just over 15 per cent. in 1985 to 28·7 per cent. in 2050. Alongside that figure is the realisation that health spending on the over-65s is more than four times as high per capita as spending on the under-65s. For the over-75s, the proportion rises to almost six times. Figures published by the Welsh Office suggest that there will be an increase of 50,000 in people aged over 75 in the next 20 years, and that in the United Kingdom generally there will be over 1 million more pensioners by 2025 and a substantial increase in the number of those over 75 and over 85.

The Government recognised that their stated policy of caring for old people in their own homes and within their local communities had not been working, so they asked Sir Roy Griffiths to prepare a report. It is clear that we now need a fresh look at community care in the light of the increase in the elderly population that we face in the next three decades.

The Public Accounts Committee report published on 25 April this year shows that between 1980 and 1985 the number of elderly people accommodated in private and voluntary homes increased by over 100 per cent., and that the level of supplementary benefit used to finance that accommodation rose from £18 million to an estimated £459 million in 1986. Clearly, substantial additional resources have been targeted to that sector. But the same report also pointed out that up to 23 per cent. of claimants entering residential homes could have stayed in their own homes for longer periods had appropriate community support services been made available. In my view, resources have been targeted in the wrong direction.

The PAC report said that since 1974 the Department of Health and Social Security had, under statute, required the NHS and local authorities to co-operate in planning and operating complementary health care services. The report also noted, however, that progress on producing jointly planned strategies had been slow and was hindered by differences in planning time scales, in accountability and management structure and, in some areas, in geographical boundaries between health and local authorities. The lack of joint planning is one of the reasons why care in the community remains a dream rather than a reality, and the Government must address the issue now.

In 1976, the Department introduced joint finance arrangements under which area and district health authorities made annual grants to local authorities and voluntary bodies for approved community-based schemes. Grants are for set periods, and are subject to tapering in the final years. As the House knows, there has been a growing reluctance on the part of local authorities to take up that initiative, as they are ultimately responsible for continued funding and set the charge against other priorities that they may have for spending within their own budgets.

The National Audit Office report, published in October last year, also referred to the difficulties encountered in joint planning and collaboration between authorities and various agencies. The report pointed out that supplementry benefit is paid to claimants in residential care without any assessment of the need for that care. It referred to pilot studies commissioned by the Department, disclosing that in about 93 per cent. of cases examined the claimants were found to be in need of care. If, however, the appropriate accommodation and intensive support services had been available in the community, that figure would have been substantially reduced.

In my view, there should be a shift away from care in residential homes towards more support for community-based services. The National Audit Office report that some elderly people currently in residential care could continue to live in their own homes for longer periods if such support were available. This highlights the importance of providing such reports where necessary, and points to the need for further research on whether some forms of assessment should be undertaken to ensure value for money for both the resident—who should obtain the most appropriate form of care—and, of course, the taxpayer.

Now we come to the Griffiths report, which the Government are so reluctant to debate here. That report on community care, entitled "Agenda for Action", addressed itself to the problems encountered with joint planning and collaboration between the various agencies, and recommended that the main responsibility for community care of the old and other priority groups should be concentrated in the hands of local authorities. The services—including residential care, day centres, hostels, home helps and meals on wheels—are now run variously by the NHS, health authorities, the private sector and local authority social services departments. Under the Griffiths proposals, local authorities would handle the amount currently spent through social security on places in private and voluntary residential care homes.

Sir Roy Griffiths spent a year investigating the way in which the switch from long-stay hospitals to care in the community is operating. We all have experiences of the problems that that creates for the elderly. I am sure that every hon. Member will have experienced the nightmare of being telephoned by families at the weekend, or perhaps late at night, saying that the hospital insists that an old person leaves and goes either home or to a residential home immediately. Such families are put into a tremendous quandary. They are faced with old people being asked to leave hospital because they no longer need the acute medical attention that they have been receiving. They may have had a period of recuperation, but the families are then faced with a problem because the support for community care is not there.

The conclusions of Sir Roy Griffiths match those already outlined in the reports by the National Audit Office and the Public Accounts Committee: that a clear responsibility must be given to one body or authority for monitoring and developing care in the community, because joint planning has failed. I fear—as, I am sure, do many other hon. Members—that, owing to the Government's pathological antipathy towards local authorities, the Griffiths recommendations will not be acted on, and we shall face the massive population explosion among the elderly without a coherent strategy.

Let me again draw to the House's attention the decision by the DHSS and the Welsh Office to withdraw funding from the research team for the care of the elderly, based at the University of Wales college of medicine in Cardiff, from January next year. It seems to me the height of folly to withdraw funding from a department that is looking at a number of the problems that we have been addressing tonight, and has gained expertise not only in monitoring specific schemes but in piloting new ideas.

Poverty levels among pensioners in Wales are on the increase. Eighteen per cent. of pensioner households in Wales were wholly dependent on benefits in 1987. Now 20 per cent. are. Coupled with the cuts in housing benefit for pensioners with modest savings, Government policies have hit pensioners especially hard in recent years. I urge the Government to set pensions at a level that will ensure that pensioners can live with the dignity and the measure of independence to which they are entitled.

8.40 pm

Mr. Anthony Nelson (Chichester): The hon. Member for Ynys Môn (Mr. Jones) spoke with great conviction and sincerity, and I pay tribute to what he said. Few of us would not share many of the sentiments that he expressed about the importance of community care, which is an accepted trend in modern attitudes towards supporting the elderly. To some extent, local health authorities are already putting his views into practice. Of course there are financial constraints on them and thus on the pace at which change can take place, but the hon. Gentleman did the House and his constituents a service in reminding us of the importance of this subject.

I thought the hon. Gentleman's speech was in stark contrast to those of some Opposition Members this evening. For example, the hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) indulged in a bit of political hyperbole, not to say downright cheek. Anyone would think that she had not been a Labour Member between 1974 and 1979 and that she dissociated herself entirely from a Government who, as my hon. Friend the Member for Bournemouth, East (Mr. Atkinson) reminded us, was responsible for inflation at 27 per cent. and a standard rate of income tax of 35 per cent. Let us not forget that that Government took away the pensioners' Christmas bonus for two years, or that they increased the retirement pension by 0·6 per cent. a year during those five years, compared with the real increase every year under this Government of 2·7 per cent. —a total increase of more than 18 per cent. in real terms.

The hon. Lady was a member of the party and Government that presided over a time of economic disaster at the end of which we were led to the International Monetary Fund with our begging bowl. It was a time when the lot of the poor and the elderly was meagre. Not a pensioner in the country would swap the financial support they receive from the Government today for that which they received in 1979. They are all better off——

Mr. Tom Clarke (Monklands, West): A number of my constituents worked in the oil industry and are now pensioners. What benefit have they gained from oil revenues under this Government?

Mr. Nelson: If it is not self-evident to the hon. Gentleman that the country's economy and standards of social support and of living after tax have improved immeasurably, nothing that I say would be likely to persuade him. The comparison that I made was fair.

The hon. Member for Ross, Cromarty and Skye (Mr. Kennedy) is highly respected on both sides of the House and I pay tribute to what he said. His speech was delivered in measured tones and I, like my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary, believe that there is a good deal in his party's motion. However, he has not been in government, and his party always indulges in generous promises at other people's expense. As it is never likely to be in government, it can afford to be more generous about not having a capital limit for entitlement to housing benefit.

I was pleased that my hon. Friend the Minister said that the Government had adjusted their view on this important matter in response to representations. The extraordinary thing is that, when the Goverment do something that is apparently wrong or unpopular, and there is an outcry, they are called intransigent if they do nothing about it. But if, in response to parliamentary and public pressure, they recognise that changes need to be made, they are accused of only looking after their own for narrow political purposes. Of course we are looking after the wider public interest and seeking to be re-elected—that is wholly proper and honourable. No doubt we should not be re-elected if we did not deliver. So far the record shows that the electorate and pensioners are at least reasonably happy with the record of the Government, to which I pay tribute tonight.

On top of the genuine increase in the state retirement pension and the reduction in inflation, there has been a significant increase in real-terms expenditure on the Health Service. About £9·2 billion per annum has been allocated within Health Service expenditure to elderly people. Their interests have by no means been forgotten. Infrastructural

[Mr. Nelson]

social support has been offered them, as well as direct financial payments; the Government have an exemplary record on that.

Nevertheless, I believe there is a consensus in the House—based on visits to our constituents and talking to those of them who are elderly—that many pensioners still find it difficult to make ends meet. I represent a constituency with nearly double the national average number of pensioners, including a growing proportion who are very elderly. It is not only a matter of money, but of life becoming much more complicated. People do not always understand their rights, and I am glad that my hon. Friend the Minister is to undertake a publicity campaign to emphasise what can be achieved if people apply to the DHSS.

More elderly people live longer now, and more of them live alone, so the costs of accommodation cannot be shared as they were in the past. Capital costs for those who live in properties that they own—the costs of repair and renewal—are significant deductions from their savings. I know many elderly people who do not qualify for financial support and are frightened about how they will pay for major items of expenditure that come along—£500 here, £700 there. Those sums represent a major proportion of their accumulated savings. We must recognise that, as I think the Government are trying to do in building up personal provision for the future. But many people face a short-term problem because they have seen the real value of their accumulated earnings and savings eroded in recent years.

Not unnaturally, many of our constituents look at their net position. They are not like Ministers, who espouse the virtues of an improvement in a particular policy for which they are responsible. Our constituents count up the net result of rent increases for their council houses, changes in housing benefit and milk bills. They work out exactly whether they are better or worse off. If they are worse off, they are worried about how they will cover the costs. So, although we have an exemplary record of maintaining and improving standards of living for the elderly, and at least of meeting our manifesto commitments, we have a particular obligation to improve the lot of the elderly in a way that helps the least well-off and maintains the relativity of the system, so that those who have provided for themselves see the benefits of so doing during their lifetimes and are not penalised to the extent that others who have not done so are underwritten by income support and other means of social security assistance.

I suggest two themes or policies that draw on some of tonight's comments. The first concerns targeting financial assistance for the elderly. In their social security review and legislation, the Government have acted rightly and of necessity. The main reason for what they have done was the need to target assistance from limited financial resources on those whose need was greatest. That was wholly defensible and a proper responsibility of Government. Now, having done that, with all its attendant difficulties, my hon. Friend the Minister should seek opportunities to build up the level of support for pensioners more generally. He should not in future try to pre-empt any additional resources that he can argue out of the Chief Secretary to the Treasury for the least well-off.

That is a controversial view, and others are entitled to take a different view. Some of my elderly constituents are just above the line of entitlement to all sorts of support, are badly off and finding it tough to make ends meet. We have done what we can for those on the lowest means. At least the real value of that support will be maintained, but, as my hon. Friend the Member for Bournemouth, East suggested, there is a substantial case to be made for improving the level of the state retirement pension ahead of the level of inflation.

Many of my constituents do not receive income support, housing benefit, lower-cost, local authority-provided sheltered accommodation, a free television licence or help with their fuel or with the cost of furniture removal, yet they cannot by any stretch of the imagination be considered well off. In fact, many of them are significantly worse off than those who receive and are entitled to this panoply of support. Those people come to me and say, as they do to other hon. Members, "What is the purpose of providing for myself during my working life? Where is the equity and fairness in helping those who are less well off and have made less provision for themselves so that they are better off than I am? What prospect is there for an improvement in my standard of living?" I tell them that their best prospect lies in steady improvement of the state retirement pension, at least to the level of inflation, and perhaps over and above that. If we can expand the economy, as has happened in recent years, there should be every reason to expect real increases in the state retirement pension.

I am drawing on part of the content of the SLD party motion and on part of the speech of the hon. Member for Derby, South, who pressed my hon. Friend the Minister not to forget the case for improvement in the statutory retirement pension. He will have our full support in arguing the case with Treasury Ministers. The time to do that is not a year before an election. There should be a steady improvement year on year, as my hon. Friend the Member for Bournemouth, East suggested.

That in itself is not enough. Although my hon. Friend the Member for Bournemouth, East was unsuccessful in his attempt to bring about a change in the tax law for elderly home-owners to release some of their capital, I believe that we should begin to consider the problems that we have built up over a generation of tax relief in tying up people's capital in non-income producing assets. Many people in my constituency, which has relatively high property capital values, are sitting on properties worth very significant sums of money, but are living in genteel poverty and sometimes finding it difficult to afford to put on the electric heater during the winter. There is a paradox between the capital values of people's accommodation and the Government's unwillingness or inability to change the tax laws to release some of that capital to support those people during their retirement.

I should like to see quite a different scheme. I should like to see a new form of variable tax relief over and above the personal allowances built into our tax regime. People should, at different stages in their life, be able to adjust to different expenditure necessities. For example, when people are young and get married, they probably need the maximum tax relief for a mortgage. The current value of that relief is probably about £800 a year. That is the value of basic rate of tax on the average level of building society interest on a mortgage of £30,000. That £800 could and should be used during people's lifetimes for other forms of designated expenditure.

That would not be an additional personal allowance that would allow them to spend the money more generally and perhaps draw in imports and fuel inflation, but a special allowance to spend on designated areas of need and responsibility. I would include among those both private education and private health provision, although those are contentious issues, but they should include, in addition, provision which the elderly can make themselves. For example, if an elderly person has paid off his or her mortgage, he or she is not able to take out a new mortgage on that property and obtain tax relief on the interest paid. Why not? They should be able to do so as pensioners. However, as I understand it, they are able to borrow money secured against the property, purchase an annuity with that money and obtain tax relief on that loan.

That smacks of the "nanny" state which says, "We'll give you tax relief, but only if you give the money back to an institution to manage for you". We should give it to the people and let them decide what is in their own best interests. A more moveable tax allowance that people can use at various times of their life with the ability to release the capital built up in their homes for designated expenditure, which would be of perceived value to them, would be a more flexible and desirable system. It would allow any combination of that expenditure within the allowance.

I hope that in the fundamental review that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services is undertaking he will be open-minded to some more imaginative schemes, such as the one I have proposed, as there is a long-term problem to be addressed and redressed. Just as we have made a good start and have a record of which we can be proud, so we should not lose sight of the need to tackle the problems of the future. The best way to do so is to have a further improvement in the real value of the state retirement pension during the remainder of the Government's period of office and to change the reliefs and allowances so that we can release the capital that elderly people have accumulated and help them to help themselves, as they all desire.

8.56 pm

Mr. Jimmy Dunnachie (Glasgow, Pollok): The recent housing benefit cuts are among the worst examples of the thoughtless, uncaring attitude that we have come to expect of the Government. The Government say that they want people to be independent, but, at the same time, they penalise the most fiercely independent section of our society—our senior citizens.

Those are men and women whose lives have been governed by hard work, thrift, duty and independence—in fact, by all the values that the Government claim to extol. They are also men and women who have worked and fought for a fairer society in which being old or poor, or both, was neither a shame nor a crime, yet all the Government can offer them is a kick in the teeth, telling them that they are of no account in the twilight years of their lives. We all know that those people could never begin to compete in the get-rich-quick jungle of man-mind-thyself Thatcherism. Even worse, the cuts have put fear and terror into the hearts and minds of senior citizens because they remind them of the depression years and of that most dreaded by-product of Victorian values, the workhouse.

I have already written to the Prime Minister outlining the hardships that the cuts are creating for senior citizens in my constituency. All that she could offer them was the hope of transitional payments—in other words, a postponement of their agony. When I raised the matter of benefit cuts, she misled the House with her answer, showing that she is either unaware or simply does not care about the cruel effects that her Government's policies are having on the lives of ordinary people. Every week in my surgery, I witness these cruel effects on many senior citizens, who, through no fault of their own, have few or no savings and are worried and frightened because they do not know how to make ends meet.

I can give some examples of this from my constituency. I recall an elderly man from the Carnwadric area whose rent and rates bill has risen by a third, an elderly lady in the Craigbank area who now has to pay an extra £30 a month, an elderly couple in the Arden area who face a 50 per cent. increase and an old lady in north Pollok who must now pay a third of her total income in rent and rates. These examples are only the tip of the iceberg. That such men and women are reduced to pleading for mercy in the twilight years of their lives is a crime against humanity.

The effects of the housing benefit cuts on the lives of the elderly make a mockery of the freedom from want for which the Labour party fought so valiantly—a battle that it won—after the war. Instead, this policy marks a return to the darkest days in the nation's history, when the old and the poor were tossed aside, to be treated as less than human. It is a tragedy that these uncaring days have returned. I beg the House to reverse this vicious policy, so that dignity and self-respect can be restored to our senior citizens in the closing chapters of their lives.

9 pm

Miss Ann Widdecombe (Maidstone): In their recent treatment of pensioners, the Government are most to be congratulated on their targeting. We have tried to help those who are most in need, and to a large extent we have succeeded. The hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett), whom I am delighted to see has returned to the Chamber after a lengthy absence—at least she is here, unlike most Labour Back Benchers—said that we withdrew millions of pounds in benefit in our recent changes to social security and housing benefit. She omitted to say that the main losers of such benefit were asset-owning pensioners or pensioners with savings as substantial as £8,000 in the bank.

It is crucial, when we talk about old-age pensioners, that we should be aware that we are talking not about a homogeneous economic group but about a group of people among whom there are wide divisions of income, comfort and provision, as there are in the rest of the population. Over 85 per cent. of our old-age pensioners enjoy some form of second income.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Enjoy?

Miss Widdecombe: I imagine that one does enjoy a second income. Even when we say that, we have to distinguish between the nature and extent of the second income—*[Interruption.]* I am told that I have something in common with the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner). Perhaps if he had been present throughout the debate, as I have been, he would have heard this point answered before.

[Miss Widdecombe]

Those pensioners who enjoy a second income also fall into various categories. There are those who may have substantial occupational pensions, there are those who will have the state earnings-related pension scheme addition and there are those who will have only a few pounds in interest from savings. I join my hon. Friend the Member for Chichester (Mr. Nelson) in his plea for some attention to be given to those pensioners who are just above the line below which they might have received various supports and benefits that we have so rightly targeted on the most needy and poor. In any system of benefits there will be some sort of trap so that people who are just above the line below which they are entitled to support are not as well off as people below the line who receive support and whose incomes are considerably enhanced. In our future targeting, we should pay particular attention to those people.

Mrs. Beckett: I think that this is the first time that I have had the pleasure of listening to the hon. Lady address the House. I feel sure, therefore, that it is uncharacteristic that she did little less than justice to my observations. I drew attention to the fact that there are those among pensioners who are losing out, some who have some assets. The flavour of the hon. Lady's observations is that many of those pensioners have substantial assets, but most of those who lost out from the Government's recent housing benefit cuts have small occupational pensions or war pensions, for example. It is not those with substantial assets who are losing out especially. I think that I am correct in saying that only 100,000 benefited from the change in the capital allowance while 7 million lost out. That implies that the vast bulk of the 7 million were at the bottom end of the scale, not at the top.

Miss Widdecombe: The hon. Lady does less than justice to the analysis that she has made. She makes the rather sweeping statement that most of those who have lost out are in the narrow trap that I have been talking about, where there is real need, but I think that the hon. Lady and I would be able to find some common ground. The thrust of our targeting was to ensure that those with a property in which neither they nor a dependent relative live, or with, in my view, substantial savings in the bank, to the tune of £8,000, lost the most significantly.

We have targeted, I think admirably, on the care of the elderly in the National Health Service. We have 22 per cent. more nurses engaged in geriatric care now than there were in 1979. There are 34 per cent. more consultant geriatricians now than there were in 1979. This is an area in which we could concentrate specific targeting. The number of home helps has been increased by about 20 per cent., while day-care places have increased by about 25 per cent. As various sedentary Opposition Members have suggested during the debate, there are far more old-age pensioners now. It is right, therefore, that we target NHS care on the elderly.

We must continue our policy of targeting NHS care and social services care on old-age pensioners who are still able to live at home, given the right levels of support. I congratulate my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State on the significant successes that have been achieved in targeting care, especially care in the community, which has often been deeply misrepresented.

I hope that Opposition Members will not continue to talk in blanket terms about substantial increases in the old-age pension and in benefits for the elderly, such as the abolition of standing charges on fuel.

Mr. Skinner: Why not?

Miss Widdecombe: I am coming to that. I hope also that they will not talk generally about the abolition of the television licence fee. Old-age pensioners do not form a homogeneous income group. Not all of them need to be exempt from standing charges on fuel and the television licence fee, for example. These are benefits, if these charges are abolished, that will have to be paid for by others who are earning substantially less than the income of many old-age pensioners. There is an argument for targeting and for supporting what the Government have so far done in their targeting.

Mr. Skinner: Will the hon. Lady give way?

Miss Widdecombe: I would have been delighted to allow the hon. Gentleman to intervene had he been present throughout the debate. I might then have thought that he had a contribution to make that would be relevant.

I support what the Government are doing. I hope that we shall hear more from them about specific targeting. I believe that it is what old-age pensioners want. My pensioner constituents always ask, "Why not concentrate on those of us who do not have an income over and above the state pension?" That is the road along which we are proceeding and the road along which I hope we shall continue. I ask my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State to address himself, as my hon. Friend the Member for Chichester and I have urged, to those who are just above the line, as it were.

9.10 pm

Mr. Tom Pendry (Stalybridge and Hyde): The hon. Member for Maidstone (Miss Widdecombe) amazed one or two of us in many ways, particularly when she said that she had something in common with my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner). The mind boggles at that and my hon. Friend has a lot of explaining to do when the debate is over.

It is a pity that the hon. Member for Chichester (Mr. Nelson) is leaving the Chamber—*[Interruption.]* I see that he has returned with his usual athleticism. His speech, fascinating as it was, revealed the different worlds in which we live and the north-south divide. He talked about an extra £450 and £500 that many of his constituents have to find on occasion. Many of the pensioners in my constituency worry about whether they can have margarine or butter. The hon. Gentleman is living in a different world. He said that there are few senior citizens who would prefer to live under a Labour Government than a Conservative one. He is living in cloud-cuckoo-land. I invite him to come to my constituency of Stalybridge and Hyde in Tameside so that he can see for himself the difference between the constituency that he represents and those represented by Opposition Members.

We receive long-winded letters from the Minister. As my hon. Friends know, I am a charitable guy. I know that he is a young Minister, but I had hoped that somebody was twisting his arm and that he did not believe what he was writing. However, when we see him at the Dispatch Box, it is clear that he believes every word and any sympathy that I ever had for him drains away.

I welcome the opportunity to make a short contribution to the debate, because it gives us the opportunity to speak up for a section of our constituents who are grossly disadvantaged by the Government's so-called reform of the social security system. I do not often get an opportunity to give my examples at Prime Minister's Question Time, so I shall take this chance to place on record some specific examples from my constituency.

When the Government introduced the new social security system they said that their objective was to "target resources" on those in "greatest need." Their aim is a bit out, since they are miles from the target. I have six surgeries every month, as do many other hon. Members, and if those who come to my surgery are not those at whom the Government wish to target the resources, there is something drastically wrong with our society. We know that there is no justice in our society under this Government.

I agree that some pensioners have been misguided up to now, because they have supported the Government. If a Labour Government had been elected in June last year, a single pensioner would by now have received an extra £275, and a pensioner couple would have received an extra £440. Even in Chichester—I see that the hon. Member for Chichester has again left the Chamber—the pensioners would have done much better.

It is so odd that the generation which fought so hard in the second world war and helped to found the Health Service—we are celebrating the 40th anniversary of the National Health Service—is being treated with such contempt by the Government. Our pensioners deserve a much better deal. They need to be treated with honour and respect—things that the Government know nothing about.

Each week I and other hon. Members receive hundreds of letters—certainly tens of letters—from pensioners who are in a desperate plight. Some plead for financial help. I know that many hon. Members think that the question of the television licence is peripheral to the debate—although the hon. Member for Chichester did raise the subject—but to many of our pensioners a television is a lifeline. My old mum, who will be 95 next Thursday, relies greatly on her television set. She told me the other day that she wanted the set taken away because the Prime Minister appears on it rather too much for her liking.

I had a letter from a 76-year-old gentleman who lives in Dukinfield in my constituency. He was worried about his television licence. I know that the Prime Minister is greatly interested in television and in satellite techniques and new stations.

Mr. Skinner: The Prime Minister is bound to be interested in television and in all these satellite channels. She has 13 television sets in 10 Downing street and does not have to buy a licence for any of them. She gets free heat, free lighting and does not pay rates or rent on 10 Downing street or on Chequers. Our 9·5 million pensioners should receive the same treatment. Then there are all the people with ministerial cars stuck outside to carry them from one panelled room to the next.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: The hon. Gentleman should address the House.

Mr. Skinner: I am addressing another pensioner.

Mr. Pendry: My hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) was looking at me during his intervention. I hope he does not think that I am a pensioner. In his characteristic style, my hon. Friend has spelt it out far better than I could.

The Prime Minister is engaged in a great deal of activity on the television satellite front. Why can she not give our pensioners free television licences? My 76-year-old constituent was told by Tameside council, quite rightly at that time, that as he was linked to a mobile warden scheme he could get a concessionary television licence. Now the Government have changed the rules. The hon. Member for Maidstone said that she hoped that certain things would not happen, but things are getting worse because people who had concessions will no longer get them.

Miss Widdecombe *rose*——

Mr. Pendry: No, I shall not give way, because other hon. Members wish to take part in the debate. The hon. Lady knows that what I say is true and that people no longer qualify.

Another clawback from these people is to be deprecated. The 76-year-old gentleman whom I mentioned lives in an old-age pensioner's flat. In my area of Tameside the demand for social services grows each year, but the financial constraints upon the council are more severe. I can tell the House that 4,930 people in my borough are aged 75 or over and that 40 per cent. of them live alone. Of the 85-year-olds, 20 per cent. are bedfast, 20 per cent. are mentally confused and 50 per cent. are unable to bathe themselves. The Government's respeonse is increasingly to shunt people over to carers in my area.

Every step that penalises pensioners, such as cuts in housing benefit, makes more emotional and physical demands on the 11 per cent. of adults in Tameside whom the local authority has identified as carers. Many of those 18,000 carers end up in part-time employment, with low pay and few prospects. It is a vicious circle and the Government should address themselves to the problem.

The cases that my pensioner constituents have been bringing to me since the benefit changes are heartbreaking. There is a single woman of 69 who has been retired for 12 years because of polio arthritis. She lives on her own in a one-bedroom flat. In 1987 she received £57·96 a week and had to pay £12·95 a week in rent. *[Interruption.]* Conservative Members do not want to hear this. The hon. Member for Stockport (Mr. Favell) does not live a million miles from me and must have constituents with similar problems. I am trying to get through to Treasury Ministers to bring to their attention the problems affecting the people whom we represent. After that woman had paid her rent she was left with £45·01 to live on. Now her pension has been increased by £1·49 a week, but she has to pay £17 in rent and is more than £2 a week worse off. Last week she told me that a mistake had been made and that she would now be £5·61 a week worse off.

The attack upon pensioners is nothing short of barbaric. In the 1980s it is a disgrace that their living standards should be worsened. Thankfully, the pensioners are fighting back. In my constituency the Thameside Pensioners Action Committee, along with many hundreds

[Mr. Pendry]

of thousands of other pensioners, will be going to various conventions, including the national pensioners' convention which will be held soon in Manchester. They will be fighting for a better deal.

The Government must not be complacent. We accept that they won the election, but they will not be returned again unless they adopt a more concerned approach to pensioners. I hope that, as a result of this debate and debates in other arenas, pensioners will begin to realise that the Government do not really care for them, their future or their living standards, and that they will increasingly turn to the Labour party, so that the smugness will go out of Tory Members at the next election.

9.21 pm

Mr. Tony Favell (Stockport): I was glad to hear the Minister emphasise the duty of those in work to care for those unable to care for themselves, not only through their taxes by supporting the Government in their attack on inflation—that sure enemy of pensioners' savings. He also emphasised the need for people to give time—that valuable commodity—to help the elderly combat their worst enemy, loneliness.

I was disappointed to hear the hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) and other Opposition Members imply that anyone who retires is more interested in dependency than independence. The Labour party often gives the impression that when somebody reaches retirement his or her useful life comes to an end. Many hon. Members, and the Prime Minister herself, are entitled to a retirement pension. Many leaders of pensionable age, not only in political circles but in industry and trade unions, continue to work.

The vast majority of pensioners continue to lead full and useful lives. It is pure nonsense to suggest that life begins at 40 and ends at 60 or 65. Many people over that age continue to work full time and those who do not give valuable service elsewhere. They serve in the voluntary sector; many voluntary bodies would collapse were it not for those of pensionable age who work hard for their fellow citizens, many of whom are older than themselves. Many pensioners give time to their families and friends and give the benefit of their wisdom to local authorities and other public bodies.

Of course, as they get older, many pensioners become frail and dependent. Society must ensure that they do not want for care, but we should never refer to older people en masse as a problem. They are not. For that reason, I am extremely cautious about the possible implementation of the recommendations of the Griffiths report on community care, to which several Opposition Members referred.

I find it an unedifying prospect that local authority social workers should set up systems to identify and assess people who may need care and support and then, as the report suggests—taking account of the views and wishes of the person to be cared for—informal carers would decide what packages of care, whether provided directly or indirectly, would best suit their needs. I do not suggest that social workers are not well-meaning, but I can think of nothing more certain to accelerate old age than to smother an elderly person with care, to make him dependent and destroy his self-esteem.

An aunt of mine died recently at the age of 93. She was known to us as Auntie Connie, as she was to everyone, certainly for the last 20 years of her life. She had a very difficult life. She worked hard to provide for herself and when she retired, having bought her own home, she took enormous pleasure in looking after herself. She was entitled only to a basic pension, but, having saved, she did not need any other help. She was proud of that. There are millions like her.

When looking after the house became too much for her —and she decided when the time came: no one else did —she made the decision to go into sheltered accommodation. She was fortunate enough to be able to go into an Anchor housing association sheltered home. She lived there for 15 years, for the last six or seven of which she was totally blind. She considered that she lived a self-sufficient, decent life. She had a bedsit, with a small kitchen, WC and bathroom. There was a warden on call, who was sensible enough to allow those living in that accommodation to help each other. They organised functions, trips out, bingo and lectures and looked after each other, and, in particular, the younger ones looked after the more elderly. I understand from a recent Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy report that the rent for a single pensioner living in housing association accommodation of that kind—it is a new unit—is between £40 and £50 a week.

I am delighted to see that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State is here. I urge him to consider whether it is better to put increased resources into sheltered accommodation than into elderly people's homes. Like many hon. Members, I have visited such homes and I think that they destroy people's independence and finally lead them to become old before their time. At the age of 92, my aunt went into a residential nursing home. Everyone there was kind and everything was done for her, but within three months, having lost her independence, she decided to die —and that is what she did.

When we speak of the needs of the elderly, it is my firm belief that, first and foremost, we should do them the courtesy of allowing them to lead useful lives, with the absolute minimum of interference, care packages or needs reviews—call it what you like. Only when that elderly person or his or her family, friends, neighbours, family doctor or community nurse decides—and only then— should the state or local authority step in, and it should be done readily, quickly and unobtrusively.

That has been the main thrust of the Government's policies. Some 95 per cent. of people aged over 65 live in their own homes. A flexible range of services for those in genuine need is being developed. The number of district nurses has risen by one fifth since 1979, and the number of elderly people treated has risen by 28 per cent. The financial position of pensioners has improved. Under this Government, pensioners' incomes have increased more than twice as fast as those of the rest of the population and four times as fast as they did under Labour. Now, 85 per cent. of pensioners have second incomes apart from their basic pension, 70 per cent. have savings and 50 per cent. now receive an occupational pension.

In terms of provision for the elderly, Britain is the third highest in the EEC, and I am glad that there are new incentives to come. I believe that under this Government —certainly with the new NHS review and their thrust to help personal and occupational pensions—the wherewithal for improving the independence of pensioners will be increased. Pensioners wish to have their independence, and it is only this Government who will give them the wherewithal to achieve it.

9.29 pm

Ms. Mildred Gordon (Bow and Poplar): I retired from teaching two years before I became a Member of the House. I had three small pensions besides my state pension, but nevertheless I found living on a pension a frightening experience. When something goes wrong with a piece of equipment, one's income bears no relation to the amount of money that one is charged for a repair. Now that the Government have so drastically reduced single payments to pensioners and other claimants who are on supplementary benefit, and offer loans that must be repaid out of their meagre income, any failure of equipment becomes a real disaster that frightens pensioners, because they have no way of coping with it.

Perhaps because I have been a pensioner I get many invitations to talk to pensioner groups. I like to speak to pensioners in my constituency, which is in the borough of Tower Hamlets. They are mostly very poor and, although some have small pensions from their job, as has already been said, those pensioners are no better off than those who have not. They are people who have worked hard and long hours for little pay, and who have had no way of saving money. They lived through the depression and the blitz, and this country owes them a lot. Throughout their lives they have had to learn how to manage well on a small amount of money.

If one goes to Tower Hamlets, one will discover that however good the women are at managing money—and the majority of pensioners are women—they hover outside the butchers' shops wondering if they can afford to buy anything except liver. Although the Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security, the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie), would probably say that liver is good for pensioners, one gets fed up with eating liver. They wonder whether they can afford to buy a chop. It is shocking that women who have been proud housewives, and who have reared their families, now stand outside the shops dithering and wondering whether they can afford some meat. If one goes into many of their homes in winter, one finds that they are in the kitchen, with the door of the gas oven open, the oven alight and that they are sitting over it because that is the cheapest way of heating and that is the only room that they can afford to heat. That is the reality.

Two Methodist ministers in the east end recently protested that the DHSS had told pensioners who applied for single payments to go to the churches. Pensioners have been going to the churches for money for food. One minister has been keeping plastic bags of food to give to them. Those ministers have now said, "We cannot do this any more. Our funds do not permit it. Please do not keep telling pensioners to come to us."

The reality is that when pensioners go to doctors for treatment, hard-pressed doctors often say, "You have to expect some aches and pains at your age." I do not think that pensioners of any age should expect to be ill, without getting proper treatment in the same way as anyone else.

Pensioners have asked me to say that they are well aware that during the past 10 years many items have been harmonised with those in other countries in the EEC. They want to know when pensions in this country will be harmonised. They say that pensions in Belgium are nearly double those in England. They would like some harmonisation to come their way.

The pensioners say that the cuts in spending weigh heavily on them, and that the agencies that help them are losing their funds because local authorities have less money to give and are being shut down or cut to the bone. Furthermore, the poll tax will penalise the carers of elderly parents and relatives.

Pensioners have also asked me to say that they would like the Government to do away with standing charges on utilities. That is a sore point with pensioners. They try to save money by switching off electric lights and cutting down on heating, but often the standing charges come to more than the rest of the bill. Standing charges take away a huge slice of their incomes. Pensioners feel that they should not have to pay these standing charges at all.

Another issue that pensioners have raised with me many times is that they would like free television licences, because television is so important to them.

Pensioners would like their pensions to be increased in line with incomes. That was something that they had before, but the Government have taken that away, and pensioners would like that provision restored.

London pensioners fear that, following the abolition of the Greater London council, 1990 will see the end of their cherished free bus and Underground travel passes. Many pensioners say that the only thing that stops people becoming depressed on reaching the pensionable age of 60 or 65 is that they get their free bus pass. They believe that the free bus pass should be safeguarded and that that system should spread to the rest of the country. It gives pensioners the chance to travel and see their friends, and stops them from being tied to their homes. Dial-a-Ride, which pensioners would like guaranteed to continue, helps those who are not able-bodied to get out of the house and have a better quality of life.

Pensioners live in fear of reaching the age when they can no longer take care of themselves. It is not just a made-up story that often pensioners who cannot walk to the toilet or get out of a chair on their own are dumped in an empty flat by hard-pressed hospital authorities which need their beds. Those pensioners are left to sink or swim and many die before their time. Many pensioners who still have their mental faculties end up in the geriatric wards of mental hospitals because there is no other place for them. We need better provision for people at home, and that cannot be done with rate capping and cuts in local authority spending. We need more homes for pensioners who cannot cope with living on their own.

There should be more research into the degenerative illnesses of old age and dementia, and that requires much more money. Pensioners have asked me to say that they are sick and tired of increasingly being presented as a burden to the country. When they are presented as a burden, it invites violent attacks on them, degrades them, lowers their status and makes it seem as though they are useless. If pensioners are given enough money, correct medical treatment and are properly looked after, they have a great deal to contribute, just as they have always done. Pensioners want to be respected and valued.

9.36 pm

Mr. Matthew Taylor (Truro): We have been talking about the difficulties of the old and the cold in our society. I welcome the fact that the debate was opened by one of the youngest Members—my hon. Friend the Member for Ross, Cromarty and Skye (Mr. Kennedy)—and is being closed by another of the youngest Members. Conservative Members often tell us that those earning cannot afford to support our elderly people as we should support them. Not all people in Britain take that view.

Elderly people deserve independence and respect in society; not to be condemned to wait out the rest of their lives without friends, families or local communities around them. That is why the Social and Liberal Democrats believe that there should be a coherent approach to treatment of the elderly—adequate primary health care and support for the many carers who dedicate their lives, often voluntarily, to look after elderly relatives.

During the general election I talked about making care in the community a reality. We are not prepared to see patients turned out of the old institutional hospitals without adequate facilities to care for them in the community. We want to support the carers and believe that the Government should and could have made giant strides towards doing that. They could and should have introduced a proper carer's benefit. They should give carers more opportunities to take a break from their responsibilities. We have heard the rhetoric of care in the community but had precious little of the reality.

The Association of Carers tells us that over 40 per cent. of carers whose elderly dependants had severe memory impairment had not had a week's holiday in five years and only 10 per cent. had ever received respite care. We need to start from the individual and to ensure that, regardless of where he or she lives, an individual has access as of right to care appropriate and adequate to his or her needs, just as Age Concern tells us. That in turn means proper assessment procedures, a definition of minimum standards to which an individual is entitled, the development of the concept of advocacy for those people and the mechanism of independent inspection made a reality. In Cornwall, all too frequently that does not happen.

Underpinning everything, there must be proper resources, yet what do we get from the Government? We get the poll tax for a start. The hon. Member for Bournemouth, East (Mr. Atkinson) spoke about abolishing the rates. In itself, that would be an advantage, but by replacing them with the poll tax, which will place appalling increased financial pressure on households which include dependent elderly relatives, the Government are ignoring the reality facing many people. If a married couple have an elderly parent living with them, all three will be liable to the charge. The Department of the Environment has produced figures showing that more than 80 per cent. of households will be worse off under the community charge.

The House of Lords has forced the Government into accepting an amendment, but there is no sign that the Government will allow it to remain in the Bill.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: What the hon. Gentleman is saying about elderly persons living in a household is totally misleading. He should know that an elderly person living with another will not be assessed for the community service charge on the income of the head of the household. Elderly people will be assessed on their own incomes, and if they are entitled to pay the lowest possible rate of 20 per cent. that will be allowed for in their pension, so the elderly person will not be adversely affected.

Mr. Taylor: The hon. Lady would do better to show her support for elderly people by voting for the amendment when the Bill comes back from the Lords.

We do not have to wait for the poll tax, nor do we have to wait for the one announcement that the Minister made tonight about the concessions that the Government are giving to pensioners on housing benefit and social security. What they mean by concessions is that they are bringing in advertising executives to tell us how wonderful the Government have been for giving back a small proportion of what they have already taken away. We do not have to wait for that. The difficulty for those on the low-level basic state pension and the continued presence of large numbers of elderly people suffering great hardship in the very lowest income groups is evidence enough. We have heard some apparently convincing arguments and statistics from the Government. I wonder why statisticians rather than politicians are not at the bottom of public opinion popularity polls. It seems that they connive together.

Constituents across the country are not convinced. In my constituency there are large numbers of elderly people, many of them in considerable hardship. Every day I receive letters from pensioners saying that they can no longer cope and that they are frightened by the changes that the Government have made.

Miss Cocks, who has paid her stamp since she was 16, wrote:

> "I am writing this to you and will you please read it out to the Tories . . . I will not be able to pay for any of these things"—

that is, rent and rates—

> "on my pension unless I get help from Social Security and there are lots of others besides me."

She wrote that letter as she saw that help disappearing.

Mr. Long wrote:

> "Out of our miserable pension increase in April . . . we have to meet extra water rates, 10 per cent. extra television fees, dearer electricity charges".

Mr. Porter wrote:

> "How Mrs. Thatcher thinks that a married couple can live these days on £65·47 per week when they pay rent, rates, water rates, electric—what has one got to live on?"

One of the most heartrending letters I received recently was from Mr. Lamb, who was receiving severe disablement allowance and invalidity benefit. He wrote:

> "My wife and I are registered blind . . . I have a small Occupational Pension (non index linked) which precludes me from receiving any benefit. Because I worked for this for many years, I am now being penalised in that I am having to pay for prescriptions, dental care, new spectacles (which in my case are essential), fares to hospital and rates. It seems ludicrous".

No wonder I am getting those letters. Just look at the figures for the recent housing benefit changes, not just for this year, but year by year as the Government, with stealth and guile, have been penalising the poor to fund tax cuts for the rich. In April 1983, 1,150,000 pensioners suffered losses and 120,000 lost all housing benefit. In November 1984, 1,200,000 pensioners lost further entitlement and another 213,000 lost all housing benefit. In November 1985, a further 1,470,000 pensioners lost benefit and an additional 270,000 pensioners lost all entitlement. In April

1987, 2,600,000 pensioners lost some housing benefit entitlement and a further 60,000 pensioners lost all entitlement.

The result is the gradual erosion of the independence of the elderly and of the meagre living standards that so many elderly people already had. It is no wonder, therefore, that many elderly people feel embittered by the bad hand that they have been dealt. As one wrote:

> "The whole country is in a bad state . . . the price is being paid by the old people. I worked for the County Council for 39 years, for many years money was taken from my pay packet and some added by the Council for retirement, and taxed, and now delivered to me every month and taxed again which is robbery."

The Government believe that the best course of action is tax concessions for those who can afford private insurance. That is not necessarily bad. I welcome help being given to people to earn additional pensions, but it does nothing at all for those for whom such luxuries will never be seen.

Again, the eloquence of my constituents spells out what the Minister did not like to say:

> "we were all born too soon . . . The next generation of pensioners will have a works pension scheme for them and they will need it, too! I have requested a surrender value on our death policies and that will be £1 per week towards our rent."

That is what these people are having to go through. Letter after letter landing on my desk says the same. If they were honest, I am sure that hon. Members on both sides of the House would say that they receive the same kind of correspondence. They could not deny it. Comment after comment shows clearly that they know where the blame lies.

In today's post I received this letter:

> "How can the Prime Minister say no poor pensioners are worse off under the new benefit rules?"

Again:

> "I did not realise the situation myself until I received my rates demand, and I have the feeling that the whole benefits structure is deliberately confused, why there has not already been an outcry I cannot understand."

Most telling of all, and we all receive this complaint in thousands of slightly different ways, with the use of different phrases, but they all say the same thing:

> "She is a terrible woman on us pensioners."

That is why we have had this debate. That is why we campaigned for an increase in the basic state retirement pension and that is why we say that the bulk of the extra expenditure should be concentrated on helping the poorest pensioners.

Conservative Members talk about the Christmas bonus, but £10 goes nowhere today. We should be talking about a Christmas bonus of double the weekly pension at the beginning of December. We should abolish standing charges for gas, electricity and telephones, all of which are vital for the elderly, instead of privatising those industries to give a little extra cash to those who already have a lot.

It is a far cry tonight from the day, 80 years ago, when a Liberal Government introduced the pension that Lloyd George saw as a "great experiment." He said:

> "It is made in an old country for the first time. We put it forward as an incomplete one; we say it is a beginning and only a beginning, but a real beginning."

I wonder what Lloyd George would say today about the gradual reductions in benefits and the degrading poverty of so many of our pensioners. Many pensioners saw the introduction of that pension. Many of them have told me that they owe a debt of gratitude to Lloyd George for what he did. It was his dream.

> "to make provision for undeserved poverty and destitution in all its branches",

whereas the Government provide for undeserved financial gain from investment in state industries that they sell off.

The Prime Minister tells us that there is no such thing as society. By contrast, Lloyd George summed it up like this:

> "These problems of the sick, of the infirm, of the men who cannot find means of earning a livelihood, though they seek it as if they were seeking for alms, who are out of work through no fault of their own, and who cannot even guess the reason why, are problems with which it is the business of the State to deal; they are problems which the State has neglected too long."

The Government do not believe that. They do not believe that there is such a thing as society. The Government do not believe that they have an obligation to our old-age pensioners and to those who live in poverty, cold and squalor. We do. I commend the motion to the House.

9.49 pm

Mr. Portillo: As the hon. Member for Truro (Mr. Taylor) has just referred to Lloyd George, I trust that he will not object if I go less far back in history and allow the occasional reference to the Lib-Lab pact to creep into my speech. There can certainly be no complaint that I am raking up the past unnecessarily.

The subject of community care was raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Stockport (Mr. Favell), and the hon. Member for Ynys Môn (Mr. Jones) referred to it extensively. I was pleased that my hon. Friend placed such emphasis on the importance of the voluntary sector and on the role that pensioners themselves can play, because many of them are still able-bodied and relatively young in that voluntary sector. He will recognise with me that state agencies cannot do everything for our elderly and that there will always be a need for comfort and company to be provided by friends, neighbours and family. I appreciate his remarks on that point.

Both the hon. Members for Ynys Môn and for Truro seemed to find fault with the Government over a supposed lack of urgency in relation to community care. I am surprised at that suggestion, because the hon. Member for Ynys Môn himself referred to the variety of reports that have been produced on the subject. He clearly recognises that it is an enormously complex question. He believes that too much money is being spent through supplementary benefit, and now through income support, and that some people are inappropriately placed.

In my opening remarks, I referred to some of the fears that we ourselves could have on those scores. However, I cannot understand how the hon. Member for Ynys Môn can believe that we are reluctant to address those issues, when we commissioned the Griffiths, Firth and Wagner reports. The hon. Member would be extremely surprised if we did not then give due consideration to the Griffiths report, which raised very complex issues, and I am certain that when we present our recommendation that will give the House an opportunity to consider how to debate them. The hon. Member for Ynys Môn should bear with us in that respect.

My hon. Friend the Member for Maidstone (Miss Widdecombe) expressed concern about the level of

[Mr. Portillo]

provision for people in the community. She made her point very well about National Health Service extra expenditure on the elderly. That increased by 22 per cent. between 1978 and 1986, and my hon. Friend will know that during the same period the elderly population increased by 5·9 per cent. Funding has not only kept pace with the growing number of elderly people, but has also led to real improvements in services for them.

The number of elderly people treated by the community nursing service increased by one fifth between 1978 and 1986, and the number of home helps shows a similar improvement. The number of day hospital and day centre attendances has also increased, as have the number of meals on wheels provided.

Turning from the subject of community care, my hon. Friend the Member for Bournemouth, East (Mr. Atkinson) placed great emphasis on inflation, and he was right to do so. He also referred to the need for a larger gap at the point where pensioners reach the age of 80. His remarks concentrated on the 25p addition to the retirement pension, but I remind him that in the case of income support the gap at age 80 is £2·35. I shall certainly refer his suggestion concerning the provision of advice and assistance about Barlow Clowes to my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Trade and Industry.

Although I was delighted with my hon. Friend's emphasis on inflation, I was disappointed with the comments of the hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) who—I apologise for boring her—has heard through all our debates the explanation of how important is the amount of money that pensioners have to live on and what happens to their living standards. Yet, after all this time, the hon. Lady resolutely sticks to discussing the way in which the retirement pension increased under the Labour Government, albeit at a time when inflation was roaring away and therefore the net result was a minimal increase in the living standards of the elderly, which is of course what really matters to them.

Mrs. Beckett: The Minister makes this point over and over again. He is right: he does bore me, because it is an extremely boring point. How on earth he can try to convey to the House that a 5 per cent. real-terms improvement in basic pensions is somehow on a par with the 20 per cent. improvement under a Labour Government I am at a loss to understand.

It is a very simple point. Pensioners were four times better off under the Labour Government than they have been under the present Government.

Mr. Portillo: Now I understand. The hon. Lady obviously fails to see the complete illogicality of what she has said. Because pensioners do not live only on retirement pensions paid by the state but on other things as well—because they have savings—what she says does not follow. Their living standards result from a combination of savings, occupational pensions and state retirement pensions, and not from one element in isolation. That is why the hon. Lady is misguided in what she says, and it is possibly why the Government of which she was a member were misguided in what they did.

My hon. Friend the Member for Chichester (Mr. Nelson) referred to the housing benefit capital limit, and the hon. Member for Ross, Cromarty and Skye (Mr. Kennedy) seemed to imply in his opening remarks that the capital limit was the only concession that the Government had made on 27 April. That is absolutely untrue. We recognised a series of vulnerable groups who needed help, and we provided it. Although the hon. Member for Truro (Mr. Taylor) churlishly believes that we should not now advertise that help, we strongly intend to advertise its availability.

My hon. Friend the Member for Chichester, however, put his finger on a dilemma. If we provide a safety net so that people will receive support whether or not they have been provident and whether or not they have had the opportunity to save, to some extent we will discourage thrift: we cannot escape that. We do not discourage thrift by having a capital limit, but it is discouraged from the moment that a safety net is provided. No hon. Member, however, would say that that safety net should be swept away. We are therefore left with difficult decisions about the point at which we should apply a cut-off on both income and capital, because all those benefits should be related to both.

Having said that, however, let me say how interesting I found my hon. Friend's suggestions about a tax allowance, which I shall certainly pass on to my right hon. Friends at the Treasury.

The hon. Member for Glasgow, Pollok (Mr. Dunnachie) —whom I do not see in the Chamber—gave four examples, all involving people whose incomes were well above the income support level and would still be above that level after payment of rent and rates. They all seemed to be people who should apply for transitional protection and I suspect that the same applies to the case raised by the hon. Member for Stalybridge and Hyde (Mr. Pendry).

In my opening remarks I mentioned the obligation that the working population has towards the retired. It is a substantial obligation, and it carries a substantial price. The elderly account for more than half our social security budget—for about £24 billion. They also account for over two fifths of health care spending—over £9 billion—and consume about half of personal social services spending —about £1·5 billion. I mention that not because the working population should begrudge the money, but because they should be aware of it.

First, I think that it represents a fair discharge of that part of the obligation that should be discharged through state agencies. Secondly, anyone working today must be concerned at the way that the numbers will grow by the time we reach retirement. That dictates that we should ourselves make provision where we can, alongside state provision. Thirdly, it emphasises that the well-being of the elderly is critically tied up with economic success.

During the election campaign, the alliance promised pensioners more money. The Labour party saw that bid, and raised it. Yet neither party can be said to have done well out of its grandiose promises. I do not know whether either of the two parties has contemplated why. The reason is that pensioners are not stupid. By definition, they are people of experience. They know when they are being conned. They know that the rate of pensions relies upon continuing economic growth, and they remember inflation, and the Lib-Lab pact, and Secretary of State for Prices and Consumer Protection, Mrs. Williams.

I end with a friendly word of advice to both the SLD and the Labour parties. They will never get elected by underestimating the intelligence of the British pensioner.

I commend the amendment.

Question put, That the original words stand part of the Question:—

The House divided: Ayes 58, Noes 171.

Division No. 400] **[10.00 pm**

AYES

Alton, David
Ashton, Joe
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Beckett, Margaret
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Caborn, Richard
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Cartwright, John
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Eadie, Alexander
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Faulds, Andrew
Flynn, Paul
Galbraith, Sam
Gordon, Mildred
Haynes, Frank
Hinchliffe, David
Home Robertson, John
Howells, Geraint
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Kennedy, Charles
Kirkwood, Archy
Livsey, Richard
Loyden, Eddie
McAvoy, Thomas
Maclennan, Robert
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Mullin, Chris
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Salmond, Alex
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Steel, Rt Hon David
Stott, Roger
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Vaz, Keith
Wareing, Robert N.
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. James Wallace and
Mr. Ronnie Fearn.

NOES

Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Ashby, David
Atkinson, David
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Hon Alan *(Plym'th S'n)*
Colvin, Michael
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Durant, Tony
Emery, Sir Peter
Evennett, David
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Gow, Ian
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Ground, Patrick
Hanley, Jeremy
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayward, Robert
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Sir Hal
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Neale, Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Portillo, Michael
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Ryder, Richard
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Trippier, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waller, Gary
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Watts, John
Wheeler, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. David Maclean and
Mr. Stephen Dorrell.

Question accordingly negatived.

Question, That the proposed words be there added, *put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 30 (Questions on amendments):—*

The House divided: Ayes 152, Noes 54.

Division No. 401] **[10.13 pm**

AYES

Alexander, Richard
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Ashby, David
Atkinson, David
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Bevan, David Gilroy
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowis, John
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Hon Alan *(Plym'th S'n)*
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den

Durant, Tony
Emery, Sir Peter
Evennett, David
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Franks, Cecil
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Sir Eldon *(Bury St E')*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Ground, Patrick
Hanley, Jeremy
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayward, Robert
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Knapman, Roger
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lang, Ian
Lawrence, Ivan
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Sir Hal
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Moss, Malcolm
Neale, Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Portillo, Michael
Ryder, Richard
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Twinn, Dr Ian
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waller, Gary
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Watts, John
Wheeler, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. David Maclean and
Mr. Stephen Dorrell.

NOES

Alton, David
Ashton, Joe
Beckett, Margaret
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bidwell, Sydney
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Cohen, Harry
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eadie, Alexander
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Faulds, Andrew
Fearn, Ronald
Galbraith, Sam
George, Bruce
Gordon, Mildred
Haynes, Frank
Heffer, Eric S.
Home Robertson, John
Howells, Geraint
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Kirkwood, Archy
Livsey, Richard
Loyden, Eddie
McAvoy, Thomas
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
Maclennan, Robert
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Mullin, Chris
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Salmond, Alex
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Steel, Rt Hon David
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Wallace, James
Wareing, Robert N.
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wise, Mrs Audrey

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Dennis Skinner and
Mr. Jimmy Dunnachie.

Question accordingly agreed to.

MR. SPEAKER *forthwith declared the main Question, as amended, to be agreed to.*

Resolved,

That this House congratulates the Government on the success of its policies for pensioners, in particular the control of inflation and the stimulation of the economy, which together have dramatically improved pensioners' total incomes; commends the Government for the increased resources now available to the National Health Service; concurs in the Government's determination to ensure that the considerable resources committed to community care are put to the best possible use; and endorses the recent reforms of social security, not least because they increase the choice of future pension provision.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Ordered,

That, at this day's sitting, the Court of Session Bill *[Lords]* may be proceeded with, though opposed, until any hour.—*[Mr. Lightbown.]*

10.24 pm

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Parliamentary history has been made today and I thought that we ought to say a word about it to make sure that it is properly recorded.

You will recall, Mr. Speaker, as a matter of record that for some time the alliance, as it used to be called, was allocated Supply days, because it was the largest minority party after the official Opposition. I noticed on today's Order Paper an interesting feature and perhaps you will confirm it. Because the parties that formed the alliance no longer exist and a new union has been formed, and as Supply days were allocated immediately after the general election in 1987 to the different parties behind me, the allocation of Supply days has had to go to another party. The interesting feature is that the leader of the Official Unionist party, the right hon. Member for Lagan Valley (Mr. Molyneaux), is now in charge of allocating Supply days to the Liberals and the Provos—the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devenport (Dr. Owen), who has left the Chamber. It will not go amiss on this auspicious occasion to say that in its desire for a merger the alliance has dealt itself a deadly blow and placed itself in the hands of the Ulster Unionists.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Gentleman is absolutely correct, and if he wants confirmation of that he will find it in Standing Order No. 13(3) which says:

> "For the purposes of this order 'the second largest opposition party' shall be that party, of those not represented in Her Majesty's Government, which has the second largest number of Members elected to the House as members of that party."

As I say, the hon. Gentleman is correct.

Court of Session Bill *[Lords]*

Order for Second Reading read.

10.26 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

The Bill repeals or re-enacts the existing provisions in many statutes since before the Act of Union right back to 1594. It relates to the Court of Session and its procedures, which have been brought up to date. This is a consolidation Bill and is totally non-controversial. The Joint Committee on Consolidation Bills said that there was no point to which the attention of Parliament should be drawn.

10.27 pm

Mr. Menzies Campbell (Fife, North-East): Good order and good sense dictate that one should not detain the House unnecessarily on a measure of this nature at this time. However, it is proper to say, as the Minister has said, that many of the statutory provisions that are to be re-enacted date from before the Act of Union. As a consequence, it is perhaps unfortunate that the opportunity has not been taken to bring some of the provisions into line with modern practice in the Court of Session. I hope that the Government will soon take that opportunity. They have some encouragement from the remarks, widely reported today, of the president of the Law Society of Scotland who, in another guise, was formerly the senior partner of the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) and who has offered himself in Conservative colours at least once in a general election in Scotland.

I hope that the Government will soon take the opportunity to give serious consideration to a proper review of the procedures of the Court of Session. The Bill provides that, at the discretion of the Lord President, what is called an extra division may be formed for dealing with civil appeals. Many of us who have experience of practising in the Court of Session think that the opportunity should be taken to establish permanently an extra or third division in the Court of Session in order to deal more speedily and effectively with civil appeals.

The Bill preserves the right to civil jury trial—a right that has existed in the law of Scotland since the early part of the 19th century. It is important to mention that because recently the Lord Advocate was reported as saying that the Government are considering the abolition of that right to civil jury trial. They are doing that on the view that the introduction of hearsay evidence—a matter that we discussed earlier this week—makes it difficult, if not impossible, for a jury to be properly directed about its duties in a civil trial. There is nothing new in that attitude. In the early 1970s when the law governing interest on damages was changed in Scotland the view was that civil jury trial would no longer be possible because of the difficulty of giving proper directions to juries. That view was proved to be wholly unfounded. In the case of Macdonald *v.* Glasgow Corporation, with which I have no doubt the Minister is intimately familiar, the first division of the Court of Session made it plain that civil jury trials could exist side by side with the changes in the legislation governing interest on damages.

I am happy to note that civil jury trial is preserved, because in many cases civil jury trial is the most appropriate means of determining the issues at stake. That applies particularly to road traffic accidents and to cases in which there are clear and unequivocal conflicts of fact which a jury is especially well suited to resolve.

I am glad to note that the provisions are to be re-enacted, but I give notice to the Government that if proposals are finally made to remove civil jury trial as part of the procedures of the law of Scotland, there may well be strenuous opposition, not only from the Opposition parties but from that well-known guardian of Scottish legal tradition, the hon. and learned Member for Perth and Kinross (Sir N. Fairbairn) who, unfortunately, is not present this evening. No doubt he is recovering from his recent illness. We are grateful for that and wish him the speediest possible recovery.

As the Minister said, the Bill is not controversial. However, some of the measures that it re-enacts appear to be the subject of Government review. If that review results in an attempt to remove some of the provisions, the Government may find themselves in rather more controversy than they have bargained for.

10.32 pm

Mr. Donald Dewar (Glasgow, Garscadden): First, I assure the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell) that the present president of the Law Society of Scotland is still my senior legal partner. These days it may be an academic or theoretical connection; none the less, it is legally valid.

I do not propose to spend long on the Bill, which is very much a consolidation measure; in any event, I recognise that I am circumscribed in that respect. I shall certainly not be tempted into an argument about whether we need a third division in the Court of Session. That sounds rather threatening. I welcome the Bill and the fact that 20 19th-century Acts have been raided and the various provisions regulating the Court of Session have been put in easily accessible form. That will certainly help practitioners.

The Law Society was good enough to supply me with a number of comments on the Bill. In the interests of speed and fairness, I shall not refer to some of those comments, because they deal with law reform points rather than matters of consolidation. No doubt the Law Society will be taking them up with the powers that be with a view to getting changes made and improvements such as those referred to by the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East introduced. It would be interesting, for example, to have a debate about the maximum number of judges. Even more optimistically, it was suggested that we might consider universal rights of audience in the Court of Session. That would certainly provoke a lengthy debate with the two members of the Bar who are assembled here.

Clause 6 deals with the allocation of business by Act of Sederunt. Clause 6(i) gives a number of classifications of the causes brought into the court. It refers to

"an Ordinary Roll . . . an Admiralty and Commercial Roll and . . . a Consistorial Roll"

and a number of other matters. I have never practised in the Court of Session, but I am told that there is an optional procedure roll which is not mentioned in the Bill. Presumably, it can still be covered by Act of Sederunt, or perhaps it is seen as some sort of subsection to one of the main rolls to which I have referred. Perhaps the Minister

[Mr. Donald Dewar]

could say whether it has had any statutory life in another Act and been dropped, or whether it has never had that kind of statutory form and authority. It is a minor point, but perhaps he could refer to it.

The hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East referred to the argument, which is receiving some publicity because of the Civil Evidence (Scotland) Bill, about the future of jury trials, but that is an argument for another occasion. I know that, by and large, members of the Bar and solicitors who practise in the Court of Session feel strongly that civil jury trials should survive. I do not complain about that, although the case is weakened by the fact that the number of jury trials has declined dramatically. At one time, they were reasonably frequent and there were more than 100 per session. I am told that we are now down to five or six, which suggests that, however important they may be, they are almost falling into desuetude.

Mr. Menzies Campbell: Does the hon. Gentleman accept that many cases are settled before they come to proof or trial, and the mere fact that a case has been allocated for disposal by way of a jury trial frequently persuades the parties to effect a settlement, which in turn saves court time?

Mr. Dewar: I am aware of that, and it is a fair point. The threat of a jury trial perhaps concentrates the mind wonderfully on settlement. That is sadly true of all litigation in the Court of Session, where the costs are now formidable, and I am not sure that we should accept that with much pleasure.

I was interested to note that the senior solicitors who were quoted in the public prints this morning in defence of jury trials very honestly made it clear that their devotion to them is largely because they see them as a way in which to maximise damage awards. I have some sympathy with that, as someone who, with limited experience, has been interested in representing the pursuer.

The Bill will be useful because it will make the chasing of the facts easier. Like most consolidation measures, it will do a useful job, and we should all welcome that. If it starts one or two hares running and reminds us about some of the changes and modernisation that are still required in Court of Session practice, but cannot be properly encompassed in a consolidation Bill, it will have done a second service, by persuading us to look for further reforms.

10.37 am

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The answer to the first question asked by the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) is that the matter is covered by Act of Sederunt under powers in clause 5. My understanding is that the courts are enabled to regulate their own procedures.

I am grateful to the hon. Member for Garscadden and to the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell) for raising those points and the points made by the Law Society, which will be carefully considered. They seem to be matters for the Lord Advocate, but not in the context of the Bill, which merely restates the existing law, making provision to remove laws which are anachronistic or obsolete.

The hon. Member for Garscadden knows that there are now very few civil jury trials, but I understand that it is the Lord Advocate's intention to consult, and I am sure that he will contact both hon. Gentlemen. I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for raising that matter.

The Bill is necessary because it repeals an Act of 1594, which debars a judge

> "from sitting in any cause where one of the parties is his father, brother or son or father-in-law, brother-in-law or son-in-law".

The only problem is that the Act dealt only with a case where the related party was a male—not, for example, where one of the parties was the judge's sister. In these days of equality of the sexes, I am sure that the House will generally welcome a measure that brings the law up to date.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read a Second time.

Bill committed to a Committee of the whole House.—*[Mr. Dorrell.]*

Committee tomorrow.

Firefighters

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Dorrell.]*

10.39 pm

Ms. Hilary Armstrong (Durham, North-West): The subject of this debate arises because of the changes in the social security legislation, which came into force in April this year and take the earnings of retained firefighters into consideration when assessing benefit entitlement.

In correspondence, the Minister, whom I thank for being here—I realise that he has had a busy day—offered as the main reason the fact that not taking such earnings into account would be a disincentive for unemployed retained firefighters to seek work. With due respect, I suggest that that ignores the fact that in areas such as mine we have the dual problem of a comparatively large number of retained firefighters in a rural area and still a large number of unemployed people.

I accept that unemployment is changing, but it is difficult in our area to calculate what those changes are, because all my constituency is covered by travel-to-work areas. Moreover, the Government have made several changes to the way in which unemployment figures are calculated. Recent studies by Durham university show that the total number of jobs available has not increased during the past few years. We are losing some and gaining others. There is therefore still a large problem with unemployment.

Firefighters join the service not to avoid work but to offer themselves for a highly dangerous and important public service. Constituents who have come to see me have looked for work. Some were previously in work but have been made redundant. They have offered themselves for firefighting when they are needed, but if work were available, they would take it. Paid work, however, is still a precious commodity in our area.

Local residents are outraged that the Government seem to have such scant regard for the service of these men. Commitment to public service is an important issue today, and I believe that the Government are beginning to put out the message that they do not value it. That would be very unfortunate. I do not believe that that is the view of the Minister or of the Government, and I am offering the Minister an opportunity to demonstrate that there is a commitment to public service.

I am not sure that the Minister needs reminding that a previous Secretary of State wrote in 1982:

> "I am happy to confirm that work as a part-time fireman does not affect entitlement to unemployment benefit. Similarly, any payment from employment as a part-time fireman in a fire brigade maintained in pursuance of the Fire Services Act is disregarded in the assessment for supplementary benefit entitlement."

I believe that that commitment is not written on tablets of stone for ever more, but it was recognised that this is a public service which ought to be recognised and that those involved should not be penalised by having their benefit affected.

Retained firefighters who are unemployed are on call 24 hours a day, and they are meant to be on call every day of the year. That in itself is an amazing act of public service. They are prepared to be tied to a narrow locality to be available in case of a fire.

I understand that to date there has been only one resignation in Durham county. I congratulate the firemen on that, because it demonstrates their commitment to service. In Durham much of the population is now located in somewhat scattered villages. Therefore, the importance of the local fire station and the local fire service cannot be overestimated. As I have said, retained firefighters are expected to respond on a 24-hour basis and within four minutes of a fire call so the location of the stations is crucial.

In Durham, there are about 170 retained firemen, of whom 20 per cent. are unemployed. The distribution of those firefighters is not necessarily even. Some stations are affected more than others. Of the two stations affected in my constituency, one, in Langley Park, has five retained firefighters who are unemployed and the other, in Crook, has four retained firefighters who are unemployed. Those men represent over 50 per cent. of the force in those stations. I hope that the Minister can understand the concern in those communities about the potential effect of the changes in the legislation.

As I have said, those firefighters have remained loyal to date, but they are looking to the Government for concessions. There are rumours—I emphasise that they are only rumours—that the Government are to re-examine things after six months. Some of those men are waiting for that.

There is also the hope that the Government will be prepared to redesignate the retainer fee as bounty. I understand that bounty payments have been allowed for other public services—for example, for the Territorial Army—and I understand that some sort of concession has also been made to lifeboatmen. If that is so—as I have said, I do not have written evidence of it, although I have been told about it—I hope that the Government can reconsider the designation in respect of firefighters.

One member of the service in Durham was recently paid his retainer fee and hoped that the Department of Health and Social Security would treat it as bounty. I understand that bounty is excluded under the legislation. However, the local office decided that it was not bounty and therefore that man's benefit has been affected for the next 26 weeks. He feels that throughout that period he will be working for nothing. It is also clear that different DHSS offices are interpreting the rules differently. I hope that the Minister can clear up some of the uncertainties and anxieties prompted by the rumours and different stories.

However, the main concern is the potential effect on recruitment. The fire service has made particular efforts and has produced leaflets to try to recruit more people and to retain more firemen. It is clear that the shortage is partly due to local authorities and local fire authorities not being able to afford to employ the number of full-time firemen which I confess I wish that they were employing, because that would be the answer to the problem. However, in Durham a large percentage of our firefighters are in the retained sector. It is important that we can continue to recruit. I understand that nationally the recruitment is normally from one large establishment. In a rural area, there are not the large workplaces that would enable that more fruitful recruitment to take place.

I hope that the Minister will take this opportunity to think again. I hope that he will recognise the worth of the service that these people give to their local communities, the esteem in which those local communities hold them and the particular problems in rural areas, which still have high unemployment. If the hon. Gentleman cannot answer tonight, we shall look for an answer in the future. I hope

[Ms. Hilary Armstrong]

that the Minister can clear up the uncertainties and ensure that unemployed people feel that there is a role for them in public service and ensure, by changing the regulations, that the commitment involved is fully recognised by the Government.

10.50 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security (Mr. Michael Portillo): I very much appreciate the opening generous remarks by the hon. Member for Durham, North-West (Ms. Armstrong). I congratulate her on obtaining this debate and on speaking so lucidly about the problems that she sees from her constituency experience. The Government share her high regard for the work carried out by the fire service as a whole. It is a matter of record that its firefighters have repeatedly performed heroically in the face of danger and at great personal risk to themselves, for the benefit and safety of others. I have the utmost regard for them and their work.

The hon. Lady referred specifically to the position of the retained firefighters under the new income support scheme. Of course, officers should apply the new rules consistently and, if the hon. Lady has any examples of where that is not occurring, I shall be pleased to look into the matter for her.

Retained firefighters are part-time firemen who voluntarily carry out their duties, often in addition to their normal full-time jobs. There are about 14,500, and only a small proportion are thought to be unemployed. We do not have any national figures, but if Durham is an indication the numbers of unemployed is likely to be under 12 per cent., and a considerably lower number may receive income support. I take the hon. Lady's point that in particular fire stations the proportion may be higher.

The Government have always recognised the valuable role that retained firefighters have in our society and we continue to reflect that in the new income support scheme. Because they are special, we are now helping them in five distinct ways—help which, apart from transitional protection, is not generally available to other claimants.

First, we are giving them the higher £15 a week disregard on their earnings instead of the standard £5 a week available to most other claimants. The £15 concession is normally available only to the more vulnerable groups—lone parents, people entitled to the disability premium and couples under 60 receiving benefit for two years or more. Retained firefighters, including fit single people, will get the £15 disregard automatically without having to satisfy any of those conditions.

Secondly, we are treating the long-service bounty paid to retained firefighters as capital, not as income. Other people who receive a bounty from their employers will normally have it counted as though it were earnings. In the year it is received the long-service bounty is worth between £10 and £18 a week for basic grade firefighters, depending on the length of service, and even higher amounts are paid to higher ranks. In practice, that means that for some retained firefighters up to £33 a week can be received in certain years without affecting their level of income support. I think the hon. Lady will agree that that is a significant concession in an income-related scheme, where many claimants are unable to work and therefore do not have the benefit of any earnings disregard.

Thirdly, those retained firefighters who were receiving supplementary benefit, but whose income support is less because their earnings are above £15 a week, will have their previous benefit protected at the point of change to income support by transitional additions. That ensures that existing recipients will not lose benefit because of the new rules.

Fourthly, we ignore the whole of their part-time earnings for unemployment benefit purposes. That has not changed. Since unemployment benefit is usually payable for the first year of unemployment and a person can requalify if he works 16 hours or more for just 13 weeks, this is a very generous concession for unemployed retained firefighters. Furthermore, because unemployment benefit is often paid at a higher rate than income support, many part-time firemen, if they find suitable employment before their unemployment benefit has been exhausted, will be completely unaffected by the new income support rules.

Fifthly, their employment as retained firefighters is not normally considered to affect their availability for other work. As the hon. Lady will know, the condition that unemployed people should be available for suitable work is a prerequisite for their receiving unemployment benefit and income support. This is yet another demonstration of the Government's willingness to help retained firefighters.

These in summary are the five ways in which we provide special help: we are disregarding the first £15 of their earnings in income support; we are treating their long-service bounty payments as capital; we are providing transitional protection to ensure that those on benefit under the old rules do not lose out; we are fully disregarding their earnings for unemployment benefit purposes; and we are ignoring their hours of work when deciding whether they satisfy the availability conditions for receiving benefit.

The hon. Lady is concerned about why we have moved from a total disregard of firefighters' earnings applying to supplementary benefit. The total disregard was first introduced in 1968. It does not go back further than that. At that time firefighters' earnings were not high enough to affect the amount of the benefit that they were receiving, but their earnings have increased considerably since then. For example, on current rates of pay, a firefighter on the lowest rate who attends a drill night and is required for turnout once a week would receive earnings of just under £30. The information we have available is that retained firefighters earn around £43 a week on average. Clearly, some will earn more than that figure and perhaps well in excess of their income support entitlement.

Let me give the House an example. Let us consider a single person earning £43 a week, with an income support entitlement of £33·40. By disregarding all his earnings he would be 125 per cent. better off than his unemployed counterpart. I do not believe that that can be right. It would be irresponsible of us, in a scheme that is supported wholly out of public funds, to give an open-ended disregard of earnings, regardless of how much those earnings might be. If we had done that, we would have been criticised.

We must also consider the other consequences if, as the hon. Lady has suggested, we were to disregard all the earnings of retained firefighters. There is evidence to suggest that the complete disregard that existed under the old scheme was acting as a disincentive for some full-time firemen to remain in their jobs because they were better off on benefits and earnings as retained firefighters. Furthermore, there was a definite risk of creating a disincentive for people seeking full-time work, particularly in areas where the proportion of low-paid jobs is higher than average. It must be remembered that income support is payable to unemployed people on the condition that they are available for, and willing to accept, full-time work.

Nor do I think that we can afford to ignore the effects that a complete disregard under income support might have on full-time firemen with low earnings who claim the other income-related benefits, namely, family credit and housing benefit. Under family credit there are no disregards on earnings, while in housing benefit the first £5, or £10 if one of a couple, of any full-time earnings are ignored. Those rules would clearly favour the retained firefighter and serve to narrow, or even remove, the financial differentials between part-time and full-time firemen. Such a move would also be counter-productive to the Government's policy of encouraging people to be self-reliant.

Like the hon. Lady, I should be very concerned if the income support regulations had an adverse effect on the retention and recruitment of firefighters. That is why we are liaising with the Home Office, which is monitoring the effect of the change in the treatment of earnings, the results of which are likely to be known at the end of the year. I suspect that that is why the six-month proposal has come into play. The Central Fire Brigades Advisory Council for England and Wales is fully aware of these monitoring arrangements.

Finally, the hon. Lady may be interested to learn about the latest position relating to personnel in Durham. She is right to say that there is a retained establishment of 270, of whom 32 are otherwise employed. She is also right to say that one man has resigned, giving the new rules as the reason, but I understand that he has since applied to be reinstated.

We have had responses from other local authorities. I am pleased to say that no difficulties have been reported from Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire, Cheshire, Clwyd, Buckinghamshire, Dyfed, West Glamorgan, Gwent, Gwynedd, Hereford and Worcestershire, Powys, Shropshire, Staffordshire, West Midlands, Hertfordshire, Suffolk, Northamptonshire, Wiltshire and Leicestershire, but for the sake of completeness I ought to mention that three local authorities have expressed various degrees of concern about the problem.

In conclusion, I assure the hon. Lady that the decision to discontinue the total disregard was not taken lightly —but we believe that it was justified—that we are monitoring the position and that, so far, we are unaware of widespread adverse effects on the retention and recruitment of retained firefighters.

I have pleasure in saying again that there can be no doubt of the value that we place upon the services of retained firefighters. That is why, for those who are unemployed, we have made the special provisions that I set out in my reply. I am grateful to the hon. Lady for the chance to spell out those special conditions. I hope that she will ponder on what I have said to her, just as I shall ponder on what she has told the House this evening.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at one minute past Eleven o'clock.

House of Commons

Thursday 7 July 1988

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

LONDON REGIONAL TRANSPORT BILL *(By Order)*

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on Question [10 December], That the Bill be now considered.

Considered; to be read the Third time.

BRITISH RAILWAYS (NO. 2) BILL *(By Order)*

Order for consideration read.

To be considered on Thursday 14 July.

TEIGNMOUTH QUAY COMPANY BILL *(By Order)*

YORK CITY COUNCIL BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*

CARDIFF BAY BARRAGE BILL *(By Order)*

FALMOUTH CONTAINER TERMINAL BILL *(By Order)*

NEWCASTLE UPON TYNE TOWN MOOR BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*

PORT OF TYNE BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*

AVON LIGHT RAIL TRANSIT BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*

Orders for Second Reading read.

To be read a Second time on Thursday 14 July.

Oral Answers to Questions

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Set-aside Scheme

1. **Mr. Ron Davies:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what consultation he had with the Game Conservancy Council prior to making his announcement concerning the set-aside of agricultural land; and if he will make a statement.

The Minister of State, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. John Selwyn Gummer): The Game Conservancy Council gave us detailed views in response to the consultation documents that we issued last December and we took those into account, together with views from a wide range of other bodies, in reaching the conclusions that my right hon. Friend announced in the House on 14 June.

Mr. Davies: Will the Minister bear in mind that the Game Conservancy Council believes that, to provide the most effective environmental benefit, set-aside strips should be accompanied by conservation headlands? Now that the Government have introduced the former as part of their set-aside proposals, do they intend to provide the latter as part of their extensification proposals?

Mr. Gummer: I have a great deal of sympathy for such arguments. I know that the hon. Gentleman will appreciate that fact, as I took some part in the experiment that we are conducting in the Brecklands, which I hope will be a success. Although conservation headlands are admirable in providing benefits to wildlife, they do not conform to the requirements of the set-aside scheme and that is why they are not part of it. We shall consider such headlands and other possibilities when we try to find a good way of carrying out extensification, which is not easy.

Sir John Farr: Is my right hon. Friend aware that the consultations are regarded by the House as important and significant? Has his Department considered introducing a regime of low-input, low-output farming?

Mr. Gummer: I assure my hon. Friend that we have considered that. From the discussions that we have had in committees on which we have served he will know that it is a matter of great importance to us. There are problems about creating such a regime and about policing it. If there were not such problems it would all be much easier. I do not have any answers yet, and if my hon. Friend has some further points to put to me I should be happy to listen, because I sympathise with his aims.

Mr. Morley: Will the Minister confirm that there has been a cool response from farmers to the set-aside scheme? Will he accept that the sums of money involved do not make it an attractive proposal to farmers who grow the bulk of cereal crops, and that the scheme is more likely to attract the more marginal producer? Therefore, if we are spending public money to try to reduce surpluses, has he considered whether that money should be targeted to introduce much more environmentally advantageous farming, whether through low-input farming or other schemes, such as farm woodland projects?

Mr. Gummer: We have already produced our farm woodland project and we are to introduce an extensification scheme. We are also achieving a great deal through the environmentally sensitive areas. I do not believe that the hon. Gentleman can accuse us of not taking on board the issues that he has put forward. The set-aside scheme is specifically designed to decrease the production of cereals. We have found that the scheme is attractive to the people to whom it is supposed to be attractive—the marginal producers of cereal. I believe that we would be criticised by the Opposition Front Bench if we were in the business of doling out public money in excess of that which is necessary. I have heard all sorts of words from Opposition spokesmen, and they would be even tougher if I had done other than ensure that we have a system that takes out those who are only marginal producers.

Mr. Bellingham: Is the Minister aware of the efforts made by farmers in East Anglia to plant spinneys, replant hedgerows and leave headlands to encourage conservation and country sports? That has done a great deal to enhance the beauty of the environment. Will he tell the League Against Cruel Sports and some of their supporters among the Opposition that if they had their way all this good work would come to an end overnight?

Mr. Gummer: I consider that country sports are one of the most important elements in the conservation of the countryside. I am glad of the support that we have had from bodies that support such sports.

Fur Farming

2. **Mr. Haynes:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food which species of animals are currently farmed for their fur in Britain.

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. Donald Thompson): Mink, white, red and cross fox and fitch are farmed for fur in Britain.

Mr. Haynes: Is the Minister aware that, like a woman, these little furry friends of ours are beautiful? Will he seriously consider the issuing of licences for this sort of farming? Will he also seriously consider the complete elimination of licences for this sort of farming over the next 10 years?

Mr. Thompson: The mink farmers are licensed and almost insist that they are. There are few other fur farmers. I have heard what the hon. Gentleman said about abolishing fur farms here, but the number of fur farms in Europe is increasing and I would have to think carefully before putting British farmers at any disadvantage.

Pollution

3. **Mr. Duffy:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he next expects to meet the president of the National Farmers Union to discuss agricultural pollution.

The Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. John MacGregor): I have discussed this with various members of the National Farmers Union, including the president. Farming unions are already well aware that the Government regard last year's number of pollution incidents as unacceptably high.

Mr. Duffy: Is that good enough, given that illegal farm discharges of slurry and silage in Yorkshire and Humberside last year were up by 38 per cent.? Is the Minister aware that south Yorkshire's water supply is 25 per cent. derived from surface-derived water abstracted from the River Derwent outside York, which itself is a catchment area of intensive agriculture? If so, he will understand the concern in south Yorkshire. I am being asked whether the time has not arrived for the Minister to consider a more vigorous prosecution policy.

Mr. MacGregor: I can assure the hon. Gentleman that we take this matter seriously. I know that the National Farmers Union is now doing so. We have fully backed water authorities in stepping up prosecutions. Through ADAS we have offered general free advice and we are carrying out a great programme in this area to assist. We are carrying out research into improved construction and management of waste-handling facilities. Capital grants for this sort of purpose, for dealing with waste storage and handling equipment, are available at the highest rates. We take this matter seriously. Clearly, we cannot have this sort of increase in farm pollution incidents.

Mr. Bowis: Will my right hon. Friend discuss with the farming community ways of encouraging modern crop spraying methods, such as the electrically charged droplets system, which uses much less water and therefore causes much less drift spray pollution in the countryside?

Mr. MacGregor: I have seen a considerable amount of that sort of thing at various shows and other exhibitions, where the attractions of such equipment have been drawn to the attention of farmers. I know that agricultural machinery companies are constantly trying to improve these sorts of facilities, and I agree that they are one way of helping to deal with the problem.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Is the loss of the common minnow in the Cumbrian lakes in any way linked to this agricultural pollution?

Mr. MacGregor: I shall look into that and write to the hon. Gentleman.

Cod

4. **Mr. Dunnachie:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what recent representations he has received regarding a mid-year adjustment to the North sea cod total allowable catch for 1988; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: I am aware of concern by fishermen about the allocation of the United Kingdom sea cod quota, but I have had no recent representations about a mid-year adjustment to the total allowable catch for 1988. No change to it was recommended in the most recent biannual scientific assessment at the end of May.

Mr. Dunnachie: Does the Minister agree that the industry cannot be run viably when the quotas of species such as cod fluctuate so wildly? Will he listen to the fishermen as well as the scientists?

Mr. Gummer: If one listened to the fishermen one would hear all sorts of different voices, including the voices of those who always want an increase in the number of fish that can be caught. We must listen to the scientists. If we do not, there will be no fish for fishermen to catch—not only next year, but when their children go fishing. I am in the business of conserving our fish stocks so that I can conserve the fishing industry.

Mr. John Townend: Is my right hon. Friend aware that British fishermen are demanding not more fish than last year, but a fair share of the quota? Does he accept that the quota for the Yorkshire and Anglian fish producers' organisation has been cut by significantly more than the reduction in the United Kingdom quota? If something is not done, that will result in the collapse of the producers' organisation.

Mr. Gummer: I do not accept that. My hon. Friend must agree that the quota given to the Yorkshire and Anglian fish producers' organisation is a fair share of our national quota. It has been cut, but, of course, some boats have left that producers' organisation. If I gave his producers' organisation more of the cod, I would have to take it from other producers' organisations, and they would rightly say that that was unfair. The system is operated fairly between different parts of the country, and I can see no other way of doing it.

Dr. Godman: North sea cod fishermen have a legitimate worry. May I offer my compliments to the Minister on obtaining at the recent Council meeting a reduction in the minimum landing size of nephrops? However, the disappointment about west coast mackerel is considerable. These achievements and failures fall within the framework of the common fisheries policy. Will the Minister assure the House that with the advent of the European single market we will not see the demise of the common fisheries policy, especially in relation to access agreements and historic fishing rights?

Mr. Gummer: The Government are wholly committed to the basis of the common fisheries policy. It gives our fishermen a very fair share of the fish that are available in the European Community. Any renegotiation of that would be bound to give our fishermen a smaller share. That is the reality. We are determined to see that the situation remains as it is and that the policy is applied to new resources in exactly the same way as it is applied to old resources. I give that assurance to the hon. Gentleman.

Farming Unions

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he last met representatives of the farming unions; and what matters were discussed.

Mr. MacGregor: I meet representatives of the farming unions frequently to discuss agricultural matters.

Mr. Jones: During his discussions with the farming unions, does the Minister discuss the implications of the recent House of Lords ruling that income levy raised by the Meat and Livestock Commission is not VAT-recoverable? Is he aware that that represents a loss of about £2·5 million a year to the agriculture industry, and that to some people it is seen as the thin end of the wedge for the introduction of VAT on food? Does he intend to discuss the matter with the Chancellor of the Exchequer with a view to introducing regulations to amend that ruling?

Mr. MacGregor: As I think the hon. Gentleman has recognised, this is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer and his colleagues. I am obviously aware of the concerns that have been expressed as a result of the House of Lords ruling. However, it has absolutely nothing to do with any question of VAT on food, on which the Government's position is entirely clear. There is no question of this being the thin end of the wedge.

Mr. Colin Shepherd: Has my right hon. Friend discussed with the farming unions the question of livestock in respect of the set-aside proposals contained in the latest agreement? Does he agree that it is particularly important to the west of the country that the livestock sector should be kept strong, and that there should be no temptation to move the livestock centre of gravity towards the east into land that might otherwise have been used for grain production? Does he further agree that it is vital for this matter to be understood so that the full confidence of the livestock sector in the west of the country may be maintained?

Mr. MacGregor: I agree with my hon. Friend. In the decisions that I took on set-aside, and especially the decision not to take up the grazed fallow option, I had very much in mind the interests of the livestock sector, not only on the western side of England but in Wales and Scotland, and especially in the hill areas. Therefore, I understand the point of his question about the possibilities that might have arisen if we had gone for the grazed fallow option.

The other matter that my hon. Friend might be concerned about is whether we can achieve greater transferability of quotas in the dairy sector. From all the discussions that I have had with British farmers, I can tell my hon. Friend that I do not think that greater transferability of quota would undermine the livestock sector in the west. I assure my hon. Friend that I am conscious of the importance of that sector to farming on the western side of the country.

Mr. Geraint Howells: I am sure that the Minister will agree that it is difficult for members of the farmers union, for his Department and for our friends in the EC to introduce a sensible policy that will be acceptable to the farmers of this country, will cut production and will ensure that they have a reasonable livelihood in the years to come. Does he further agree that, if 10 per cent. of the land in this country is taken out of production, the farmers will be able to produce even more, if that is their wish? Does he agree, therefore, that it is essential that we consult for a long period before we make a decision that may be wrong for the rural dweller, the farmer and the consumer in this country?

Mr. MacGregor: I can assure the hon. Gentleman that I consult and am in discussion all the time before taking decisions on matters that affect the agricultural community.

The need to take more land out of agricultural production arises simply because of the capacity to grow more from the land and, in any case, because of technological developments. I am anxious to ensure a reasonable transition that preserves the attractiveness of the countryside for all of us as that land comes out of production. That is the purpose of a number of the schemes that we have been pioneering recently.

Mr. Cormack: Has my right hon. Friend had recent discussions on the problems and anxieties of pig producers, and is he able to give any further reassurances?

Mr. MacGregor: I am very much aware of the problems. We have done all that it is possible for the Government to do within the context of the CAP, both earlier in securing for a proper period—not too long—a private storage aid, and as a result of the decisions taken in the Community in the price negotiations on the further reduction of negative MCAs. That means that, shortly, the negative MCAs in the pigmeat sector will have dwindled to almost nothing, provided we obtain final agreement on price negotiations. However, one of the problems currently facing the pig sector is the possible increase in feed costs, as a result of the drought in the United States.

Dr. David Clark: When the Minister met the agricultural leaders, did he discuss with them the proposals to dump in Britain the domestic rubbish from New York and elsewhere? Did they tell him that the farmers and the British people are not prepared to become the garbage tip of the world, with the accompanying health and disease risks? Will he give the House an assurance that he will continue to refuse a licence for such applications?

Mr. MacGregor: We have not yet had discussions with the farming unions on this matter—nor have they raised it with us—but we have already been considering it carefully. In so far as it is our responsibility, particularly in relation to animal health, I assure the hon. Gentleman that we are considering it carefully.

Organic Farming

6. **Mr. Colvin:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what support his Department is giving to organic farming.

Mr. MacGregor: My Department is giving full support to the board of the United Kingdom register of organic food standards in the task of setting standards for organic production which are essential if organic farming is to achieve its potential. In addition, those farming organically benefit from the various agricultural support measures in the same way as other farmers, while the Agricultural Development and Advisory Service is equipping itself to respond to demands for specialised advice.

Mr. Colvin: My right hon. Friend will be aware that, under the set-aside proposals, farmers will merely try to produce more food from their remaining acres. In view of what he said, therefore, will he consider giving financial incentives to those who practise extensive farming methods, which would not only reduce farm surpluses, but would ensure that the food that we produce was much better for us and would cut our imports of organic food, which at present constitute 60 per cent. of the total consumption of the United Kingdom?

Mr. MacGregor: I do not think that there will be in this country the increase in production on land that is not set aside within a farm as one sees in, for example, the United States, because, on the whole, United Kingdom farmers are already farming to maximum efficiency and productivity. I do not think, therefore, that that particular point arises, but my hon. Friend will know that organic farming was not a feature of the set-aside scheme because it was not a part of the thinking behind it, although those who take up the fallowing aspect of set-aside may find that that has some implications for organic farming.

Set-aside was not designed to deal with the organic farming issue. The matter arises in the extensification proposals that we will consider in the Community and in the United Kingdom. We will then consider closely the possibility of an organic farming option within the extensification proposals.

Mr. Boswell: I welcome the opportunities for informed consumer choice and what my right hon. Friend has said about the encouragement of organic farming, but does he agree that British food produced by conventional methods is equally good and wholesome?

Mr. MacGregor: Yes, it is important to keep stressing that. I agree with my hon. Friend. There is among some consumers a growing demand for organically grown food which I should like to see our farmers meeting. That is the reason for setting up the register, which enables us to establish nationally recognised production standards for consumers who want organic food. However, my hon. Friend's point is entirely right and relevant.

Milk Marketing Board

7. **Mr. Robert G. Hughes:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he last met the chairman of the Milk Marketing Board; and what was discussed.

Mr. MacGregor: I met the chairman of the Milk Marketing Board on 9 June, when we discussed various issues affecting the dairy industry.

Mr. Hughes: When my right hon. Friend next meets the chairman of the Milk Marketing Board, will he stress the importance of giving all possible help and encouragement to our quality milk producers in seeking to find export markets for their goods? Does he agree that the liberalisation of the European milk regime is liable to widen those markets and that milk producers should take all the opportunities presented to them?

Mr. MacGregor: In the last financial year the Milk Marketing Board spent nearly £24 million in support of market development, and that effort must be encouraged. I agree with the implication of my hon. Friend's remarks that sometimes we in Britain have concentrated too much in a rather defensive way on the dangers of imports of milk products and not sufficiently on the prospects for exports of our dairy products. I hope that as we move towards the single market we shall increasingly take opportunities to exploit those markets.

Mr. Martlew: At a recent meeting with the head of the Milk Marketing Board we were told that there was no longer a milk surplus in the United Kingdom and there is a shortage of milk in Scotland. Is it not a fact that the surpluses in Europe are being created by EEC countries that have not met the quota? What will the Minister do to protect British farmers?

Mr. MacGregor: That is not the case. There is still overall a milk surplus within the Community. My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland and I encourage the two Milk Marketing Boards to sort out problems that arise as a result of seasonal troughs and certain shortages, for example, milk for cheese production—a problem which arose particularly in Scotland. I am glad to say that as a result of the talks some arrangements have now been made to transfer milk from England to Scotland.

Mr. Curry: When my right hon. Friend next meets the chairman of the Milk Marketing Board, will he discuss with him the remarkable turnaround in the European dairy industry? Will he note that there is now virtually no skimmed milk powder to be had, that the butter mountain has been more than halved and that the incorporation premium has been reduced? If he studies the Milk Marketing Board's annual report, he will also note that since it ceased to put large amounts of butter into cold store its financial situation has improved because it is not tying up its money so much.

Mr. MacGregor: My hon. Friend is right. There has been a considerable change as a result of the decisions taken by the Council of Ministers on the dairy sector, in particular the introduction of quotas and the tightening of quotas in 1986, so that we are achieving a better balance between supply and demand. My hon. Friend is also right to draw attention to the considerable reductions in the amount of butter in intervention and to the fact that the amount of skimmed milk powder in intervention has come down to practically nil. On the other hand, we still have sizeable subsidy support programmes to dispose of some of the surpluses, including skimmed milk powder. We are still paying a good deal of money to encourage its disposal. Nevertheless, my hon. Friend is correct to say that substantial progress has been made.

Mr. Ron Davies: Will the Minister also discuss bovine somatotropin with the board, and in particular, the view of a group of scientists employed by the Monsanto chemical company who think that if BST is licensed it should be made available on prescription only? Is that not a reasonable policy to follow?

Mr. MacGregor: As the hon. Gentleman knows, we have permitted under the Medicines Act 1971 the BST trials that are taking place because we were satisfied, from all the advice and evidence that we were given, that within the terms and criteria set by that Act it was right to do so. We have not yet received advice on the application for licences, and we shall have to take various matters into account when making those decisions.

Poultry

8. **Mr. Alexander:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps is he taking to ensure that the health of the United Kingdom poultry flock will continue to be safeguarded after 1992; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: While the Government fully support the single European market, we believe that animal health should be achieved by working towards uniformly high standards throughout the Community. In the meantime, we shall press for eradication of serious diseases and the maintenance of necessary controls. The European Commission has yet to make any detailed proposals.

Mr. Alexander: I note my hon. Friend's comments, but will he confirm that the current quarantine regulations will remain in force after 1992? Is he aware that this is a matter of the utmost concern to both poultry breeders and farmers?

Mr. Thompson: I am aware of that concern and have answered a great deal of correspondence from my hon. Friend and others on the subject of the quarantine regulations, which we are determined will remain in place for as long as they are necessary.

Mr. Butler: Has my hon. Friend yet made any assessment of the danger to the United Kingdom poultry stock from the importation of millions of tonnes of American domestic waste into this country?

Mr. Thompson: My right hon. Friend touched on that matter in a previous answer. I am doing all that I can to ensure that if any American waste is imported it contains no animal matter or any matter injurious to animal or plant health in this country. Perhaps we may have to invoke the well-tried rule that the polluter pays.

Dolphins

9. **Mr. David Shaw:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what measures he will take to prevent the killing of dolphins.

Mr. Gummer: The United Kingdom Government are opposed to the needless killing of dolphins and will continue to press for further measures to protect dolphins and small cetaceans, through the International Whaling Commission and other relevant international fora.

Mr. Shaw: Is my right hon. Friend aware that almost everyone loves dolphins, which are graceful and beautiful animals, and that there is much appreciation of the Government's work and the concern that they have expressed? However, can my right hon. Friend say what the Government are doing in response to recent reports that the Faroese are continuing to kill dolphins?

Mr. Gummer: Immediately we received that information about the Faroese we asked for an immediate investigation. What happened is clearly contrary to the law of the Faroes and we are determined to do all that we can to defend dolphins and small whales, as well as larger whales. I am pleased to report that we have received commendation for our action not only from Greenpeace locally but from that organisation's headquarters, and from Sir Peter Scott.

Mr. Macdonald: Does the Minister accept that one of the problems is sheer lack of knowledge about dolphin numbers and the tendency of the dolphin population to decline? Will he undertake to fund research into the dolphin population, to discover the causes of its declining numbers?

Mr. Gummer: The question of inshore dolphins, relating to our country, is one for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment, and I shall certainly talk to him about it. We are committed to the view that the depredations of those animals and of whales in general are wholly unacceptable, and we shall do all that we can to ensure that mankind does not destroy that important part of its heritage.

Chernobyl

10. **Mr. Patrick Thompson:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what further action he intends to take consequent upon lessons learnt in the aftermath of the Chernobyl incident.

Mr. Gummer: My Department has participated fully in the interdepartmental review leading to the setting up by the Department of the Environment of a national response plan for dealing with any future nuclear emergency overseas, and we shall continue to review and update our emergency arrangements in the light of the experience afforded by the Chernobyl accident.

Mr. Thompson: I welcome my right hon. Friend's reply, in particular as it applies to the co-ordination and dissemination of information following such an incident. What credibility does my right hon. Friend give to suggestions from Opposition Members that contaminated lamb has got into the food chain despite the restrictions on movements that were applied by his Department?

Mr. Gummer: I give no credence whatever to that. I do not believe that anyone in this country, in any circumstances or on any occasion, was in any way endangered as a result of eating lamb after the Chernobyl incident. What saddens me is the way in which the Opposition have sought to make party political propaganda out of frightening people, when there has been no reason for it.

Dr. David Clark: With respect, the Minister has not answered his hon. Friend's question. Did any sheep that were checked as having high radioactivity levels and which should have been remonitored go for slaughter without such remonitoring? The question is not how safe it was to eat meat, but how many sheep entered the food chain.

Mr. Gummer: All sheep remonitored on request were found to be below the action level. A third were monitored: there is no reason whatever to monitor every sheep. If Opposition Members do not understand that, they are once again trying to do what they ought not to —do down the British farmer—and frighten the British consumer in circumstances that make that entirely unnecessary. They should be ashamed of themselves.

Miss Emma Nicholson: Can my right hon. Friend confirm that his officials were significantly better prepared to deal with the Chernobyl disaster than were the officials of other member states of the European Community?

Mr. Gummer: I should not like to do down officials in any other country, but I believe that our officials behaved extremely well and were very well prepared. I am sometimes sorry that they are not given the kind of support that they ought to receive from the whole House. The fact is that because of their prompt, continued and energetic action no one in this country was endangered by eating food after the Chernobyl accident, and that is a very remarkable thing to be able to say.

Horticulture

11. **Mr. Matthew Taylor:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the current state of the horticulture sector.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The latest available figures, to be published next month, show an increase of 11 per cent. in the value of horticultural produce, rising from £1,219 million in 1986 to £1,349 million in 1987. Despite the setback caused by the great storm last October, the industry is buoyant and there is a feeling of increased optimism among growers.

Mr. Taylor: Is the Minister aware that the Government's recent announcement of the unexpected and far worse than anticipated news that there is to be a cutback of up to 65 per cent. in their horticultural research spending has dealt a devastating blow to the morale that the Minister has just mentioned? Will he reconsider that decision? Is he aware of the particular concern in my part of the country over the future of the Rosewarne experimental station?

Mr. Thompson: I am fully aware of the hon. Gentleman's concern about Rosewarne. There is no need to reconsider the decisions involved, as they have not yet been fully considered. Consideration is continuing.

Mr. Lord: My hon. Friend will be aware of the grave concern of both horticulturists and sugar beet growers following the recent importation of rhizomania on the root balls of Acers from Holland. What action is being taken to deal immediately with this urgent problem? In the light of the forthcoming plans for 1992, is my hon. Friend satisfied that other EEC countries have plant hygiene standards equal to ours?

Mr. Thompson: My hon. Friend will realise that the Dutch are as anxious as we are to ensure that such an incident does not happen again, because a huge Dutch export industry relies on the highest possible quality of plant and tree being introduced into this country. Our officials are at present in Holland discussing the matter with the growers and their officials, and we hope that it will be sensibly and satisfactorily resolved in the near future.

Dr. David Clark: Will the Minister confirm that the horticulture industry has been shattered—to use Simon Gourlay's word—by his announcement of a reduction of 65 per cent. in research and development spending? Will he also confirm that these massive cuts are part and parcel of proposed cuts of £60 million in spending on research and development in agriculture and food? Does he not accept that this is a stupid and short-sighted policy?

Mr. Thompson: I do not accept that trying to attract more money into research and development from wherever possible is stupid or shortsighted. We are convinced that at the end of our discussions the industry and the Government will have a greater and better-organised input into research and development than ever before.

Caffeine

12. **Mr. Thurnham:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement about his policy towards the sale of soft drinks containing a high level of caffeine.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Draft proposals for revised soft drinks regulations issued for public consultation on 18 May include a provision to limit the caffeine content of soft drinks to 125 mg/litre. Government policy will not be finalised until all comments have been considered.

Mr. Thurnham: Does my hon. Friend agree that manufacturers should not encourage children to consume drinks with excessive levels of stimulants? When he decides this matter, will he treat the protection of children as a priority?

Mr. Thompson: When we decide any matters of additives in food or drink, including caffeine, the protection of children is paramount.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: In the light of the work done by Dr. Wurtman in America and others on the difficulties that arise from the use of aspartame, otherwise known as Canderel or Nutrasweet, in soft drinks, will the Government now review approval that they gave to Searle, the manufacturers, some four years ago?

Mr. Thompson: We constantly review the approvals that we have given. At present we have no intention of reviewing that product.

Pollution

13. **Mr. Barron:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what discussions he has had with water authorities about reducing agricultural pollution of rivers and streams.

Mr. Gummer: I have had discussions with the Ministry's representatives on water authorities about reducing pollution and have arranged to meet the chairmen of the Anglian water authority and the Water Authorities Association later this month.

Mr. Barron: Does the Minister accept the growing concern over pollution to rivers from agriculture? There was an increase of 60 per cent. in serious pollution incidents last year in this country. Does the Minister accept also the argument put by many people that the advice given from ADAS ought to be free, not only on the first visit, but on further visits as well, to ensure that all is being done to stop the atrocious pollution of our rivers?

Mr. Gummer: I am sure the hon. Gentleman will know that I condemned that considerable rise and said to the farming community that it is up to it to make the necessary changes. We already give the highest rate of grant for the changes that have to be made to farmers. As the hon. Gentleman said, we give the first visit free, but it is not unreasonable for people to pay something towards the detailed application, because they get very high rates of grant for the work that they have to carry out. What is more important, having done the work, the day-to-day management has to be excellent, and we are encouraging farmers in that.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: Is my right hon. Friend aware of the serious concern expressed by the Welsh water authority over pollution, which has doubled in Wales in recent years? Will he consider whether the 60 per cent. grant which is available in hill areas might be extended to lowland areas?

Mr. Gummer: I am always willing to look at such things, but I consider that the grant levels are right. Many people who have carried out the changes that needed to be made have not carried on with the day-to-day management. Pollution incidents arise, even when proper installations have been made. Therefore, we have to insist that farmers properly maintain those installations, and we must support water authorities and magistrates in enforcing the law.

ADAS

14. **Mr. Geraint Howells:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he has any plans to privatise the Agricultural Development and Advisory Service; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. McGregor: I have no plans to do so.

Mr. Howells: I am sure that agriculturists will be delighted with that answer. There is no more to be said.

Pollution

15. **Mr. Brandon-Bravo:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether, in the light of increased river pollution from farm effluent, he will be seeking stiffer penalties on those found guilty.

Mr. Gummer: The Government have drawn the attention of the Magistrates Association to the need for penalties to reflect the seriousness of water pollution offences.

Mr. Brandon-Bravo: Does my right hon. Friend agree that if those penalties are to be effective they must be painful, and seen to be painful? There is growing public concern and a growing belief that the polluter should pay, not just the fine in a magistrates' court, but the cost of putting right the damage done by that pollution.

Mr. Gummer: It is important that the fines should be sufficient. The highest penalty for a single case in 1987 was £3,000, with costs of £4,500. We are beginning to crack down very hard on this offence. Ultimately, it is up to the farming community to ensure that its enterprises and activities do not harm the water of the nation. We are determined to see that that happens.

Mr. Hardy: Is the Minister aware that since this Government took office the condition of Britain's rural rivers and streams has deteriorated at an astonishing pace? It is no good calling for extra penalties if the water authorities do not bring prosecutions. In many areas there has been a sharp decline in the number of prosecutions brought, despite an enormous increase in the number of offences.

Mr. Gummer: I do not think that that assessment of our waters and rivers stands up. We are determined to support water authorities when they bring prosecutions and people are found guilty. We are also supportive of the strongest implementation of the fines imposed by magistrates. The hon. Gentleman must accept that it is up to the water authorities to carry out those prosecutions. In many cases they have found that by conciliation and work with farmers they can produce a better response than by taking farmers to court.

Continental Pig Producers

16. **Mr. Gill:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he has any evidence of hidden subsidies to continental pig producers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Recent Italian and French state aids in the pig sector are the subject of Commission investigations. Rulings on their legality are awaited. We are always prepared to refer firm evidence of possible illegal aids to the Commission for action.

Mr. Gill: Does my hon. Friend agree that a failure to implement fair trade in pigmeat will not only weaken the position of the British pig industry, but seriously undermine the United Kingdom balance of payments?

Mr. Thompson: I entirely agree with my hon. Friend. He will welcome the reduction, all things being equal, of the MCA on pigmeat to −1·7 per cent. next January, and I am sure that he will be joined in his welcome of that by the NFU and the National Pig Breeders Association.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Mathew Taylor:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 7 July.

The Prime Minister (Mrs. Margaret Thatcher): This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House I shall be having further meetings later today. This evening I shall be presiding at a dinner in honour of the recently retired secretary general of NATO Lord Carrington.

Mr. Taylor: The Prime Minister will be aware of the great difficulties facing young people looking for housing in areas such as Cornwall. Does she agree with the comments in *Building Today* of her Secretary of State for the Environment in relation to his two new papers on rural housing, when he said:

> "I don't see this as making a major contribution to solving the housing problem."?

The Prime Minister: I fully support my right hon. Friend's most excellent paper, which is designed to ensure an increase in the life of rural communities by attracting more industry and light industry, and by providing more housing of a kind that will persuade these young people to stay in rural areas.

Mr. Ian Bruce: Will my right hon. Friend find time in her busy day to send a message of encouragement and thanks to our naval personnel in the Gulf on the Armilla patrol? All their families and friends and, indeed, the whole House will wish them well in the difficult job that they have been doing these past eight years.

The Prime Minister: I am grateful to my hon. Friend and will certainly respond to his invitation. Our naval personnel have been doing their task extremely well, quietly and efficiently, regularly accompanying many ships up the Gulf. The whole House will wish to join my hon. Friend in his good wishes and thanks.

Mr. Kinnock: May I fully endorse the Prime Minister's sympathy for those who have lost loved ones and who have been injured in the horrific accident in the North sea oilfield. May I join her in commending those in the rescue services who have shown bravery and skill. Mindful of the scale of this disaster and aware of the memory of other disasters and the implications for families who have been bereaved and suffered losses or injury, may I ask the Prime Minister whether she will now give further consideration to establishing a system of no-fault compensation, which would at least provide immediate support and future financial security for people hit by horrors such as these?

The Prime Minister: My right hon. Friend the Minister of State, Department of Energy, is in Aberdeen, and I spoke to him at lunchtime. There will be a full statement after questions, but my right hon. Friend wished to say that the rescue services, always good, had on this occasion absolutely excelled themselves. We should all be very grateful to them for that, although we know the enormous tragedy with which they were faced.

The right hon. Gentleman asked about no-fault compensation. I cannot undertake to introduce statutory no-fault compensation, for reasons that the right hon. Gentleman will know—the matter has been debated and discussed for a very long time—but he will have heard at previous Question Times that a number of voluntary no-fault compensation schemes are being introduced and that I agreed to look at them.

Sir Richard Body: Has my right hon. Friend seen a report of the speech made by the President of the EEC at Strasbourg yesterday in which he estimated that, with the Single European Act in place, in 10 years' time 80 per cent. of social and economic decisions now made by national parliaments will be made in Brussels? Does she agree with that estimate of 80 per cent. and if it is some other percentage will she tell the House?

The Prime Minister: I heard the reports of what was said in Brussels and I do not agree with what was said on the occasion.

Q2. **Mr. Wall:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 7 July.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Wall: Will the Prime Minister explain why her Government abolished independent provision for safety in the North sea in 1980? Does not the transfer of that function to the Department of Energy leave the Government open to accusations that huge profits are more important than safety and human lives? Will she further explain why provision for independent safety representatives has been opposed for nine years by the Government and the oil industry? Does not this tragedy show the need for working people in the North sea to have the right to statutory provision to bring safety aspects to the notice of authorities on all occasions?

The Prime Minister: As I said earlier, there will be a full statement after questions. In the meantime, it is obvious that we all wish to express our deep sympathy with the people concerned—those who have been injured and the bereaved of the very many whom we seem to have lost. My right hon. Friend will be referring in his statement to safety and to the recent inspections on the rig, and it would be best if we waited for that statement.

Q3. **Mr. Couchman:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 7 July.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Couchman: We are all acutely conscious of the tragedy in the North sea today, but may I turn to the continuing tragedy in Northern Ireland? Will my right hon. Friend confirm that our troops, to whom she has so often paid tribute, will remain in Northern Ireland as long as law and order demand? In that context, has my right hon. Friend been approached by any other party leader for advice on how to deal with a Front-Bench spokeswoman who has broken the bipartisan approach by demanding the withdrawal of troops?

Mr. Speaker: Order. The question must refer to the Prime Minister's responsibilities.

The Prime Minister: May I answer my hon. Friend's main point. In thinking of other tragedies we perhaps do not remember often enough some of the daily tragedies that occur in Northern Ireland. Our troops will, of course, stay there as long as the situation requires them to do so and I hope that all hon. Members will join me in paying tribute to their courage and dedication as well as to that of the RUC.

Mr. Vaz: Does the Prime Minister agree that it is one of the fundamental principles of our democracy that all our citizens should have equal access to the law and to proper legal advice? If she does, how does she square those sentiments with the proposals in the Legal Aid Bill, which seeks to deny citizens the right to select the lawyer or legal adviser of their choice? Is she not deeply ashamed, especially as she is a former lawyer, that hers is the first British Government in history to put justice out to competitive tender?

The Prime Minister: The fundamental principle is, I believe, that all people are equal before the law. As they come before the courts their rights are absolutely equal. Under this Government the amount spent on legal aid has made that budget one of the fastest rising budgets of all. We have spread opportunity ever more widely.

Q4. **Mrs. Gillian Shepherd:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 7 July.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mrs. Shephard: Will my right hon. Friend find time today to consider the encouraging improvement in employment in south-west Norfolk, especially in Thetford, where unemployment has fallen during the past year from 11 per cent. to less than 6 per cent.? Does my right hon. Friend agree that it would be a great encouragement to those successful companies in Thetford, which in expanding have taken advantage of the Government's economic policies, if the Department of Transport were to increase its investment in the dualling of the A11, so that sooner rather than later Norfolk will be linked convincingly by a dualled road network to the rest of the United Kingdom?

The Prime Minister: I am delighted to hear the figures on the fall in unemployment in Thetford, which has been brought about by greater prosperity. Advantage has been taken of that prosperity by more small businesses starting up. I know my hon. Friend's views on the A11/M11. I think she will agree that when the present works are finished about 80 per cent. of the road will be dual carriageway all the way up to Norwich. I shall carefully consider my hon. Friend's comments on further improvements.

Mr. Boateng: Is the Prime Minister aware that there are more people homeless and sleeping rough on the streets of our capital city than in any other capital city in Europe, with the exception of Istanbul? Is the right hon. Lady aware that for every £4 that the Government spend on the homeless £10 was spent under the last Labour Government? Is she aware that last night the city of Westminster agreed to close a hostel for the homeless to make way for studio flats for the well-to-do? We know that the Prime Minister has no compassion, but has she no shame? What will she do for the homeless?

The Prime Minister: This point came up a few weeks ago and the same allegations were made. Inquiries were carried out. According to the figures, and as far as we are aware, there has been no increase in the number of people in difficulty in the capital and some places are available in hostels which are not taken up every night. Young people can benefit from a number of our measures—*[Interruption.]* More than 14,700 places have been approved since April 1981 to benefit the young single homeless and others. We made it easier for council tenants to sub-let so that they can take in people who need lodgings. We are increasing the programme of grants to voluntary bodies concerned with homelessness.

Q5. **Mr. Holt:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 7 July.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Holt: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the events surrounding the Cleveland child sex abuse scandal must not be allowed to happen again? Does she agree also that those who are charged with the responsibility of taking action arising out of the scandal must do so quickly and allow the people of south Cleveland to build their lives on the prosperity which has been laid down so well during the past five years?

The Prime Minister: I listened carefully to yesterday's statement in the House and to the response by many hon. Members. It will now be for the authorities to take such further action as they think fit in the light of the report. I agree with my hon. Friend. We all utterly condemn child abuse and violence against children. We must do everything we can to protect children from that, but at the same time we must make certain that false allegations are not made against parents or children who may be innocent. It is easy to draw the line; it is not always as easy for social workers, neighbours and others to see the right side. Paramount protection must go to the child.

Q6. **Mr. Campbell-Savours:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 7 July.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave quite some time ago.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Why, when representatives of the Westminster Association of Relatives went to see the Prime Minister in her surgery some 10 days ago about the scandalous sale of Westminster cemeteries, was she both insensitive and indifferent to their plight and, indeed, upset them? Why did the Prime Minister refuse point-blank to condemn Lady Porter and Westminster city council for selling, for £1, assets worth at least £5 million to £7 million? Was not that sale, which is now the subject of an investigation by the fraud squad, the unacceptable face of privatisation?

The Prime Minister: When my constituents wish to see me—and I am sure the same applies to the hon. Gentleman —I do not refuse to see them, although I sometimes have to explain that, when matters are being investigated by the fraud squad, independent auditors or by the Ombudsman, I am in a position only to listen to what they say. I am not in a position to pronounce, especially when they are asking for such things as a statutory inquiry, which my right hon. Friends have no power to give. In accordance with my custom, they came and I listened to them for a very long time. One could not possibly be unsympathetic to what they were saying—no one could be. They knew that I could not reply and it would have been totally wrong if I, in the position of Prime Minister, replied on something to which my right hon. Friend may have to pronounce.

Piper Alpha Platform

3.31 pm

The Secretary of State for Energy (Mr. Cecil Parkinson): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I would like to make a statement on the explosion and fire on the Piper Alpha platform last night.

At about 10 o'clock last night a serious explosion occurred at the platform. The coastguard service was informed and an emergency control centre was established. All emergency services were immediately alerted. Royal Navy, Royal Air Force and coastguard helicopters and surface vessels in the area, including a NATO detachment, were committed to the search for survivors. Occidental, the operators of the platform, activated its emergency centre to control the fire and oil and gas flows.

The explosion appears to have been so violent that the platform was effectively destroyed. My right hon. Friend the Minister of State went early this morning to Aberdeen. He has kept me in continuous touch with developments. My latest information is that there were 229 people on the platform at the time of the explosion, of whom 65 are known to have survived. There were three people in a small boat involved in the rescue, of whom one is known to have survived. Sixteen people are known to be dead and 150 are at present unaccounted for.

Her Majesty the Queen has asked me to convey to all those concerned her heartfelt sympathy for the injured and bereaved and her admiration for the gallant efforts of the firefighting, rescue and medical services in preventing even greater loss of life. I am sure that the whole House will wish to join in expressing our sympathies and in paying tribute to the efforts of the emergency services.

Oil and gas production in the hostile environment of the North sea demands the greatest attention to safety. Safety is the first priority of the Government and the operators. We apply the highest safety standards to all phases of development: design, construction and operation. We have also established procedures to be followed in the event of an emergency. These are regularly rehearsed.

The Government are determined to establish urgently the cause of the explosion and the lessons to be learned. Nearly 30,000 people work in the United Kingdom sector of the North sea. They and their families have the right to expect the fullest possible investigation. The Government will therefore be setting up a full public inquiry as soon as possible.

Mr. John Prescott (Kingston upon Hull, East): We on the Labour side of the House very much welcome the Secretary of State's statement. We offer our deepest sympathy to the families and all involved in the tragic event. We should like to express our deepest appreciation —and, yes, admiration—for the excellent rescue services that are provided in these most difficult circumstances and for the onshore response by the police, hospital, and other services. It reminds us how much those people contribute in difficult circumstances. Those are not simply words, but express great admiration.

Considering the magnitude of the tragedy, we fully endorse the Secretary of State's decision to hold a public inquiry. However, does he accept that that inquiry should be open and wide-ranging and that its scope should not exclude anything in examining the safe operation of such installations? Although this is not in his statement, will the Secretary of State confirm that the Health and Safety Executive will conduct its own investigation into the technical causes and effects of the tragedy so that it can reach a conclusion quickly while we await the longer public examination?

Will the Secretary of State confirm that the public inquiry will address itself to the following issues: the increasing number of accidents and dangerous occurrences in the industry in the past few years; the reduction in inspections and maintenance in the past few years, which have been highlighted and drawn to our attention by the Select Committee on Energy; the increasing pressures on costs and safety practices, and the low level of expenditure on training in what is clearly a profitable industry? Will he also address the issue of no-fault compensaton, which has been raised by my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition, and which should be considered by an inquiry and considered for inclusion in any statutory system?

Finally, will the Secretary of State confirm that health and safety legislation does not fully apply to this industry, highlighting the conflict between his Department's responsibility for production and for safety? Will the right hon. Gentleman now give further consideration to making safety the first priority? Will he now review that conflict of interest and consider whether the Health and Safety Executive should extend its powers and responsibilities to that North sea industry?

Mr. Parkinson: I thank the hon. Gentleman for his generous tributes to the emergency services. I shall take up his points one by one. Of course, the inquiry will wish to be far-reaching and to discover the fundamental causes to make sure that if there are any wider implications from this particular event and any lessons to be learned for other operators, that information will be disseminated as quickly as possible. It will be a deep and far-reaching inquiry.

The Health and Safety Executive has responsibilities in this area but, by agreement, it delegates them to the inspectorate in my Department, which is recognised worldwide as being technically one of the best qualified inspectorates. Therefore, it is not true to say that the Health and Safety Executive is not involved. It does have rights and duties but delegates them to my Department's inspectorate.

On the question of the increasing number of accidents, it is simply not true that accidents are increasing in the North sea. In fact, last year the number of serious accidents reported fell from 101 in 1986 to 59, although 59 is still far too high a figure and we wish to keep the pressure on to ensure that that improvement is maintained.

On the question of the reductions in surveys, I advise the hon. Gentleman that it is not only the inspectorate of my Department which attends the platforms. It may interest him to know that an inspector finished the most recent inspection of that platform on 28 June. Lloyd's Register of Shipping is also under a responsibility annually to certify the platforms and equipment and the Department of Transport must also check the safety arrangements and safety equipment on board. Therefore, the platforms are under continuous inspection, not just from my Department acting on behalf of the Health and Safety Executive, but also from other Government

[Mr. Parkinson]

Departments which themselves have duties, and independent bodies, such as Lloyd's Register of Shipping, which has a duty to carry out the full certification.

On the question whether my Department should continue to carry out this work as agent for the Health and Safety Executive, as he knows, this was carefully examined by the Burgoyne committee, which reported in 1981. That committee said in its majority report that the present arrangements were, in its opinion, the best possible. I accept that there was a minority report which disagreed, but the majority report, whose recommendations the Government accepted, felt that the present arrangements were the best.

Sir Hector Monro (Dumfries): May I join in the expressions of sympathy from all Members of the House to the families who have lost relatives? In praising all the rescue services, may I highlight the work throughout the night of the Royal Air Force and civilian helicopter pilots and the Nimrod pilots and crews? Does this not highlight the importance of keeping a good search and rescue capability all round our coast, and particularly on the east coast of Scotland?

Mr. Parkinson: I join my hon. Friend in paying a tribute to the RAF and civilian helicopter pilots. One of the few satisfactory aspects of this tragedy has been the operation of the emergency procedures. The dovetailing of the arrangements has worked extremely well. As helicopters were deployed, further helicopters were brought up from other stations throughout the country. I note what he says, but I am sure that he will share my satisfaction that the arrangements worked so well on this occasion.

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): May I, on behalf of my right hon. and hon. Friends, join in the expressions of sympathy to the bereaved and injured and in the tributes to the emergency services? As the Secretary of State well knows, the oil from the Piper Alpha platform comes ashore at the Flotta terminal in Orkney. Occidental has, over many years, played a very positive role in the community in Orkney and I am sure that the sense of loss and tragedy felt by the company is shared by my constituents.

The Secretary of State has mentioned a public inquiry. Is he able at this stage to go further and say what the nature of it will be? Am I right in thinking that it will certainly go beyond the fatal accident inquiry which would otherwise follow?

Finally, there have been other reported incidents this week on North sea platforms. Is this just a case of a tragic coincidence or is there any evidence at this stage of any connection?

Mr. Parkinson: I thank the hon. Gentleman for his opening remarks. I chose my words very carefully about the public inquiry. We want it to be the fullest possible but, as he knows, we are operating in Scotland and either Scottish law or English law, or both, can be applied. The Law Officers are, therefore, in discussion to settle which would be the most appropriate. As soon as decisions have been made—and I am talking about a very short time—I will reveal further details to the House.

Mr. Alick Buchanan-Smith (Kincardine and Deeside): Not so long ago I visited the Piper field. Many of my constituents work on that platform. Many of them are known to me personally. Surely today, above all, so far as the House is concerned, it is incumbent on us to join the whole of the nation in keeping in our thoughts and our prayers those who have lost their lives, and their families.

Mr. Parkinson: I am sure that my right hon. Friend speaks for Members in all parts of the House.

Mr. Harry Ewing (Falkirk, East): As a Member who has had to deal with tragedies in the oil industry onshore rather than offshore, can I say to the Secretary of State that all our technical or probing questions are overshadowed by the extent of this tragedy and the sad loss that is borne by so many people as a result of what has happened. I have learned from bitter experience that on the day of the tragedy it is never wise to probe too deeply. Having said that, however, can I bring out the point about Scots law and ask the Secretary of State if the decision to establish a public inquiry will rule out, as it seems bound to do, any possibility of a fatal accident inquiry? Will he discuss these aspects with his noble Friend the Lord Advocate?

Finally, for 13 years, as the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) has said, my constituency has been connected by pipeline from rig to refinery. Today, my constituency is connected by sadness and on behalf of all those who work at the BP refinery at Grangemouth, which receives the oil, and on behalf of all my constituents who live in Grangemouth, I express their deepest sympathy to those who have lost loved ones and their fervent hope and prayer for a speedy and full recovery of those who have been injured.

Mr. Parkinson: I associate myself with the hon. Gentleman's final words. We are looking extremely carefully at the interrelationship between the two laws. It does not necessarily follow that an inquiry under one law is ruled out by the other, but that rather detailed discussion is going on at this very moment and we intend to resolve the matter as quickly as possible. I stress that we want the inquiry to be as full and as public as possible.

Mr. David Howell (Guildford): We would all wish to be associated with the words of sorrow that my right hon. Friend has expressed at this appalling tragedy in the North sea where, as he reminds us, under successive Governments safety has always been the first and proper priority in this inevitably risky industry. Although the obvious and only dimension of the tragedy in our minds must be the tragic loss of human life, will my right hon. Friend also confirm that the destruction of the Piper Alpha platform will mean the loss of 5 per cent. of the entire oil production of the North sea until it is rebuilt? If the destruction has covered some of the other pipelines in nearby oilfields, that loss of production could be even greater, although I repeat that it is obviously human lives that concern us most.

Mr. Parkinson: I thank my right hon. Friend, as a former Secretary of State for Energy, for underlining what I said about the importance of safety as a top priority from the moment that the platforms are designed right through to the day when they move into operation.

I confirm that the Piper Alpha platform is a major producer, producing about 120,000 barrels of oil a day. I am glad that, as I would have expected, my right hon. Friend today puts the emphasis on the tragic loss of so many lives, and I am sure that that is what preoccupies the House.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing (Moray): May I also, on behalf of my hon. Friends and the nationalist parties, extend our sympathy to all those families throughout the United Kingdom who have suffered bereavement or seen their breadwinner injured in this enormous disaster in the North sea? May I also add my congratulations to the rescue services, many of whom operated from the bases in my constituency at RAF Kinloss and Lossiemouth, and add my tribute to those who volunteered, such as many of the fishermen along the north-east of Scotland, and went to assist in that operation?

As this is a day of tragedy, I shall ask one brief question. Will the Secretary of State assure us that provision for the families who have been bereaved will be taken into account as quickly as possible? Today, we have seen the human cost of winning North sea oil and I am sure that the Government, who have benefited so much from the revenue of Scotland's oil, will ensure that everything is done to provide for those families.

Mr. Parkinson: I note what the hon. Lady says and I shall bear it very much in mind in the next few days.

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): Like those of my right hon. Friend the Member for Kincardine and Deeside (Mr. Buchanan-Smith), a number of my constituents work in this part of the North sea. Although we have no knowledge of which individuals are missing, I am sure that the rest of the House will extend its sympathy to their relatives. Will my right hon. Friend have discussions with his right hon. Friends at the Scottish Office and the Ministry of Defence to make absolutely certain that there is no plan to reduce, for example, the helicopter rescue capability and, in particular, the search and rescue unit based at RAF Leuchars, which is a key centre for that part of the North sea?

Mr. Parkinson: Yes, I will discuss these matters with my right hon. Friends. I also stress that the events of the past 24 hours have shown that the emergency arrangements work extremely well, even when they are put under the huge pressures of the past 18 hours or so.

Mr. Frank Doran (Aberdeen, South): I thank the Secretary of State for his statement and the courtesy he has shown me throughout the day in keeping me briefed on progress, as the terrible tragedy has become known to us all.

This is the second major tragedy connected with the North sea oil industry to have hit Aberdeen in the past three years, the previous one being the helicopter disaster —although this accident far outstrips that one in its magnitude. I add my sympathies and condolences to the families among my constituents who have lost loved ones who worked in the North sea, and to such families all over the country—particularly those in the north-east of England—from where I know many employees come.

I add my thanks to the rescue services and to people in the Grampian health board who have been working throughout the night and today to deal with the terrible injuries that they have had to cope with. I also thank the people of Aberdeen who have rallied round magnificently, to the extent that the health board has had to stop calling for volunteers to donate blood, for example.

The Secretary of State mentioned that there are about 30,000 employees in the North sea. I urge him to ensure that the public inquiry that he has said he will hold is as wide and open as possible, and not restricted in the way that a fatal accident inquiry would be under Scots law. In the interests of those 30,000 employees and their families I also ask him to ensure that, as soon as the lessons and causes of the tragedy are known, there will be no hesitation in circulating them to the other operators in the North sea. We must not wait until the inquiry report has been discovered: the lessons should be distributed as quickly as possible.

Mr. Parkinson: My right hon. Friend the Minister of State, Department of Energy has visited the survivors in hospital and has paid tribute to the way in which they are being looked after and to the tremendous spirit of co-operation in Aberdeen. The whole city has joined in wanting to help the victims of the tragedy.

I want also to deal with the point raised by the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) about the string of incidents. There have been two or three incidents recently, but they have had no connection. Each one is being investigated as part of our normal procedures.

As for the public inquiry, if we find that there are lessons of wide application to be learned, we shall not waste a second in making sure that they are conveyed to the other operators.

Dr. Michael Clark (Rochford): On this day of tragedy and sorrow, does my right hon. Friend agree that it is appropriate to pay tribute to the skill, dedication and above all courage of all who work in the hostile environment of the North sea?

Mr. Parkinson: Yes. As I said earlier, we have become accustomed to taking North sea oil almost for granted. But if one goes offshore, as I have done on a number of occasions, and sees the area in which the platforms operate and the appalling conditions that can occur from time to time during the year, one realises that it is a hazardous operation carried out by very brave people. We try to ensure that the maximum possible number of steps are taken to ensure their safety.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): I, too, would like to voice my deepest sympathy and condolences to those who have suffered tragic loss today. I also speak as one who represents many constituents who work in the North sea. I ask the Secretary of State to ensure that the people who were involved in the rescue operations and who behaved on this as on other occasions in such a magnificent and heroic way have the finest resources at their command. I say this with special regard to emergency support vessels dynamically positioned on the continental shelf and in relation to standby vessels which provide cover for every platform.

My final question is about the absence of an experienced and critical safety voice. It is about the absence offshore, vis-a-vis the Health and Safety at Work, etc Act 1974, of trade union safety representatives. May I assure the Secretary of State and others that in this field

[Dr. Norman A. Godman]

trade union representatives perform an admirable and vital service? The absence of a critical voice should be carefully examined by the Government.

Mr. Parkinson: The hon. Gentleman mentioned the standby resources. On this occasion the standby vessel was, as one would expect, in position and was responsible for saving many lives. There was a second vessel there belonging to Occidental and it was also able to take part in the rescue. On this occasion there is no suggestion that the standby resources were inadequate.

They were considerably more than adequate. The hon. Gentleman asked about safety on platforms. As I am sure he knows, on every platform there is a major safety committee consisting of management and representatives of all grades on the platform. Many of those people are trade unionists and, therefore, trade unionists are taking part in discussions about safety on each and every platform.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am sure that the whole House will echo the comments made by the right hon. Member for Kincardine and Deeside (Mr. Buchanan-Smith). I shall allow questions to go on for only a further four minutes because we are to have two other statements, a business statement and the presentation of a Loyal Address before we move on to the main business.

Mr. Rupert Allason (Torbay): I endorse all my right hon. Friend's tributes to the rescue services, but may I draw his attention to a matter that causes great anguish among the families of those directly involved in a tragedy such as this? It is that the first news that they get of a major disaster is through the news media. A telephone number is flashed up on the television screen. Of course, the number is constantly changing and families have to ring a number and the lines are very soon swamped by calls. The lack of information for the families that are directly involved causes great anguish. Will my right hon. Friend agree to consider with his ministerial colleagues the setting up of some kind of centralised disaster unit so that after future disasters like the one that we have just experienced and the Townsend Thoresen disaster people can ring a central number and have their calls logged straight away?

Mr. Parkinson: The arrangements for dealing with tragedies such as this are finely developed. Each company immediately opens its emergency room which is in mothballs waiting for eventualities such as this. I shall certainly look at my hon. Friend's idea, but I must tell him that the flashing up of telephone numbers is a way of trying to give anxious relatives the most immediate access to information. The companies then set out to try directly to contact the relatives of those concerned. I am sure that my hon. Friend realises that in an operation such as this, in which many vessels are active, it is not immediately possible to know the exact position.

Mr. Jack Ashley (Stoke-on-Trent, South): Is the Secretary of State aware that when all the headlines about this terrible tragedy and all the expressions of sympathy have been forgotten, the people who have been injured, badly burned and disabled in this accident and the relatives of those who have been bereaved will, year after year, face legal struggle for compensation? Because of our archaic laws only the lawyers will win those battles. Some people will be denied compensation. They will face years of hardship and horror on top of the horror that they have suffered because we do not have no-fault compensation. The Prime Minister has just rejected a request for no-fault compensation. Could the Secretary of State have a private word with her about a more just and equitable system to help these people?

Mr. Parkinson: I note what the right hon. Gentleman says and, as he knows, this is a long-running and difficult argument, but, as my right hon. Friend pointed out, a number of private insurance schemes covering no-fault compensation are being developed. However, all I can say is that I note what the right hon. Gentleman says.

Mr. Martin Flannery (Sheffield, Hillsborough): Is it not a fact that, in the minority report mentioned by the Minister, there was bitter criticism of the safety precautions in the North sea? I am chairman in this House of the MSF union's committee on health and safety matters which represents many people involved with helicopters and oil rigs and which made it clear that it wanted an inquiry into the whole business and that that inquiry should not be attached to the Department of Energy, but should involve an independent group of inspectors examining those rigs. Is it not also a fact that warning was given that, unless such a step were taken, something like this would ultimately occur?

Mr. Parkinson: The hon. Gentleman should remember that that was a minority view, as he hinted, and that the majority of the Committee set up by his right hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) disagreed with that point of view. *[Interruption.]* He was not the Member for Chesterfield then, but the majority of that Committee came down firmly on the side of the present arrangements.

Mr. Prescott: May I again ask the Secretary of State about the role of the Health and Safety Commission, which has statutory powers of inquiry under section 14 of the Health and Safety at Work, etc. Act 1974, but from which the offshore industry is exempt? The commission can conduct a quick and technical examination so that the lessons can be learned and implemented before the final conclusions of a public inquiry. Because of the agency arrangement between the Department and the commission, the Department's agreement to that is required. Will the Secretary of State give his agreement to such an inquiry?

Mr. Parkinson: I have already spoken to the chairman of the Health and Safety Commission and we have discussed the range of possibilities. He knows of the discussions that I am having with the various Law Officers. The key is to ensure that we have the fullest possible inquiry, and as soon as I am able to give a definitive answer, I shall come back to the House.

Local Government Finance (England)

4.2 pm

The Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Nicholas Ridley): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I would like to make a statement about a number of matters that will bring local authority finance in England up to date for the introduction of the new system in 1990.

First, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales and I are issuing a consultation document today on local authority capital expenditure. The paper has been placed in the Library and is available in the Vote Office. It will be sent to local authorities and their associations today. The new system will take effect from 1 April 1990. It will be a control on borrowing and all forms of credit, rather than on expenditure. I believe that authorities will welcome this.

Capital receipts will continue to be another source of finance for capital expenditure, but the debt attributable to past capital expenditure by local authorities in England and Wales now stands at £45 billion. We propose that a proportion of the accumulated and future cash receipts should be set aside for debt redemption or to meet future capital commitments. Local authorities will be free to spend the balance, in whatever year they like.

Local authorities will also be free to finance additional capital expenditure from revenue contributions, subject only to the discipline of the community charge. I believe that the new system will provide local government with greater assurance and flexibility in the planning of capital programmes.

Secondly, under the new system in the Local Government Finance Bill, revenue support grant is to be paid on a fixed basis, authority by authority. Authorities will have certainty about their grant entitlements. There will be no adjustment to take account of actual spending. The discipline will come from the community charge. My right hon. Friend and I have decided to pave the way towards the new system by introducing greater certainty for 1989-90. In doing so, we will remove any scope for creative accounting by an authority designed to increase its grant entitlement by reducing its reported "total expenditure", without changing its true spending. There would otherwise be a number of ways in which authorities could do that for next year, this year and, indeed, earlier years.

We therefore propose to bring forward legislation as soon as possible to alter the basis on which grant will be paid in England and Wales. For the current year, and for the previous three years, final supplementary reports have not yet been made. For some of those years, it would still be open to local authorities to undertake book-keeping transactions or financial deals unrelated to true spending, but which alter the level of reported total expenditure and therefore gain extra grant. We envisage that the Bill will provide that, for all years up to 1988-89, grant entitlements should be calculated in general using total expenditure information which was with our Departments by midnight last night.

In a normal year, grant payments would be calculated taking account of grant-related expenditure assessments, block grant mechanisms, any arrangements for limiting grant changes and authorities' reported expenditure, which I announce following consultation in the autumn. Grant payments for 1989-90 will be calculated in the same way, except that the legislation will provide that grant payments for individual authorities should be calculated not on authorities' reported total expenditure, but on a figure derived for each authority, based on information about their present levels of total expenditure and projected forward. Allowance will be made for changes in function where appropriate. In making the calculations, we shall use, in general, only that information about total expenditure which was with our Departments by midnight last night. When the RSG report has been approved, and subject to Parliament approving the new legislation, grant will be paid on the new basis.

That will provide local authorities with greater certainty about their RSG entitlements for 1989-90 and previous years. It provides a basis for an orderly transition to the new system and for bringing the existing system to a close. Without the new legislation, it would have been necessary to recalculate grant under the present system well into the 1990s. I hope that it will now be possible to make the last supplementary reports under the present system during 1989-90; otherwise I would have been asking the House to approve them up to probably 1992 or 1993.

Thirdly, let me deal with my proposals for next year's RSG settlement for England. I propose to set the level of provision for current expenditure at £29,140 million. That is 4·7 per cent. or £1·3 billion more than authorities' budgets for this year, after deducting the cost of polytechnics, which, from next April, will be the responsibility of central Government. That increase is slightly above the anticipated level of inflation.

That sum includes £110 million in respect of the current costs next year for preparing for the introduction of the community charge. That is in line with the estimate of those costs made by Price Waterhouse and is consistent with the figures put forward by the local authority associations. Since authorities continue to spend more than they need, I again intend that there should be a margin between the total of grant-related expenditure assessments and provision.

I propose that aggregate Exchequer grant should be set at £13,575 million. After allowing for the removal of polytechnics, that is £600 million more than the settlement allowed for this year, and is about £1·1 billion more than the grant which will be paid for 1988-89. That represents an increase of about 9 per cent. on the amount of grant that will be paid out. Under my proposals for closing down the system, grant payments to authorities will not be affected by their level of spending in 1989-90.

I am conscious that some local authorities will be disappointed that no grant increase will be available in recognition of any shortfall in their spending in the current year and last year. I believe, however, that if they look at the total picture they will recognise that the package I am proposing is a fair one. If spending is held steady in real terms, this settlement will enable most authorities to hold the increase in rates to less than the rate of inflation next year. I shall be discussing all these proposals with the Consultative Council on Local Government Finance on Monday.

Fourthly, let me deal with rate limitation. I am today laying before the House a report setting out how general purpose authorities will be selected next year. The selection criteria that I am adopting are the same as those I adopted last year—first, for authorities not selected in 1988-89, budgets of at least 12·5 per cent. above GRE and showing

[Mr. Nicholas Ridley]

a growth of at least 6 per cent. since 1987-88; and secondly, for authorities that are selected in the current year, budgets of at least 12·5 per cent. above GRE.

On those criteria, seven authorities will be reselected for 1989-90—Camden, Greenwich, Hackney, Lewisham, Southwark, Thamesdown and Tower Hamlets. No authority that was not selected last year is being selected this year. I am today also setting the expenditure levels for the seven rate-capped authorities at the same level as in 1988-89.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science has laid a separate report designating the Inner London education authority and he will be setting an expenditure level. That completes the Government's proposals for designating authorities in England.

Dr. John Cunningham (Copeland): Is the Secretary of State aware that this is a typical statement from him and the Government—a statement of bogus claims and, in some cases, deliberate illusions? Is he also aware that, despite his rather vain hope, rarely, if ever, do local authorities welcome any statement that he has to make about local government finance?

Will not what he has announced today force all local authorities to use the balances of their capital receipts to reduce debt? The right hon. Gentleman's previous claim was that he would slow down the rate at which they would be able to embark on new expenditure. Now he will forbid local authorities to use apparently large amounts of their own money in the way that they wish to do. Does not that mean that Conservative authorities, such as Bracknell, with £48 million worth of receipts, Wycombe with £52 million, Medway with £40 million, Shepway with £11·5 million, Nottingham with £51 million, Bromley with £45 million, Croydon with £50 million, Barnet with £47 million and Solihull with £25 million of their own money, will not be able to spend it in the way that they decide, but will have to use some of that money in the way that the Secretary of State and his Cabinet colleagues, most notably the Chancellor of the Exchequer, will determine?

Is it not also the case that to suggest that local authorities will be free to increase their expenditure in the way that they choose is deliberately misleading? The Secretary of State said that that would be subject to the discipline of the poll tax——

Mr. John Heddle (Mid-Staffordshire): Community charge.

Dr. Cunningham: No one outside the Conservative party refers to it as the community charge.

Has not the Secretary of State ensured that the notorious gearing of the poll tax legislation means that for a 1 per cent. increase in expenditure, however important or necessary, all local authorities will need a 4 per cent. increase in the poll tax?

What can possibly be the justification for the Secretary of State's second announcement in four months of legislation by the midnight knock? He is now announcing that from midnight yesterday he will be retrospectively legislating over this year's local authority finances and the previous three years, again changing the rules and moving the goalposts long after the expenditure has been made and the decisions have been taken. There is no precedent for the way in which the Government have rigged rules on local authority expenditure and changed them so often, so capriciously and so retrospectively so many times. The record is a scandal. It is outrageous that we should be faced with that again.

What can possibly be the purpose of the Secretary of State's meeting next Monday, 11 July, with the local authorities, planned for some considerable time, to discuss his proposals for the coming year? He has announced his proposals today. It means that the meeting next Monday with the local authorities to consider this matter is a farce. Or will he confirm to the House that he will take on board the points made by the local authorities and come back and change what he has said today? Is that a possibility? If not, it makes nonsense of the consultation process.

We welcome the Secretary of State's belated admission that what he and his colleagues said in the financial memorandum to the Local Government Finance Bill was nonsense. They hopelessly underestimated the costs of implementation of that obnoxious legislation, as the Price Waterhouse report has confirmed. At least we welcome the recognition forced on him by Price Waterhouse's conclusion that he would have to make far higher allowances for the costs of implementing the poll tax.

Why does the Secretary of State waste his time, as well as that of the House, by repeating what he said last year during his statement on the rate support grant for England, that the

"increase in rate bills . . . should be around the rate of inflation"—[*Official Report*, 23 July 1987; Vol. 120, c. 496.]

He kept repeating that last year, when in fact average domestic rate bills rose by 10·1 per cent. and, in many Tory-dominated authorities, increases were of the order of 20, 30 or 40 per cent. Shepway, in the constituency of his hon. and learned Friend the Minister for Local Government, had one of the largest rate rises in the south-east of England. Why the time of the House should be wasted again and again by bogus claims for the implications of what the Secretary of State is announcing, I really do not know.

It is also welcome that at long last the Secretary of State is beginning to wind down the arbitrary use of power in the Rates Act 1984. But what is it that the citizens of Camden, Greenwich, Hackney, Lewisham, Southwark, Thamesdown and Tower Hamlets have done——

Mr. Heddle: Vote Labour.

Dr. Cunningham: Exactly. The hon. Gentleman has given the game away. It is an action of enduring political spite by the Government towards the citizens of those boroughs that they should go on applying the Rates Act to them in that way.

The statement is as pathetic, as misleading and as obnoxious—and it should be regarded in the same way by all Conservative Members who are concerned about local democracy—as any previous statement that the right hon. Gentleman has made. I only wish that we could believe that it is the last that he will make.

Mr. Ridley: We are all becoming used to the ritual courtesies of the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham), with which he covers up the fact that he does not understand the subject under discussion. His views on the capital control paper, which obviously he has not yet read, were interesting. If he reads it, he will find that the prescribed proportion that may be spent from housing receipts is increased from 20 to 25 per cent., and on other local authority assets, from 30 to 50 per cent. I do not know why the hon. Gentleman thinks that local authorities will be cross about that.

The hon. Gentleman claimed that this measure is in some way retroactive. The phrase that he used was that we are moving the goalposts long after the expenditure has been made. I make it clear that the statement will stop local authorities changing the accounts long after the expenditure has been made. That is changing the goalposts, and if he understood the subject, he would know that that is liable to save his constituents, as taxpayers, a considerable sum of money, possibly.

The hon. Gentleman asked about consultation. What an extraordinary question! I am having a consultative meeting on Monday. Is it not better to have proposals about which to consult the local authorities, rather than to wait until after that meeting to announce them? The hon. Gentleman has a very odd idea of what consultation means.

As for rates, the hon. Gentleman again misunderstands the situation. Last year, and again this year, I said that if local authorities spend at the settlement assumption, their rates should just about increase by the level of inflation. This year I say that if local authorities spend at the settlement assumption, it should be necessary to increase rates by less than the rate of inflation. The hon. Gentleman does not seem to comprehend the fact that local authorities spend at a great deal higher level than the settlement assumption, which is why rates increase so much.

The hon. Member for Copeland asked why certain local authorities appear to be rate-capped year after year. The answer is simple: they spend too much.

Mr. Heddle: Does my right hon. Friend accept that all prudent local authorities who have the genuine interests of their ratepayers and local accountability at heart will not fear anything that he has said today? Will he confirm that the most eloquent expression of the need for the reform of local government finance is if any local authority has to increase its rates above the figure of 4·7 per cent. to which he has referred? Will he confirm that the £110 million included in next year's RSG settlement will be a one-off figure, and that it will not be necessary for any local authority to come back after 1990 for a supplementary order, because only then will the community charge restore real accountability and local democracy between the ratepayer and the spender?

Mr. Ridley: I am grateful to my hon. Friend and can tell him that if all local authorities were to spend at the settlement assumption, which is that they should spend about in line with the increase in inflation between this year and next, it is likely that rates increases would be about 1·6 per cent. in England, which is much less than the rate of inflation is likely to be. I confirm that, as soon as all outstanding years have been completed and supplementary reports have been presented to the House, there will be no need, under the proposals I am putting to the House for its approval, for there to be any further supplementary reports into the 1990s.

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): Can the Secretary of State clarify what appears to be a contradiction? He said that capital expenditure limits are being raised, and he gave a figure, yet he said in his statement that control would be moved away from expenditure to borrowing and credit, which is something very different. Is not the reality that the Government are retaining their controls, even if easing them slightly? Local authorities are looking to spend much more, particularly on housing investment, about which he has said nothing today.

Is it not the case that, as was said by the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham), the Secretary of State is going for a completely arbitrary and simple system at the expense of justice? To say that rate support grant for this year and next year will be calculated on the basis of information known to the Secretary of State last night, irrespective of the reality, completely disregards real need. The reality of the situation is also apparent when one remembers that, in real terms, rate support grant since 1981-82 has been cut by the Secretary of State's announcement by 12·5 per cent.—at a time of great economic growth, according to the Government.

The inner city, which is meant to be helped, is being rate-capped yet again, so that poor boroughs such as mine in inner London and others are being told that money will not be available in the form of increased rate support grant. Is it not the case that the Secretary of State wants there to be a massive difference between the amount that local authorities currently receive and their revenue from poll tax in 1990, so that people will be penalised for being poor and will receive nothing from those who have much to give? The Minister could have distributed that money to them.

Mr. Ridley: The hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) mentioned control. The new system will control borrowing rather than spending, but that will not help us with the treatment of in-year receipts and existing cash-backed receipts, where we propose that under the new regime 75 per cent. of housing receipts should be put to the redemption of debt and the remainder should be available for spending, and 50 per cent. of receipts from other assets should go to the redemption of debt and 50 per cent. be available for spending.

We propose fixing allocations of new borrowing consents so that we can concentrate on areas of need rather than on areas of high receipts, which will give us a flexibility that we do not have at present, and ensure that allocations go to the areas of greatest need.

The hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey commented on the rate support grant, and I can tell him that if he and the local authorities will examine all the years concerned in my statement, they will find that the package as a whole is a very fair one, because the rate support grant for the coming year must be taken into account as well.

The hon. Gentleman suggested that the previous Labour Government provided far more in rate support grant. I shall give him the true figure. The grant I have announced for 1990 is only £1 billion less than that given in the last year of the Labour Government, brought up to date.

Mr. Ian Gow (Eastbourne): The hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) would have been more honest with the House if, when naming the local authorities that had accumulated capital receipts as a

[Mr. Ian Gow]

result of council house sales, he had set alongside those receipts each of those council's debts, which greatly exceeds the accumulated receipts.

Dr. Cunningham: They are all Tory.

Mr. Gow: Is it not the case that the Government's legitimate attempts over the past nine years to control local authority capital expenditure have not been successful, and that my right hon. Friend's decision to control their borrowing is to be warmly welcomed?

Mr. Ridley: My hon. Friend may not have heard me say that local authorities' total debt has risen to the very high figure of £45 billion. To the extent that local authorities repay that debt from their receipts, they directly benefit their community charge payers because the servicing of that debt is reduced by the amount by which the debt is reduced. That in itself is a major way of helping their electors. My hon. Friend is of course right in his second point.

Mr. Peter Shore (Bethnal Green and Stepney): When the Secretary of State says that the reason why a number of London boroughs, including Tower Hamlets, are being rate-capped yet again is that they spend too much, does he not himself believe that he is guilty of an oversimplistic statement? Is he aware that they are precisely the boroughs which, by all objective measures and calculations, have the greatest measurable financial and other needs? Is the right hon. Gentleman not aware that in the year ending 1987 Tower Hamlets spent £20 million simply in providing bed-and-breakfast accommodation for the homeless, and that the figure for this year cannot be much less, and will be at least £13 million? How can the Secretary of State justify continued rate-capping and grant reduction? His figures are bogus and he knows it. How can he justify taking such action for another year?

Mr. Ridley: The right hon. Gentleman talks about an objective measure of need. The nearest that we have to an objective measure of need are GREAs, which are based on need and are subject to negotiation with the local authorities over many years. Tower Hamlets is spending 23 per cent. above its GREA, or 23 per cent. more than the objective measure of its needs. I believe that that entirely justifies the statement that I made. It turns out that the inhabitants of Tower Hamlets face an implied community charge of £616, and if that is not a measure of overspending I should like the right hon. Gentleman to tell me what is.

The right hon. Gentleman asked about the reduction of grant. The settlement that I have announced today is a £1·1 billion increase in the amount of grant that will flow from the Exchequer to the authorities next year. That is an 8·9 per cent. increase against inflation, which will probably be about half that.

Ms. Mildred Gordon (Bow and Poplar): Will the Secretary of State tell the House how he will explain his announcement to the 10,000 on the housing waiting list in Tower Hamlets and the 11,200 on the transfer list, one of whom I spoke to last week? He has had a heart transplant operation, but the results of that wonderful operation will be lost because of his housing stress and because there is no place to which he can be transferred.

How will the right hon. Gentleman explain his statement to the many others who are locked in unsuitable flats—where they cannot see daylight—because they are disabled and cannot be transferred to ground floor flats? How will he explain it to more than 1,200 homeless people and to the 35 families who have been sleeping in church halls because there was nowhere else for them to go? How will he justify the rate capping and financial restrictions with which he is punishing those people?

Mr. Ridley: The hon. Lady and her right hon. Friend the Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) are being not very complimentary to the Liberal-controlled council of Tower Hamlets, which has responsibility for such matters. I have heard of people criticising the council for wasting large sums in all sorts of directions. When it gets priorities right, I will listen to the hon. Lady.

Sir Ian Lloyd (Havant): As the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) has exhausted the vocabulary of condemnation, it is much easier for Conservative Members to frame their remarks in the vocabulary of approbation. Those of us who regard this whole area of local authority expenditure as highly convoluted and complex welcome anything that introduces simplicity and clarity.

The second paragraph of the yellow paper—the consultative document—discloses the remarkable fact that local authorities have now borrowed £45,000 million, on which the annual charge is £6,000 million, or roughly £300 per annum per family. Does that mean in effect that a considerable proportion of the community charge will go towards financing existing borrowing?

Mr. Ridley: This might be considered an occasion for rejoicing, in that it is the last time—we hope—that a rate support grant statement of the traditional type will ever have to be made in the House. I hope that next year a statement can be made about the support grant for the new system of community charge finance which will be much more acceptable and much easier to understand. I entirely sympathise with my hon. Friend about the immense complications to which, with any luck, we shall be saying goodbye today.

I confirm that the total of local authorities' capital debt is £45 billion, which costs £6 billion a year to service. That £6 billion must be met by the ratepayers at present and by the community charge payers in future, which is why we are helping the community charge payers by suggesting that some proportion of receipts should be applied to the redemption of debt.

Sir George Young (Ealing, Acton): Is my right hon. Friend aware that many in local government will welcome his announcement because they have been pressing for control on borrowing rather than on expenditure? Any new system that enables capital expenditure to go to areas where it is needed must be an improvement on the present system, whereby it goes where the receipts are accruing.

The statement will, however, be received with a tinge of regret in the London borough of Ealing, rate-capped this year but, sad to say, not to be rate-capped next year. Is my right hon. Friend aware that the rates went up by 66 per cent. last year, and that rate capping this year reduced them by some 23 per cent.? Without the protection of rate capping next year, they are likely to go up by between 50 and 100 per cent., making it difficult for the Leader of the Opposition and me to budget. Is my right hon. Friend aware that there are real problems in boroughs that come in and out of rate capping year in, year out? Will he give some thought to the problems facing us in Ealing?

Mr. Ridley: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for what he said about the capital controls document, and I confirm his important point that it will enable us to target borrowing resources to areas of greater need. I think that all hon. Members would benefit from reading the paper carefully, because it contains a number of new ideas, many of which at least will be welcomed by local authorities.

As my hon. Friend knows, I have to set the criteria for rate capping so that they are justifiable, and then we have to see which authorities fall within those criteria. This year, Ealing has not done so. It is, in a sense, rather an irony that the more successful rate capping is in reducing rates and expenditure, the less likely the authority in question is to be rate-capped next year. This, however, is another part of the present system that I hope will disappear from the scene for ever after 1990.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): Why does the Secretary of State continue his campaign against two of the three most deprived local authority areas in England and Wales—Hackney, which is the most deprived, and Tower Hamlets, which comes third? Is he aware that the second most deprived area, my own borough of Newham, has just put forward a scheme to lease some 600 private dwellings to try to house the homeless?

Will the right hon. Gentleman tell me—because this has been a long and complicated statement—whether he has changed the rules so much that the goalposts are now outside the stadium? Can he tell me that the borough council of Newham will be able to proceed with its package and will not be caught up by the right hon. Gentleman's retrospective legislation?

Mr. Ridley: I can only confirm that Hackney is spending 20 per cent. above its GREA, and therefore falls within the criteria for rate capping. The capital changes that I am suggesting are to be the subject of consultation and then of legislation, and are intended to come into effect in 1990. Even the hon. Gentleman will therefore have time to understand them and give us his comments.

Mr. Robin Squire (Hornchurch): These are complex matters. None the less, I congratulate my right hon. Friend and echo the praise that has already been accorded to the capital spending adjustments. The control of borrowing is to be widely welcomed.

Can my right hon. Friend tell us what will be the position on revenue expenditure when a need grows in a particular borough, if distribution is to be based broadly on expenditure up to 1987-88, as I understood from his statement?

Mr. Ridley: In any system of support grant—whether it is the present rate support grant, or the new revenue support grant that will apply under the community charge—the change in population is taken into account in GREAs, and the numbers are adjusted accordingly. It will not be possible to change those numbers after the system has been closed down in the way that I suggest, but I think that my hon. Friend will find that the package as a whole will deal fairly with the problem.

Ms. Diane Abbott (Hackney, North and Stoke Newington): How does the Secretary of State reconcile the Government's stated intention to regenerate the inner city with, year after year, rate-capping some of the poorest inner city boroughs—including my own borough of Hackney, the poorest local authority in the country? How can he see it as fair that over the years the balance of rate support grant has moved, in practice, from the poorest areas in the inner cities to the richest in the shire counties?

As the right hon. Gentleman seems to think that Hackney is spending 20 per cent. above GREA heedlessly, recklessly and unnecessarily, will he accept my invitation to come to Hackney, see the result of cuts in the past and note the cruel cuts in jobs, housing and services that will have to be made in the coming year as a result of today's announcement?

Mr. Ridley: Hackney has very high rates. It has an implied community charge of £573. When will the hon. Lady realise that community charges or rates at that level impoverish the citizens and drive businesses away, causing those problems of deprivation and unemployment which she has been talking about? The sooner relief can be brought to Hackney by bringing in the national non-domestic rate and by a reduction in spending, the more likely that borough is to prosper.

Secondly, the hon. Lady said that grant had been switched from the inner cities to the shire counties. I do not think that my hon. Friends who represent the shire counties have that feeling. Some counties are nearly out of grant because grant has been switched to the inner cities.

Mr. Simon Burns (Chelmsford): Is my right hon. Friend aware that his statement will be greeted with a great deal of pleasure by hard-pressed ratepayers and taxpayers? Does he agree that the proposed legislation to close down the existing rate support grant system will put a stop to attempts at creative accounting to milk the taxpayers by authorities that are trying to get grants that have little relation to their spending or their need?

Mr. Ridley: I agree with my hon. Friend. The only people for whom today's statement will be bad news are some fringe banks and dubious accountants who were hoping to prosper in the future.

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): The Minister has taken more and more control of the affairs of local government by cuts in provisions since 1979, by grant capping, rate capping and controls on authorities to force them into privatisation, so how can he continue to blame local authorities for the shortcomings in their services when he is beginning to run it all from his office?

Mr. Ridley: The hon. Gentleman and the Leader of the Opposition tie in mathematics. An increase of £1·1 billion cannot be described as a cut.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I shall endeavour to call hon. Members who have been rising, because I hope that it may curtail business questions, but I ask them to be brief.

Mr. Richard Holt (Langbaurgh): Will my right hon. Friend accept from me, as I have tried to grapple with local government finances for 25 years, that few people understand them, but they understand the bottom line when they receive their rate demands—particularly in

[Mr. Richard Holt]

Cleveland? One way in which my right hon. Friend can help matters is to take the bull by the horns, get rid of Cleveland county council and restore to my constituents their Yorkshire heritage.

Mr. Ridley: I note my hon. Friend's views, but the first stage is to abolish the rates. After that, we shall see about other matters.

Mr. Neil Hamilton (Tatton): Did my right hon. Friend notice that the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) seemed to treat the accumulated capital receipts as the personal playthings of councillors, when the true position is that councillors act as trustees for the ratepayers? Will there not be a huge welcome throughout the country for the control that my right hon. Friend has announced today, which will reduce the accumulated debt burden of the local authorities? Just as the reduction of the debt burden centrally has been essential to the reduction of taxation, the reduction of the debt burden of local authorities will be central to the reduction of the community charge. I believe that my right hon. Friend's reputation and popularity will shortly exceed even that of my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer through pursuing such a policy.

Mr. Ridley: I am not entering the competition that my hon. Friend invited me to enter. The total amount that has been raised by the local authorities by selling assets since the Government came to power amounts to £17 billion, of which £6·2 billion remains unspent but cash-backed. Next year, we expect there to be a further £2·9 billion of assets. Those are very large sums indeed, and I am sure that the whole House will agree that some of that should be applied to the reduction of debt to benefit the community charge payers when the new system comes in.

Mr. Barry Field (Isle of Wight): My right hon. Friend will be aware of the way in which the present convoluted system has always conspired against the Isle of Wight. He will also be aware that the present system includes a special factor for the Scilly Isles. When he introduces the new system, will he seriously consider giving some assistance to the Isle of Wight, on the lines of that given to the Scilly Isles, to recognise the fact that it is the only United Kingdom offshore island which has no financial recognition of its excommunication from the mainland?

Mr. Ridley: The concept of GREA for islands had not occurred to me hitherto. I should have to consider the consequences for a number of other islands round the shore of this country. I doubt whether we need to go that far; we could take into account the needs of such places through the new needs grant system.

Mr. David Wilshire (Spelthorne): Does my right hon. Friend agree that, in the interest of fairness, the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) should have included in his list of Tory authorities my own Conservative Spelthorne borough council, which cut its rate by more than 70 per cent. the last time it fixed a rate? Does my right hon. Friend accept that the great majority of councillors will thank him for his measures further to curb creative accounting, since those who play by the spirit of the law as well as the letter of the law need protecting? Will he confirm that his sensible announcement means that there will no longer be any need for councils to cut anything except rates, unless they are Left-wing councillors who want to play party politics with people's services?

Mr. Ridley: The worst evil of creative accounting is not that it enables expenditure to be increased but that the bill comes back on future generations, possibly long after the councillors who incurred it have ceased to be councillors. Mortgaging the future for which one may not be responsible is clearly something which we should seek to stop. I believe that the new system outlined in the consultative paper will have the effect of making councillors live with their decisions.

Mr. Jeff Rooker (Birmingham, Perry Barr): May I press the Secretary of State on the point raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, North-East (Mr. Barnes), who spoke about what has happened since 1979-80? Twice the Secretary of State, in his statement and in answers, said that the settlement of £13·57 billion is £600 million more than the settlement allowed this year, and £1·1 billion more than the grant paid for 1988-89. I have the benefit of a calculation, carried out for me by the Secretary of State's private office, which shows that far from being an increase, the £13·57 billion settlement is £1·8 billion less in real terms than the same figure for 1979-80, taking both figures at 1989-90 prices. The precise figure is £13,575 million, and the comparative figure under Labour was £15,437 million. I am extremely grateful to the Secretary of State's private office for that calculation, which was carried out during the statement.

Twice in his statement the Secretary of State referred to the discipline of the poll tax. What does the discipline of the poll tax mean? Surely the implied discipline of the poll tax is that a local authority will not wish to put up the poll tax because of the fear of electoral consequences. [HON. MEMBERS: "That is right."] If that is the case, if the council puts it up and wins the election, why do we have poll tax-capping when the Government boast about getting rid of rate-capping? There is no discipline. It is an absolute fraud and a misuse of the English language to speak in that way.

Whatever might be the consequences of the statement, it is less generous than the local authorities require. There is a cut of £1 billion on what is needed for current policies due to demographic changes and structures in the country, there is retrospective legislation and the lifting of capping on the joint boards a year before the poll tax comes in. All those unelected joint authorities will be free to precept what they like on the elected local councillors.

Those four factors come together to make the existing rating system even more unpopular than it already is, and herein lies the reason: it is all part of the plan to try and make the poll tax popular. Two thirds of the British people see a poll tax in 1990 as unpopular. What better than to try and turn that round in the last year of the present system? To twist and use bogus arguments and to make the present system even more unfair, bogus and unpopular is all part of the plan to improve the credibility of the poll tax. Well, it won't wash.

Mr. Ridley: After a rather sensible and restrained session of questions on this statement we return to what I call the ritual courtesies from the Opposition Front Bench.

I confirm that there are two figures on this matter and, equally, as the hon. Gentleman suggested, that comparing

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aggregate Exchequer grant in this settlement—after making adjustment for the polytechnics it works out at £13·575 billion—with the AEG in the 1979-80 settlement expressed in 1989-90 prices, that settlement is £15·437 billion, including the polytechnics, which is an increase of £1·9 billion. It depends how the polytechnics are treated. That is the simple answer to the hon. Gentleman.

The hon. Gentleman asked about the community charge. We have made it abundantly clear that we hope that it will never be necessary to cap a community charge. But, as I said earlier in relation to capital, if a local authority ceases to care about the future when an election whose conclusion is foregone is coming up, it is enabled to go berserk with the community charge in its last year of office. In those circumstances it may well be right to use the capping powers.

I have not noticed in local authority by-elections, the local authority elections in May or in the public opinion polls this strange unpopularity which the hon. Gentleman keeps suggesting. If I may suggest it politely to him, the unpopularity seems to fall on the shoulders of the Labour party.

Local Government Finance (Wales)

4.52 pm

The Minister of State, Welsh Office (Mr. Wyn Roberts): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I wish to make a statement about local government finance in Wales in the period leading up to April 1990.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment has already announced that he and the Secretary of State for Wales are today issuing a consultation paper on our proposals to revise the arrangements for controlling local authority capital. The paper has been placed in the Library and is available in the Vote Office. It is being sent to local authorities in Wales and to their local authority associations today. The new system will operate in Wales as in England. It will control borrowing and all forms of credit rather than expenditure.

Local authorities have made representations over several years about the use of their capital receipts. Under the new system we now propose, a proportion of accumulated and future cash-backed receipts will be applied to debt redemption or set aside to meet future capital commitments. Councils will be able to spend the balance of their receipts in whichever year they choose. Local authorities will also be free to finance capital expenditure from revenue contributions, subject only to the enhanced accountability that they face following the introduction of the community charge. The system meets the needs of both central and local government. I believe that local authorities in Wales will welcome it.

I turn now to rate support grant and the local government finance system. My right hon. Friend has decided that it is appropriate to pave the way towards the introduction of the new local government finance system in 1990 by making changes to the present system which will give local authorities certainty about their grant entitlements for the coming financial year. We propose to achieve this by introducing a fixed grant for 1989-90.

As in England, legislation will be introduced during the next Session to alter the basis on which grant will be paid. It is proposed that grant payments for 1989-90 should be calculated, not on authorities' reported total expenditure, but on a figure derived for each authority based on information about their present level of total expenditure and projected forward. Appropriate adjustments will be made for changes in functions. It is also envisaged that in making such assumptions we shall use only that information about total expenditure which was with the Department by midnight last night.

Once the report has been approved, and subject to Parliament approving the new legislation, grant will be paid on the new basis and will not depend upon authorities' spending decisions in 1989-90. That contrasts with 1987-88 and this year, when local councils have budgeted to forfeit about £20 million in grant.

Final supplementary reports for the current year and for the two previous years have not yet been made. We envisage that for these three years authorities' grant entitlements should be calculated in general using total expenditure information which was with the Department by midnight last night.

Our proposals provide a basis for orderly transition to the new system and for bringing the existing system to a close. Without the proposed legislation, it would have been necessary to seek the approval of the House to

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recalculate grant under the present system at least until 1991-92. It should now be possible under these proposals to make the last supplementary report under the present system during 1989-90. I am sure that hon. Members will be relieved to hear that.

I refer now to next year's rate support grant settlement for Wales. Local authorities in Wales are beginning to consider their budgets for next year, and to assist this process I am today announcing our proposals for the key elements of the settlement. We shall be discussing them in the usual way with the local authority associations, and the Secretary of State will take account of their representations in reaching his decisions. In due course, more detailed information will be circulated, as usual, to Welsh councils. Copies of this additional material will be placed in the Library and in the Vote Office.

We propose to set the level of provision for current expenditure at £1,785 million. This is 5·1 per cent. or £87 million more than authorities are budgeting to spend in 1988-89. This increase is above the level of inflation and is close to the forecast of spending made by the expenditure sub-group. It should allow authorities to keep their spending in line with our plans and broadly level in real terms. It includes full provision for the current costs which will be incurred next year in preparing for the introduction of the community charge.

We propose that aggregate Exchequer grant should be set at £1,316 million. This increase of 5 per cent. is ahead of inflation, is £63 million more than we provided in the settlement for 1988-89 and about £77 million more than the amount being paid to local authorities for the current year. We will be discussing all these proposals with the Welsh consultative council on local government finance on 13 July.

This is a generous proposal. It gives local authorities certainty and offers a smooth path to the new system. Both grant and expenditure provisions have been increased by more than the level of inflation. Ratepayers should therefore expect their councils to safeguard their interests by setting their budgets in line with the settlement. They will know that in doing so rate increases can be kept below the rate of inflation. I hope that all councils will ensure that rate increases are kept low. I hope, too, that they will continue to improve their efficiency and effectiveness to ensure that they use available resources for the full benefit of the communities.

Mr. Alan Williams (Swansea, West): I thank the Minister for his statement. Naturally, we welcome generally the greater predictability that the announcement will give to councils. That is a gain in method, but whether it proves to be a gain in substance depends on the ceilings, which we do not know yet. In that context, will the Minister confirm that, despite his protestations about a generous announcement, the Government stand by the White Paper prediction, which shows that local council spending in Wales will fall? If the Minister's announcement is in keeping with that, the standards of service will also continue to fall. In future, control will be exercised by borrowing rather than through expenditure. Will the Minister confirm that that is a return to the system that operated before his Government started meddling with the system of local authority finance—the system that operated before 1980? Is it a rather belated confession of error?

The fixed grant may be good or bad depending on the level at which it is fixed—which we do not know. We shall have to wait and see. I welcome, as a general proposition, the idea that local authorities will be free to finance capital expenditure from revenue. However, that proposition must be seen in the context of the financial environment in which it is intended to operate. The cruel sting in the tail is that it will be subject to the disciplines of the community charge. That is the same as giving someone the freedom of the straitjacket. Local authorities will be limited by the ratchet effect. To the extent that there is a 6:1 magnification in the poll tax impact of any expenditure decision, that is a meaningless freedom. It is a freedom to pace the cell.

I welcome the fact that councils will be able to spend the balance of capital receipts in whatever way they choose, but the impact of that depends on what the balance is. The Government intend that a proportion of receipts must—not may; this is an enforced decision by the council—be set aside. The Minister has not told us the amount for debt redemption or for future commitments. That means that most of the resources that the councils have received from the sale of their assets will not be available for the replacement of facilities or for new facilities for the communities that they serve. If anything, the overall effect will be that councils will lose freedom rather than gain it.

The Minister referred in glowing terms to the increase of 5·1 per cent. As he admits, it is a standstill figure. Inflation is running at 4·5 per cent. and, as hon. Members know, local authority expenditure—like National Health Service expenditure—is not directly related to the cost of living index, which is based on personal spending patterns. Inflation in local authority expenditure is always higher, because of the way in which local government costs are made up. The Minister gave this away inadvertently when he said that the announcement will

"allow authorities to keep their spending . . . broadly level in real terms."

That is the key statement. Their spending will be level in real terms. There will be no expansion of services and no provision to meet the cost of GERBIL—the Education Reform Bill. That is an additional cost that councils have not had to meet before.

The provision will remain constant in real terms. It will include the cost of meeting the introduction of the community charge, yet expenditure will be level in real terms. In other words, when one deducts the cost of education and the cost of the community charge, constant expenditure in real terms becomes cuts in real terms. Will the Minister give us the precise estimates of the cost of introducing GERBIL and the community charge in Wales? I suspect that the ultimate figure will not even match the cost of living index and the normal inflation figure that the Government use.

Where is the extra provision to finance the councils' part in the valleys initiative? We eventually wrung the information out of the Treasury that there is not a single penny of Government money for this. What is available in this constant funding to help the valleys meet their part of the cost of the valleys initiative? Not a penny again, it would seem.

Will the Minister confirm that, since the Government came to office, Wales has lost £829 million in support for local government expenditure from Government compared to 1978-79? Those figures were given by the Secretary of State to one of his hon. Friends on Friday. Will the Minister confirm that the figure for the valleys is £250 million and that the announcement will do nothing to refund any of that money to the valleys or to Wales? Will he also confirm that——

Mr. Nicholas Bennett (Pembroke): Too long.

Mr. Williams: It was a long statement.

Will the Minister also bear in mind that as interest charges are a major part of council costs——

Mr. Colin Shepherd (Hereford): This is boring.

Mr. Williams: The hon. Gentleman may be bored; the people of Wales are interested and concerned. We do not need a tame poodle Parliamentary Private Secretary coming here from England to tell us what we can ask about Wales.

As interest charges are a major cost in local government administration and as these figures were settled before the latest increase, will the Minister confirm that there is another erosion of the real spending power of the councils? We need far more detail before we can assess the real impact of the announcement. It appears to be utterly inadequate to sustain existing services, and certainly inadequate to meet the extra costs that are being imposed by the Government's policies.

Mr. Roberts: The right hon. Member for Swansea, West (Mr. Williams) welcomed parts of the statement and I thank him for that. He quickly went on to talk about the consultative paper. Of course, there will be considerable discussions on the contents of that paper in the months ahead. However, I was rather surprised to hear the right hon. Gentleman object to the limitation that would be put on local authority spending by the community charge, as the Government are introducing the community charge to make local authorities more accountable to their electors for what they spend.

The right hon. Gentleman mentioned debt redemption. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment said that local authorities in England were indebted to the tune of £45 billion, and the figure for Wales is £2·5 billion. That is a significant sum and the majority of hon. Members would regard the redemption of debt and the devotion of some part of captial receipts to that purpose as worth while. As the right hon. Gentleman acknowledged, there is a debt interest charge to be borne by those who contribute to the expenditure.

We are talking about the overall spending figures for both provision and grant, and we shall be discussing the detailed implications. We expect that local authorities will have adequate resources under the settlement to meet all their commitments. I remind the right hon. Gentleman that under this Government rate support grant for current expenditure has increased by 15 per cent. in real terms, whereas under the previous Labour Government, between 1974 and 1979-80, RSG expenditure remained unchanged in real terms.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I again remind hon. Members that there is a heavy day ahead. I ask for brief questions, to which I hope brief answers will be given.

Sir Anthony Meyer (Clwyd, North-West): Is my hon. Friend aware that councillors in Wales will give a warm and unreserved welcome to the removal of the restrictions on capital expenditure which have irked them for a considerable period? Does it not clearly emerge from the figures quoted by the right hon. Member for Swansea, West (Mr. Williams) that, during the final three years of the Labour Government, because of their mismanagement of the economy, the amounts in real terms devoted to rate support grant dropped steadily year by year, whereas under this Government in the past three years they have steadily increased?

Mr. Roberts: My hon. Friend is right. One must remind the Opposition that, had the trend in rate support grant between 1976-77 and 1979-80 continued, the level of RSG this year would have been £620 million, not the £1 billion that the Government have made available.

Mr. Richard Livsey (Brecon and Radnor): I welcome what has been said about councils spending the balance of their capital receipts in the year they choose. None the less, on this pre-poll tax statement, I should like to ask the Minister to enlighten us as to the mechanisms that will be deployed for controlled borrowing and credit. Will the hon. Gentleman consider relaxing council house receipts controls in Wales, just as the Secretary of State for the Environment said would happen in England? Has provision been made in the coming year for school building repairs in Wales, as were announced for England by the Secretary of State for Education and Science?

Mr. Roberts: I again emphasise that we have issued a consultative paper which contains various proposals. In the next three months we shall receive representations on them, so we have not made firm decisions. As for other details of the settlement, I again emphasise that today we are dealing with overall figures.

Mr. Keith Raffan (Delyn): I warmly welcome my hon. Friends statement, which will allow councillors to budget more efficiently and effectively, and in particular the Government's proposals on capital expenditure. Does my hon. Friend agree that next year's settlement should lead not only to low rate increases—if any—but to an improvement in the services, provided local authorities concentrate on their statutory obligations? Does my hon. Friend recall the statement last year by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State that not enough was being done to ensure the rapid and effective dissemination of improvements in efficiency? What has been achieved in that direction?

Mr. Roberts: My hon. Friend may be aware that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has had discussions about efficiency with local authority associations in Wales. The Audit Commission has pointed out that it is possible to make savings of £40 million per annum in local authority spending. Only about one third of the savings suggested by the Audit Commission have been achieved. I agree that there is considerable scope for savings, but even as things are, if local authorities keep to this settlement there should not be significant rate increases. Such increases should be below the rate of inflation.

Mr. Donald Coleman (Neath): If the statement means that local authorities will be freed from the meddling of

[Mr. Donald Coleman]

Ministers, it can be welcomed. How is the completion of local authority schemes, such as road building, affected by the statement? Will it mean that local authorities can still make bids for grant aid to complete those schemes, or will they have to find the money from their own resources?

Mr. Roberts: I have announced local authority provision as being some 8·8 per cent., or £145 million, over provision this year. That is some 5·1 per cent., or £87 million, over this year's budget. The authorities are reasonably well provided for, and I am being very restrained about the provision for next year. Local authorities will also receive grant of 5 per cent., or £63 million, more than this year, which in turn is 6·2 per cent. or £77 million more than claimed this year. In short, the authorities are in a good position to carry on with their existing plans.

Mr. Gwilym Jones (Cardiff, North): In joining the general warm welcome for my hon. Friend's generous statement, I urge him to stress as forcefully as possible that his abolition of spending controls should not be taken as a green light for local council spending again to go out of control. My hon. Friend knows as well as I do that next year is local election year in Wales and that, for electoral purposes, the Labour-controlled councils will operate a cynical cycle, producing low or no rate increases next year.

Mr. Roberts: Up until the coming year, local authorities that overspent had their grant reduced. That will no longer happen. I should have thought that it will be clear to local authorities and their electors that any heavy spending that attracts huge rate increases will be due solely to the decisions of their local councillors.

Mr. Dafydd Wigley (Caernarfon): I should like to press the Minister further on capital controls. In view of his comment that there will be controls on borrowing and other forms of credit rather than on expenditure, can the hon. Gentleman clarify the position in relation to European grants, for example, for the counties of Gwynedd, Powys and Dyfed, where the integrated operations scheme is making available millions of pounds of capital? Can we take it that that scheme is outside the capital control system which he proposes and that the new system will provide for additionality, so that these councils will not miss out because of a reduction in capital allowance from the Government because capital is available from the EEC?

Mr. Roberts: The hon. Gentleman will find that that matter is referred to in the consultation paper. I cannot give him the precise page, but he will find that there is a complete paragraph discussing various ways of dealing with his point.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: Does my hon. Friend agree that it is clear from the fact that only one third of Welsh Labour Members are present that they are satisfied with his statement? Will he draw attention to those local authorities that believe that their expenditure can continue to rise and that they do not have to grasp the nettle, for instance, on the number of surplus school places in Dyfed? Is my hon. Friend aware that the Audit Commission has repeatedly pointed out that it is a matter not of milking the ratepayers for more money but of local authorities getting their house in order?

Mr. Roberts: My hon. Friend is right to say that there is tremendous scope for local authorities to make savings. Of course there is scope for local education authorities to make savings, as they are well aware, by getting rid of surplus places in primary and secondary schools. I am glad to say that local education authorities are fully apprised of the need to get rid of surplus places and thereby devote the resulting savings to other educational purposes.

Mr. Alun Michael (Cardiff, South and Penarth): It is clear that we will know what the Minister is really up to only when we have the figures and percentages. Capital expenditure is important for employment in local authority areas. Will the Minister be genuinely generous in his decisions on capital expenditure?

The Minister should be subject to the maximum penalties of the Trade Descriptions Act when he uses the word "generous" about revenue, because he knows that that signals yet another round of imposed cuts. How is it that the Secretary of State for the Environment can calculate the cost of introducing the poll tax and refer to it in his statement, yet there is none in the statement for Wales? If the Department of the Environment's figure of £110 million is correct, that suggests that between £7 million and £10 million is appropriate for Wales, although I have reservations about that figure.

In addition, it will cost some £10 million a year to collect the tax. That calculation is based on the £1 million extra required for collection for the city of Cardiff. What are the Minister's calculations? In view of those figures, will he undertake to fund the effects of bringing in this crazy tax and not allow it to eat still further into the inadequate provision for inflation in the figures he has announced today?

Mr. Roberts: The hon. Gentleman is right: we have not made our announcement about capital spending for next year. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment was able to give a figure for the community charge in his statement. I cannot because the matter will be discussed by my right hon. Friend at a meeting next Wednesday with the local authority associations, but the cost is estimated at between £4·5 million and £7·5 million.

Mr. Michael: That is far too low.

Mrs. Ann Clwyd (Cynon Valley): Surely even the Minister is aware that this statement is a completely inadequate response to the problems of deprivation in the valleys, as my right hon. Friend the Member for Swansea, West (Mr. Williams) said. It cannot deal with the problems of bad housing, high unemployment, poor infrastructure and the heavy demand on social services in those areas. It will enable local authorities simply to stand still. It will not allow them to develop those essential services.

I remind the Minister that earlier this week the United Kingdom came bottom of the pile of European countries providing child care. That has happened in a week when we have heard much about the Government's concern for children. The settlement will not enable local authorities to develop child care and nursery education in Wales or in any other part of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Roberts: As usual, the hon. Lady is painting an excessively black picture. We in Wales are very fortunate, because 70 per cent. of our children aged under five are in some form of nursery education, as compared with some 40 per cent. in England. I think that she is painting far too dark a picture.

My right hon. Friend has announced his valleys initiative. I know that Opposition Members do not like it, but the people of the valleys do. It involves a tremendous concentration of expenditure and is a real attack on the social, housing and other problems of the valley communities. The settlement is generous in terms of the grant to Wales. The current expenditure provision is perfectly adequate and maintains expenditure for next year at the same level in real terms as for this year.

Mr. Gareth Wardell (Gower): Will the Minister help me in two ways? First, will he explain and clarify the difference between the statement that he has read out today and the copy of the statement that I received on the board a few minutes ago? There are two differences between them. According to the copy of the statement that I have, he is meeting local authority associations on 12 July, but he read "13 July". Secondly, he completely omitted an important sentence in the first paragraph on page 3, which says:

> "There will be no grant reduction if authorities spend more than planned."

As that was not read out, should it be included in or excluded from the statement?

When statements appear on the annunciator concerning Scottish rate support grant settlements, "Scotland" is put after "rate support grant," and the same applies for England. Why can Wales not receive the same treatment?

Mr. Roberts: I do not think that the last matter is one for me. The hon. Gentleman is among those privileged to receive a copy of a statement as a matter of courtesy, but of course the actual statement is the one that I delivered to the House.

Mr. Win Griffiths (Bridgend): Having explained to us that the settlement is generous and that 5 per cent. is better than the level of inflation, will the Minister now say that he does not expect inflation to rise above 5 per cent. during the coming year? Will he further say that he does not expect interest rates to rise during the coming year? Both have a crucial effect on local authority expenditure. Is the Welsh Office keeping a sum of money in reserve to cover those contingencies? If so, how much does it have available?

The Minister laid great stress on the fact that local authorities would be consulted about the overall package and about what might eventually happen. Will he confirm that, if there is an overwhelming majority view in favour of some significant changes to the package, the Welsh Office will meet the local authorities' demands?

Mr. Roberts: It is not for me to forecast the level of inflation, but I can urge local authorities, which are after all major spenders in the United Kingdom, to play their part in helping to keep down inflation. They can do that by keeping to the expenditure levels anticipated in the settlement.

Mr. Alan W. Williams (Carmarthen): Where is the generosity in the statement? The last paragraph begins:

> "This is a generous proposal."

Where is that generosity when what is being suggested is a 5 per cent. increase and inflation is 4·5 per cent. and rising? At best, that is a standstill budget.

The settlement highlights what is wrong with the whole of the Government's economic policy, which is that throughout the public sector we are at a standstill. What growth there is is in the private sector, and being let rip, it is causing serious balance of payments problems. The settlement is not just bad for local government in Wales —it is bad for the economy of Britain. How can the Minister describe a standstill budget as generous? It is double-talk.

Mr. Roberts: I am afraid that I have to remind the hon. Gentleman of what I said earlier about what happened to rate support grant current expenditure under the Labour Government—it remained unchanged in real terms. Since 1979, however, under this Government, it has increased by some 15 per cent. in real terms.

Mr. Paul Flynn (Newport, West): When one includes the cost of introducing the community charge in Wales, one sees that the increase over the last year is not 5·1 per cent. but 4·4 per cent., which is below the level of inflation. In spite of our entreaties, we have yet to hear what the cost of introducing GERBIL to Wales will be. We can summarise today's statement in simple terms—it is a cut.

Mr. Roberts: The hon. Gentleman would be wrong to do so. With regard to the cost of introducing the community charge, I believe that the £4·5 million estimate is that of the local authorities themselves. The £7·5 million estimate is that of Price Waterhouse.

Mr. Flynn: And the cost of GERBIL?

Business of the House

5.29 pm

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Wakeham): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I should like to make a statement about the business for next week:

MONDAY 11 JULY—Second Reading of the European Communities (Finance) Bill. Details of the documents relevant to the debate will be given in the *Official Report.*

Motion on the Rate Support Grant (Scotland) Order.

Remaining stages of the Court of Session Bill *[Lords]*, which is a consolidation measure.

TUESDAY 12 JULY—Opposition day (18th Allotted Day). Until about seven o'clock, there will be a debate entitled "The growing divide between rich and poor in London". Afterwards, there will be a debate entitled "Public provision for sport for all". Both debates will arise on Opposition motions.

Motion relating to the Wireless Telegraphy (Broadcast Licence Charges and Exemption) (Amendment No. 2) Regulations.

Motion to take note of EC documents on the control of chlorofluorocarbons and the ozone layer. Details will be given in the *Official Report.*

WEDNESDAY 13 JULY—Ways and Means Resolution relating to the Finance (No. 2) Bill.

Progress on remaining stages of the Finance (No. 2) Bill.

Motion on short speeches.

THURSDAY 14 JULY—Completion of remaining stages of the Finance (No. 2) Bill.

Motion on the Redundant Mineworkers' Concessionary Coal (Payments Schemes) (Amendment) Order.

Motion on the Army, Air Force and Naval Discipline Acts (Continuation) Order.

FRIDAY 15 JULY—There will be a debate on Hong Kong on a motion for the Adjournment of the House.

MONDAY 18 JULY—Estimates day (3rd Allotted Day). There will be debates on hospital and community health and other services, England (class XIV, vote 1) and on the Training Commission (class VII, vote 5) so far as it relates to adult employment and youth training.

[Relevant documents:

Monday 11 July 1988: Undertaking as confirmed by the representatives of the Governments of the member states of the European Communities meeting within the Council to make payments to finance the Communities general budget for the financial year 1988 (CM 418); Decision of the Council of the European Communities on the system of the Communities' own resources (CM 419); Treasury and Civil Service Committee fifth report Session 1987-88 (HC 358).

Relevant European Community documents: (a) 5647/88. Gross National Product; (b) Unnumbered. Correction of budgetary imbalances: United Kingdom abatement. Relevant reports of European Legislation Committee: (a) HC 43-xxvi (1987-88), paragraph 1; (b) HC 43-xxxii (1987-88), paragraph 4.

Tuesday 12 July: Relevant European Community documents: (a) 8335/87 Chlorofluorocarbons in the atmosphere; (b) 4997/88 + COR 1 Protection of the ozone layer. Relevant reports of European Legislation Committee: (a) HC 43-iii (1987-88), para. 3; (b) HC 43-xxi (1987-88), para. 1, HC 43-xxvii (1987-88), para. 1 and HC 43-xxxii (1987-88), para. 1.]

Mr. Frank Dobson (Holborn and St. Pancras): I thank the Leader of the House for his statement. In view of the length of time that has been taken on the earlier statements, I shall keep my questions to a minimum. Arising from that, will the Leader of the House consider postponing the estimates debates on the environment and housing which are set down for later today as it looks as though they may either not be reached or will scarcely be reached before the close of business?

When can we expect a statement on the discrepancy between the assertion made on 24 May 1984 by the right hon. Member for Tonbridge and Malling (Mr. Stanley) that no strip searches have been carried out on women at Greenham Common, and the recent court award of damages to a woman on the grounds that she had been strip-searched at Greenham Common before that date? The House is owed some explanation.

When can we expect a debate on the Government's lamentable failure to get enough of their Members to serve on the Select Committee on Scottish Affairs?

Does the right hon. Gentleman intend that all stages of the European Communities (Finance) Bill should be taken on the Floor of the House rather than in Committee upstairs?

Finally, will the Leader of the House take this opportunity to spell out for hon. Members the arrangements for the ceremony in Westminster Hall on 20 July to mark the tercentenary of the Declaration of Rights, the Bill of Rights and the claim of right?

Mr. Wakeham: The hon. Gentleman has asked me five questions about the business for next week and for today. So far as today's debate is concerned, I recognise that there have been several statements and that we shall be starting that debate later than we had intended. However, the best plan is to see how we get on.

With regard to the point raised by his hon. Friend the Member for Stalybridge and Hyde (Mr. Pendry), I should like first to apologise to the hon. Gentleman, who I do not see in his place today, for the fact that there was not a Minister on the Treasury Bench when he raised his point of order yesterday. That was due to a misunderstanding. However, my right hon. Friend the Member for Tonbridge and Malling (Mr. Stanley) stands by the answer that he gave on 24 May 1984, which was based on a Ministry of Defence police investigation, which had found no evidence to support the allegations of strip searches at Greenham Common. However, I can give the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) an undertaking that the appropriate Minister from the Ministry of Defence will write to his hon. Friend about the matter that he raised in his point of order yesterday. I shall ensure that the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras receives a copy of that letter.

The hon. Gentleman raised the question of the Select Committee on Scottish Affairs. As I have said many times in the House, I regret very much that the proposals that I put forward, which would have enabled the Select Committee to be set up, were not acceptable to the Opposition. I have undertaken that we should have a debate on the matter but the arrangements for the debate are best made through the usual channels.

I intend to have discussions through the usual channels to decide how best to handle the European Communities (Finance) Bill, but it would be my present intention—I think this is the right thing to do—to commit the Bill to a Committee of the whole House.

With regard to the Westminster Hall ceremony, it is proposed that both Houses will present their addresses to Her Majesty the Queen to mark the tercentenary of the revolutions of 1688 and 1689 and of the Bill of Rights in Westminster Hall on Wednesday 20 July at 11 am. Hon. Members have been asked to notify Mr. Speaker's Office if they or their spouses wish to attend so that seats may be reserved for them and tickets issued in advance. Hon. Members and their spouses must be in their places by 10.30 am. Because each House will be attending formally on the Sovereign, Members will be seated separately. The ceremony is expected to end with the departure of the Queen at about 11.30 am.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. May I again stress that we have a heavy day ahead of us with a Loyal Address and then a debate on the estimates? I ask for questions to be directed to the business for next week.

Mr. Nicholas Soames (Crawley): Will my right hon. Friend spare time to reflect on the great aggravation and anguish that is being caused to many hundreds of thousands of our fellow citizens as they move about London because of the terrible state of the roads and the traffic? Will he find time to include in an estimates debate an opportunity to debate the sum of money that the Government presently spend on the roads in the capital to see whether the expression of the whole House would encourage them to spend a bit more?

Mr. Wakeham: As my hon.Friend knows, the amount spent by this Government is substantially up on the amount spent by the Labour Government. The question of which estimates are debated on estimates days is not a matter for me, but I shall certainly ensure that my hon. Friend's suggestion is referred to the appropriate quarter.

Mr. Alfred Morris (Manchester, Wythenshawe): As the European Commission is required to put forward proposals about New Zealand's butter exports to the United Kingdom by the end of this month, will the Leader of the House arrange for a statement to be made next week on the British Government's decision on that important matter, having full regard to the Prime Minister's comments in this House on 19 May?

Mr. Wakeham: I recognise the right hon. Gentleman's long-standing interest in such matters. The best thing that I can do is to refer his point to my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food.

Mr. Michael Latham (Rutland and Melton): May I thank my right hon. Friend for bringing forward the motion on short speeches next week? Is he aware that the foreign affairs debate last week was an absolute travesty because right hon. Members of all parties had absolutely no concern for the ordinary rights of squaddies on the Back Benches?

Mr. Wakeham: As my hon. Friend knows, I have written to him about that because I recognise that several hon. Members had some modest cause for complaint towards the end of that debate. That issue is not something that we can always control but the motion on short speeches should make it more easily controllable in the future.

Mr. Archy Kirkwood (Roxburgh and Berwickshire): While I acknowledge the fact that the need for a debate on the Government's failure to set up the Select Committee on Scottish Affairs is a matter for the usual channels and is not in the programme for next week, may I ask whether the Leader of the House will give us an undertaking that time will be found for that before the summer recess?

Mr. Wakeham: I cannot add anything other than to say that I will discuss it through the usual channels. It is not entirely a matter for me.

Sir Peter Blaker (Blackpool, South): Following the question asked by my hon. Friend the Member for Rutland and Melton (Mr. Latham) about the foreign affairs debate, the point was not only that the speeches were rather long, but that the lapse of time since we had had a foreign affairs debate was so long that an enormous number of hon. Members wanted to speak. Will my right hon. Friend bear that in mind, and can we have another debate on foreign affairs reasonably soon?

Mr. Wakeham: I recognise the strength of what my right hon. Friend says, which is a logical deduction from last week's debate. I shall do my best, but I do not promise such a debate in the near future.

Mr. William McKelvey (Kilmarnock and Loudoun): Can the Leader of the House be a little more forthcoming on the question of the debate on the Select Committee on Scottish Affairs because it was my understanding that he said that we would have such a debate before the House rises at the end of this Session?

Mr. Wakeham: I have said that I would prefer to have a debate and that we would have a debate. I am seeking to arrange that through the usual channels.

Mr. Tom Sackville (Bolton, West): Is my right hon. Friend aware of the growing chaos at Manchester Airport and some other British airports with passengers, particularly with Mediterranean holiday destinations, having to wait for up to 10 hours, mainly as a result of the air traffic control system in Europe being unable to cope with the volume? Will he find time for the House to debate this matter before what is already a very serious situation becomes a crisis?

Mr. Wakeham: I recognise that these matters are important, particularly at this time of the year. I cannot promise my hon. Friend a special debate before the summer recess, but I can think of ways in which he might use his ingenuity to raise the matters that rightly concern him.

Dr. Jeremy Bray (Motherwell, South): Will the Leader of the House ensure that the British Steel Bill, which was having its Third Reading in the House of Lords at a late hour last night, comes back to this House for further consideration, because the Lords were successful in extracting from Ministers the articles of association for the successor company, which we in this House asked for and were refused? Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that it is apparent from these articles of association that the golden share offers the British Steel Corporation no protection

[Dr. Jeremy Bray]

from a takeover, because the share can be sold at any time with the agreement of the Government? Is he further aware that, because the chairman of the *British Steel* Corporation has made the statement that the closure of the Ravenscraig strip mill is probable rather than possible next year, this would spell the end of the steel industry in Scotland?

Mr. Wakeham: As the hon. Gentleman says, the Bill is still proceeding through the House of Lords. I think that the best thing is to wait until it has finished its passage there and then decide what to do.

Mr. John Carlisle (Luton, North): Is my right hon. Friend aware that many on these Benches will be delighted by the Opposition's decision to have a debate on sport next week? Can he perhaps ask the Minister for Sport whether, during that debate, he will indicate to the House the ideas set out by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister in the excellent scheme for membership of football clubs for the season after next? Will he also point out to the House how successful this membership scheme has been in Luton and how readily accepted it will be by all those interested in the well-being of sport?

Mr. Wakeham: That is a very helpful suggestion from my hon. Friend. I think it is unlikely that my hon. Friend the Minister for Sport will not be dealing with these matters in his speech.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): With respect to Monday's business on the European Communities (Finance) Bill, in view of the fact that this authorises an increase in both EEC expenditure and our contributions of up to 25 per cent., will the Leader of the House assure us that the Chancellor of the Exchequer will be here to explain and move it? In that regard, has he noticed that in the claimed financial effects of the Bill in the explanatory memorandum it is indicated that our estimated net contributions increase will be £200 million to £300 million? Is he not aware that under these provisions the gross taxation increase will be up to £1,000 million? Why is that not in the explanatory memorandum?

Mr. Wakeham: These are matters for the debate next week. While I cannot say which Minister will be speaking, I can guarantee to the hon. Gentleman that the Second Reading will be moved by a senior Minister, who will be highly competent to deal with the matters the hon. Gentleman has raised.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): As a matter of compassion for the Leader of the Opposition, and, more important, for my constituents, will my right hon. Friend arrange a debate next week on the statement of the Secretary of State for the Environment on rates for next year so that I can put arguments to him directly for Ealing council to be rate-capped, bearing in mind that it is reliably estimated that rates will rise by 50 per cent. simply for that Labour council to stand still? In fact, an 80 per cent. increase is expected.

Mr. Wakeham: My hon. Friend makes his point well. Unfortuntely, I shall not be able to arrange a debate on that subject next week, but no doubt we shall come to the matter from time to time.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): Will the Leader of the House arrange time for a debate on the enterprise culture so that we can discuss the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry's failure to refer the Cannon takeover of Thorn EMI cinemas to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission? Is he aware that the Cannon group has started asset-stripping by closing cinemas, including the much admired, much used and profitable Ritz cinema in Bradford, and has now sold off Elstree studio, one of the three major film studios left in this country, which played an important part in producing much admired and in some cases profitable films that were shown all round the world? These have been sold off to a property developer. Does not the Leader of the House think that it is disgraceful conduct by both the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry and Cannon Films which should be the subject of a debate?

Mr. Wakeham: No, I do not accept that for a single minute. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry acts in matters of mergers and takeovers in accordance with statute law. He conducts himself quite correctly in accordance with his duty. If the hon. Gentleman wants to raise matters of the enterprise culture, I suggest that he might be able to do it on both Wednesday and Thursday, when the remaining stages of the Finance Bill are being discussed.

Mr. Peter Thurnham (Bolton, North-East): My right hon. Friend will be aware of the great concern in the country about child abuse. Will he consider providing time for a full debate on this matter, including the need for a wider inquiry into the full extent of child abuse in the country?

Mr. Wakeham: Yes, this is a very important subject and I recognise that there is a demand for a debate in many parts of the House. I do not think that I can promise a debate in the near future, but it is something that we can discuss through the usual channels.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): Will the Leader of the House make arrangements next week to enable us to debate the situation in Turkey, in view of General Evren's unwelcome visit to this country? Will he ensure that, if General Evren does indeed come, the Prime Minister will make it clear to him that in Turkey there are far too many political prisoners, that far too many people have died as a result of the coup that he led in 1980, that trade union freedom is something that we hold precious and that the war against the Kurdish people should be brought to an end rapidly? Will she make it clear that there is no question whatsoever of Turkey being allowed to pursue an application to join the EEC while the lack of democracy in Turkey is such an obvious and palpable fact?

Mr. Wakeham: The visit of the President of Turkey next week is welcomed by, I believe, everybody in the House, with a few exceptions such as, probably, the hon. Gentleman. I believe that a closer relationship with Turkey will be to the benefit of both us and the Turkish people. I certainly am not prepared to arrange a debate next week on the subject.

Mr. Edward Leigh (Gainsborough and Horncastle): In the light of next week's debate, is it not ironic that certain voices are raised in favour of setting up a central European banking system—an act that would certainly deprive this House of its traditional control over economic policy, as we celebrate the tercentenary of that control? Will my right hon. Friend therefore use his considerable skill and influence in Government to impress on his colleague who is to introduce the debate next Monday that the Government have no intention of presiding over any diminution of this House's traditional powers and privileges in matters of economic policy?

Mr. Wakeham: I have heard and read some of the reports to which I imagine my hon. Friend refers. I prefer to rely upon what my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said during questions today, which seems to me to be much nearer the views of the British people.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Will the Leader of the House arrange a debate or a statement about the continuing lockout at TV-am? Is he aware that this matter has never been debated properly in the House of Commons even though the lockout has been going on for more than six months and 299 people have been deprived of their jobs? Since Tories are appearing on that company's programmes, and since people of principle on these Benches refuse to take part, and go to picket lines instead, does it not mean that there is political imbalance and that therefore we should have a debate in order to thrash out these matters in a proper way so that some of us can defend those who have been chucked out of jobs?

Mr. Wakeham: Not for the first time, the hon. Gentleman wants to have it both ways: he refuses to go on a programme and then complains that he is not on it. These are matters for the management and the work force to resolve; it is not for the Government to intervene.

Mr. Richard Holt (Langbaurgh): Notwithstanding the answer that my right hon. Friend gave a moment ago and the excellent one-hour statement yesterday, I believe that the House, and certainly the country at large, would far rather have a debate next week on child sexual abuse than on Hong Kong. Ought not my right hon. Friend to consider having an early debate on that subject, because there is much that needs to be said, which so far has not been allowed to be said in the House?

Mr. Wakeham: I totally agree with my hon. Friend that it was a most excellent statement by my right hon. Friend the Minister for Health yesterday and I think that the House conducted itself very well during the subsequent discussion. I recognise that the House will want to debate these matters further. All I can say to my hon. Friend is that I will look at the matter again, but I cannot promise him an early debate.

Mr. Harry Ewing (Falkirk, East): Can I ask the Leader of the House a Member's question? Can I try to persuade the Leader of the House to investigate on behalf of Members what is going on in relation to the use of the services and facilities of the House? Is the Leader of the House aware that hardly a week passes without the all-party Whip having one more notice on it restricting the use of the facilities by Members? Last week's all-party Whip was the final insult. It explained that Members could not take more than six people on the Terrace, which is bad enough, but went on to say that that applied unless they were going to a party in the Terrace Bar. The Leader of the House will appreciate that the House is rapidly passing into the hands of outside interests. Will he investigate all this and make a statement to the House as early as possible?

Mr. Wakeham: I have sympathy with some parts of the hon. Gentleman's remarks. As a matter of fact, earlier this week, I had a meeting with senior members from both sides of the House to consider what we should do about some of the things that occur in all-party groups and things of that sort. We are considering it as a matter of some urgency and I shall be in touch with the hon. Gentleman and the House as soon as we have done so.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett (Pembroke): Following the question of my hon. Friend the Member for Crawley (Mr. Soames), may I point out that we have not had a general debate on transport since this Parliament met? On the Conservative Benches there is a desperate desire to discuss the successful deregulation of buses and the need to privatise British Rail.

Mr. Wakeham: I recognise the strength of my hon. Friend's suggestion and I wish that I could be more forthcoming, but this is a difficult part of the year in which to find extra time for debate.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): Will the Leader of the House arrange for a debate next week on the increase in visa fees, which did not receive any parliamentary approval? Does the Leader of the House realise that such a debate would allow Ministers to explain why visa fees have been increased by 20 per cent. and why they are now imposed upon all children? It would also force Ministers to defend such policies, which are clearly erecting financial obstacles to families being united in this country.

Mr. Wakeham: The Government's policy of, by and large, making the services that are provided financially self-sufficient is a good one. I do not believe that Ministers would have any difficulty in defending what has happened. I wish that I could offer the hon. Gentleman time for a debate next week, but he knows that, at this time of the year, there are occasions when he might be able to raise the matter should he want to.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes (Harrow, West): Will my right hon. Friend find time for a debate next week on the Post Office monopoly? My constituents have just suffered a seven-day strike by Harrow post office. Companies have lost thousands of pounds and private individuals' lives have been disrupted. They would like to have a choice of postal service. Does my right hon. Friend agree that this matter and the Post Office monopoly should be referred to the Director General of Fair Trading?

Mr. Wakeham: I readily recognise the great inconvenience that such industrial action may cause and has caused my hon. Friend's constituents. Such matters must be kept constantly under review because things cannot necessarily go on the same for ever if such strikes continue. However, it will be difficult for me to arrange a debate on the subject next week.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): Is the Leader of the House aware that there is a strong feeling going around Westminster that he and a number of members of the Select Committee considering the televising of Parliament are deliberately dragging their feet to try to ensure that the experiment does not go ahead in October?

[Mr. Tony Banks]

May we have a debate next week on the reasons for the seeming delay and, if not, can we have an interim report before the House rises for the summer recess so that Members can consider what has been done so far? Finally, will the Leader of the House assure us that he will not attempt to frustrate the will of the House regarding the televising of Parliament?

Mr. Wakeham: The hon. Gentleman is one of the most naive of Members if he believes everything he reads in the newspapers about the television Select Committee. That Committee consists of Members from all sides of the House, who hold all sorts of views about the televising of Parliament. That Committee has been working extremely well and extremely hard and has dealt with many aspects of the problem. It is making good progress. We discussed whether we should make an interim report, but the present view is that that would further delay matters rather than speed things up.

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): Would we also be naive if we believed what is written in *Hansard* when it reports the answers that the Leader of the House gives to our questions? On 9 June in answer to my question about hunting deer with packs of dogs he said:

> "Wild deer are already protected by the provisions of the Deer Acts 1963 and 1980"—*[Official Report*, 9 June 1988; Vol. 134, c. 987-8.]

He said that those provisions mainly referred to protection against poachers.

Scotland has the Deer (Scotland) Act 1959, which offers the sort of protection asked for in the early-day motion that I mentioned on 9 June. May we have a debate so that such protection is spread to England, Wales and Northern Ireland?

Mr. Wakeham: I do not think that I have written to the hon. Gentleman, but I have written to a number of his hon. Friends setting out the detail of the statement I made, which I believe was correct. However, the hon. Gentleman will know that such matters are normally left to private Member's legislation. The Government have no plans to introduce legislation on this topic.

Mr. Allan Roberts (Bootle): Will the Minister confirm the rumours circulating in Westminster that the Government are about to announce where the housing action trusts will be based? Will he make sure that, when that announcement is made, it is not in a written answer, but in a statement by the Minister for Housing and Planning or the Secretary of State for the Environment to the House next week? Will he also arrange for a debate on Girobank privatisation before it is privatised because, to go through, that privatisation does not require legislation?

Mr. Wakeham: The hon. Gentleman is a glutton for punishment. I thought that we were having a little rest from housing legislation. It is not for me to confirm the rumours that are going around the House. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment will make a statement at the proper time if a statement is required. I cannot confirm any rumours.

WELSH AFFAIRS

Ordered,

That the matter of the Effect of Government Legislation on the People of Wales, being a matter relating exclusively to Wales, be referred to the Welsh Grand Committee for its consideration.—*[Mr. Wakeham.]*

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Ordered,

That, at this day's sitting, Standing Order No. 52 (Consideration of estimates) shall apply to the consideration of Estimates as if paragraph (2) of that Order were omitted.—*[Mr. Wakeham.]*

Revolutions of 1688-89 (Tercentenary)

Mr. Speaker: I have to announce to the House that I have not selected any of the amendments on the Order Paper—[HON. MEMBERS: "Shame."]—nor have I selected the manuscript amendment in the name of the hon. Member for Halesowen and Stourbridge (Sir J. Stokes).

5.56 pm

The Prime Minister (Mrs. Margaret Thatcher): I beg to move,

That an humble Address be presented to Her Majesty, as follows:

Most Gracious Sovereign,

> We, Your Majesty's most dutiful and loyal subjects, the Commons of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, in Parliament assembled, having in mind the acceptance by Their Majesties King William and Queen Mary of the Declaration of Rights presented to them on 13th February 1689, and recalling also the Bill of Rights passed by the Parliament of England and the Claim of Right made by the Estates of Scotland for vindicating and asserting the ancient rights and liberties of the people of the two Kingdoms, beg leave to express to Your Majesty our great pleasure in celebrating the tercentenary of these historic events of 1688 and 1689 that established those constitutional freedoms under the law which Your Majesty's Parliament and people have continued to enjoy for three hundred years.

The address commemorates the 300th anniversary of one of the great events in the history of these islands: the glorious revolution of 1688. It is an anniversary with particular meaning for this House because, uniquely in the annals of European history, this was a revolution carried through by the action of Parliament itself.

The main events are well known: the defiance of the orders of King James II by the bishops and the judges; the invitation to William of Orange and Mary to defend our ancient rights and liberties; the landing at Torbay and the peaceful transfer of power which gave rise to the title of the bloodless revolution in England—although it was not like that in Scotland, and it was a very different story in Ireland; the summoning of the Convention Parliament; and the passage of legislation starting with the Bill of Rights and in Scotland the Claim of Right, which set us firmly upon a course of political stability and peace at home.

Those who invited William and Mary and who drew up the constitutional settlement wanted to secure our liberties and safeguard our institutions—Parliament, the common law, the jury system, local government by justices and corporations.

There are many important conclusions to be drawn from those momentous events 300 years ago. First, the glorious revolution established qualities in our political life which have been a tremendous source of strength: tolerance, respect for the law and for the impartial administration of justice, and respect for private property. It also established the tradition that political change should be sought and achieved through Parliament. It was this which saved us from the violent revolutions which shook our continental neighbours and made the revolution of 1688 the first step on the road which, through the successive Reform Acts, led to the establishment of universal suffrage and full parliamentary democracy.

Secondly, the events of 1688 were important in establishing Britain's nationhood and they opened the way to that renewal of energy and resourcefulness which built Britain's industrial and financial strength and gave her a world role. They demonstrated that a free society will always be more durable and successful than any tyranny.

Thirdly, we also celebrate the forging of the alliance between Britain and the Netherlands, which has endured for more than three centuries and which is active today in NATO and the European Community. Her Majesty's visit to the Netherlands this week further strengthened our friendship.

Even great events are subject to constantly shifting judgments and interpretations. Not every legacy of 1688 is a happy one—above all in Ireland. But the principal achievements of our forebears in 1688 remain and ensure that the will of the people be exercised through Parliament rather than by intimidation or pressure practised by any one group or faction. That is the legacy of 1688—a legacy not only to this country, but to parliamentary democracies everywhere.

6 pm

Mr. Neil Kinnock (Islwyn): This motion to express to Her Majesty our pleasure at the tercentenary of the revolution is a worthy act, not only because it celebrates a significant advance, as the Prime Minister just said, but because it requires us all to consider the character of our democracy and the ways in which, arduously and slowly, it has been brought thus far to our own time. Reflecting on that journey of democracy is a rewarding activity in itself. For me, it is fascinating, for instance, to see some who are usually scornful of fudges and compromise give such respect to the settlement of 1689, for if the coup d'etat itself was dramatic, the contemporary explanations of what occurred—and why—were somewhat pragmatic.

The Whigs, as we all recall, claimed a little disingenuously that James had been deposed merely because he had broken the contract of monarchy with the people. The Tories disagreed with that, holding that there was no such contract. Phlegmatically, however, they preferred what had happened peacefully to the alternative, which would certainly have been the second revolutionary civil war inside 50 years, with all its incalculable consequences. Once again, the world would have been turned upside down.

Meanwhile, the Prince of Orange knew a good thing when he saw one. With a Dutch opportunism not now seen outside the realms of the European Nations Cup, he asserted that he had brought an army with him to Torbay, not for reasons of invasion or insurrection, but merely for personal security. Then he went on to accept Parliament's rather dexterous definition that the throne had simply been vacated by James II, apparently in between having nose bleeds and disposing of the great seal in a rather original manner.

To the actors in the revolution and to many subsequent politicians, constitutionalists and historians, the interpretations of the revolution have been a matter of "pick your preference". As Christopher Hill said, history is written by the winners, and that is certainly true of revolutions. It was ever thus.

However, some of the most redoubtable roots of our democracy and some of the most intractable causes of our divisions, as the Prime Minister implied, run back to those years of 1688 and 1689, which is what makes the events so significant. It is important, therefore, even at this distance of centuries both to avoid the overblown romanticism of

[Mr. Neil Kinnock]

those who say that the revolution meant everything to liberty and democracy, and to eschew the cynical affectation of those who hold that the revolution meant nothing for liberty and democracy. Both schools of thought, if that is what they qualify to be called, are wrong.

The coup d'etat and settlement of 1688 and 1689 produced an important advance in the process of constructing rights and suppressing tyrany, which has progressed gradually and fitfully in our country over the centuries. No final date has been set for that process, and if we are truly a democracy of vigilance and vitality, no date for the completion of the body of liberties will ever be set:

"Each freedom"—

as Aneurin Bevan said—

"is only made secure by adding another to it".

The real assessment of 1688 and its consequences must, like all historic events, be made according to the two criteria of what they meant when they happened and what they convey to our age. That is especially true when the events concerned are held to be the very foundry of our liberties.

As for what happened, let us commend the undoubted fact that the revolution effectively asserted Parliament's power to dislodge the executive. Let us commend the fact that it did so without bloodshed in England. Let us celebrate the fact that it began to dispose of the dictatorship of divine right and to replace it with the civilised and durable strength of democratic right. Let us welcome the fact that, by further developing the conditions for liberty, the revolution notably assisted the advance of freedom of speech, the rule of law and the independence of the judiciary.

In all those ways the revolution deserves to be marked, as today's motion puts it, with "pleasure", just as it earned the accolades offered by Liberal historians such as Macaulay and G. M. Trevelyan and the applause of Socialist historians such as A. J. P. Taylor, who hailed the revolution as

"the foundation of our liberty".

They were all prepared to praise the revolution, despite being conscious, as we are, that in its immediate wake there was bloodshed in Scotland, and in Ireland there was dreadful slaughter, since when there has been a long and dreadful history and inheritance of conflict. All these commentators were conscious, too, that, although they were prepared to praise the revolution as a genesis of liberty, issues such as the royal prerogative, exercised not by the monarch but by a political executive, were bound to remain vexed—as they do in our time.

This brings me back to the second criterion for judging these events—what do they convey to us now? For the most incisive assessment of that, we are indebted to the most distinguished of our contemporary historians of the 17th century Christopher Hill, former master of Balliol. In a perfect illustration of the fact that the historian's art is confined not merely to analysing the past, Hill wrote to *The Independent* as recently as February of this year to say that the revolution of 1688

"was not a popular Revolution like that of 1640-60. But . . . it overthrew a Government which . . . had alienated the whole electorate, including its Tory supporters, by an arrogant and insensitive disregard for public opinion, by its arbitrary interference with the independence of local government and the universities, by its bullying of the press and the judiciary and by the subordination of British foreign policy to the wishes of the greatest World power."

Christopher Hill continued:

"James alienated Scotland and even the House of Lords; opposition to him started among the bishops".

The revolution, Hill concluded,

"re-established effective parliamentary control over the executive, the rule of law and the political independence of judges, restored traditional local government and greater freedom of the press. It ended rule by royal favourites and ideological sycophants, most of whom were recent converts to the rulers' religion."

It is clear that the former master of Balliol was writing only of 1688 and 1689.

The liberties and democracy which the events of those years began to establish in our country must never be taken for granted. Parliamentary democracy above all systems of government must respond to and stimulate change. In three centuries democracy has slowly been extended in our country. Parliamentary democratic government has adapted to each new age. It must continue to do so: by getting rid of residual injustices and abuses from previous ages, ancient and modern; by advancing to new ground in the achievement of rights; and most of all by using the best of all collective instruments—democracy itself—for its highest purpose of enlarging the political, social and economic liberty of the individual.

We in this generation recognise that which the generation in 1688 did not, that that obligation must apply to all individuals—women as well as men, poor people as well as those who are not poor—and that it must apply without prejudice or preference to everyone regardless of race, colour and creed. The object of that obligation is freedom. It is freedom that is not merely formal and conditional upon the accidents of fortune, but freedom that is real and usable because people have the political rights, the economic power, the personal confidence in security and the sense of social responsibility that make them truly emancipated. Now, as always, it is our parliamentary obligation to further those freedoms. As we endorse this celebratory motion, we regard it as our democratic mission.

6.10 pm

Sir Bernard Braine (Castle Point): May I, as one who has had the privilege of sitting in 12 successive Parliaments under six of your illustrious predecessors, Mr. Speaker, and having seen nine Prime Ministers at the Dispatch Box, offer a few reflections on the motion that is before the House?

As the Leader of the Opposition has said, we may have our differences in this place, but there is surely one consideration that unites us all. It is the knowledge that the parliamentary system which we jointly serve is greater than the sum total of all who are here at any one time. We are here, of course, to make the laws, to control taxation, to check the abuse of power and to seek redress of grievance, but only for a brief tenure. Therefore, we are no more than custodians of the best inherited from the past and trustees for generations yet unborn. That is why being a Member of this House is the greatest privilege that any British citizen can have.

Yet it might have turned out differently. If the arbitrary rule of a Stuart king had not been checked, as it was by the events of 1688-89, upheaval might have been delayed but it would have been as inevitable and probably as violent as it was to be in France a century later or as it was in 1917 in Tsarist Russia.

Looking back, we can see that those events were a major watershed in our history. It was certainly a revolution but more in the sense of the turning of a wheel back to normality, away from arbitrary rule back to the ancient contract between king, Parliament and people which had obtained at least from the middle ages. As one of our most distinguished historians has written:

> "Stuart England, like so many continental countries, found kingship and liberty incompatible. The revolution of 1688 gave us a constitution in which the two are inseparable."

Henceforward, not even the king would be above the law and the actions of his Ministers would require the assent of a freely elected Parliament. That is the nub of it.

Of course, the glorious revolution did nothing to change the social order. It did nothing immediate for the lot of the common man, it did not widen the franchise, but what it did was provide a strong framework of law within which later far-reaching changes were to prove possible and a stability ensured which became the envy of the nations of the world.

What is more, no year since 1689 has passed without a meeting of Parliament. The way was at last open for the expansion of commerce, the extension of influence overseas, the building of empire and later that truly remarkable and peaceful transition from empire to a free Commonwealth of nations. Of course, it did not all proceed smoothly. Only 76 years after the revolution, an unthinking British Government sought to tax 2·5 million Britons on the other side of the Atlantic without consulting the colonial assemblies or representation here. When that happened there were some Members of this House who took the view that the Government of the day were in breach of what had been settled in 1689.

The great Edmund Burke, writing to his constituents in Bristol in 1777, rejected the charge that those who, like him, opposed the Government's American policy were guilty of encouraging rebellion. *[Interruption.]* I hope that hon. Members will agree with what Edmund Burke went on to say:

> "revolts of a whole people never were encouraged, now or at any time. They are always provoked."

Ironically, one of the greatest compliments that could have been paid to our revolution was that the American founding fathers drew their inspiration from our Bill of Rights, even to the extent of using some of its phraseology in the framing of their own constitution.

Happily, we learned from the experience, beginning with the Durham reforms, the extension of self-government to Canada and to the Australasian colonies, and eventually sovereign independence to India and to nearly all our remaining dependencies. In the end, we kept faith with all who had been subject to the British Crown, and we did so in the spirit of what was begun here 300 years ago.

It was not given to those who participated in the glorious revolution to know where it would lead. What they did not know was that only 40 years before their fathers had engaged in cruel civil war, had executed a king, had suspended Parliament and had installed a military dictatorship. It is true that king and Parliament came back in 1660, yet the lesson had not been learnt, so that once again the realm was in grave danger. Those who sought a new settlement saw clearly the need for constitutional stability and freedom, and they acted. Their instinct was sound, and we can justifiably say now that they built better than they knew.

It is wholly fitting, therefore, that, as we celebrate the tercentenery of this great milestone in our history, we should pay tribute to what was done then and should thank God that as a consequence we live in a free country. We should support the motion with full and grateful hearts.

6.17 pm

Mr. David Steel (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale): On behalf of my hon. Friends I warmly and readily support the motion which the Prime Minister has moved which says that

> "an humble Address be presented to Her Majesty,"

to mark the celebration of significant and historical events which led to 300 years of stable constitutional monarchy.

For once the motion correctly refers to the Parliament of England. I hope hon. Members will not mind if I remind them that we are the successors not just of the Parliament of England but also of the Parliament of Scotland. We all have our favourite historians and I should like to quote the words of Professor Robert Rait who reminded us that the Claim of Right of the Scottish Convention of Estates was different from the declaration in England. He said:

> "But the Scottish declaration, as a whole, was not expressed in the general terms which satisfied the English Parliament; it was less philosophical and more indignant, and it specified a large number of detailed offences."

He went on to say:

> "In 'offering' the Crown to William and Mary, the Convention asserted, more explicitly than the English Parliament, the dependence of the royal authority upon the will of the legislative assembly, and, in making the offer, the rights defined in the list of grievances were claimed, demanded, and insisted upon."

It is right to remember that the revolution of 1688-89 established the rights of a democratic Parliament against the usurpation of power by the Crown, but that it did not, nor did it purport to, establish the rights of individuals against the abuse of power by the Executive. As we celebrate these events of 300 years ago, it is wholly right that we should use the occasion to deliberate on our present constitution and the abuses of power within it. In that constructive spirit, I support the motion.

6.19 pm

Mr. Ian Gow (Eastbourne): Last month, the Economic Secretary to the Treasury came to the House of Commons and told us that, following a decision of the European Court, the Government were proposing to introduce legislation to give effect to the judgment of that court. My hon. Friend was asked what would be the consequence if the House of Commons failed to agree to that change in taxation which he had announced the Government were to seek to secure. My hon. Friend told the House that, if we were to make that decision to reject the Government's proposal to give effect to the judgment of the European Court, that would lead to a serious constitutional situation.

Earlier this week, the President of the European Commission was reported as having said that, in a few years' time, 80 per cent. of the powers now enjoyed by the House would have been transferred to the European Commission or the European Parliament. It is against that

[Mr. Ian Gow]

background that I want to underline some of the words that appear in the Humble Address moved by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister. Those words refer to the

> "constitutional freedoms under the law which Your Majesty's Parliament and people have continued to enjoy for three hundred years."

It is appropriate, when we are debating this motion, that the House should reflect that that which occurred 300 years ago is in the nature of a trust conferred upon us. It is timely that we should reflect whether those freedoms granted to this Parliament and to our people can long be maintained, if we are to continue in the direction proposed by my hon. Friend the Economic Secretary and which was envisaged by the President of the European Commission.

The great movement—in a way, it was a great movement—towards what some people regard as European unity started 42 years ago with the famous speech at Zurich of Winston Churchill. He said in those telling sentences:

> "We must recreate the European family—or as much of it as we can—and provide it with a structure under which it can dwell in peace, in safety and in freedom."

The next sentence, which I believe has been widely misinterpreted, stated:

> "We must build a kind of United States of Europe."

We do not know what Churchill would have said about the prospect of a continuing erosion of the powers of this place over our people, but it is legitimate for those who, like myself, share his European ideal to say that it is possible to believe that the European nations must co-operate as closely as possible, one with another, where it is in their common interest to do so.

It is possible to believe, as I do, in the free movement of people, goods and capital in Europe without also believing that we need to go on surrendering the powers of this place, either to the Commission or to the European Parliament.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): It is not a Parliament. It is an assembly.

Mr. Gow: Following the Single European Act, it is so called.

It is appropriate on this occasion that the House should reflect on the liberties that were conferred specifically upon us as a result of the glorious revolution and say—I believe that we have my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister's sympathy in this—that we shall seek to preserve and uphold the rights of this House and the rights of our people to be taxed and their rules to be made only as we, the House of Commons, decide.

6.23 pm

Mr. Tony Benn (Chesterfield): This is the first time in my 38 years in the House that we have had a debate on parliamentary democracy, on what was meant to be a formal motion. But it cannot possibly be a formal motion because of the speech made in support of it by the Prime Minister and by other hon. Members who have participated.

One thing has become quite clear to me, and I have thought it for some time. If one blows on the embers of any old controversy, the flames come up quite quickly. I recommend the House not to pass the Humble Address that has been moved by the Prime Minister today. What happened in 1688 was not a glorious revolution. It was a plot by some people. By chance, they conspired in Chesterfield. The Earl of Devonshire got a dukedom for his pains and it would have cost him his head if it had gone the other way. That plot sought to replace a Catholic king with another king more acceptable to those who organised the plot. It was not bloodless. I do not know how the House can discuss the arrival of William of Orange without referring to the hideous repression for which he was responsible in Ireland. He was not alone in the long history of British repression in Ireland, but he was responsible for very much of it. Historians have said, and I have read, that the rights of the Irish Catholics under William III were fewer than those of the American negroes at the time of slavery.

Nor, indeed, was 1688 the establishment of our liberties. How many hon. Members have read the Bill of Rights? I shall quote just one passage from it. It referred to:

> "An Act for the more effectual preserving of the King's person and government by disabling papists from sitting in either House of Parliament."

That is in the Bill of Rights. Are we to say today that we welcome a Bill of Rights that says that papists could not sit in either House of Parliament? I know that that was changed later, but we should not attribute our rights to the Bill of Rights.

Let me turn to the oath required of magistrates and Ministers, which states:

> "I do declare that no foreign prince, person, prelate, state or potentate hath or ought to have any jurisdiction, power, superiority, pre-eminence or authority, ecclesiastical or spiritual within this realm. So help me god."

However, the Prime Minister allowed the airfields of Britain to be used by an American President to bomb Libya. The standing army of James II consisted of 30,000 troops, exactly the same number that President Reagan has at his command in our islands.

The hon. Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow) touched on another aspect of the matter—the fact that this Parliament is about to be destroyed by the European Act. It is all very well making a speech, saying that he thinks that the Prime Minister really sympathises with him. Whatever the sympathies of the Prime Minister, one has only to read what Mr. Delors said as quoted in *The Times* today. It states:

> "M. Jack Delors, the president of the European Commission, yesterday stunned Euro-MPs by declaring that the existing system of national parliaments would have to give way to the 'embryo' of a European government within seven years, and the Single European Market after 1992."

What capacity for self-deception does this House have when it celebrates such a motion? The Father of the House and I were elected in the same year, although he was elected a few months before me. The one difference between us was that I followed Edmund Burke in Bristol. Edmund Burke was the paid agent of the state of New York. That is why he supported the American colonies. He was the Member for Bristol for six years. He visited the constituency four times and he is now treated as one of the great architects of parliamentary democracy. He used to take his holidays in Bath, 10 miles away, but he did not bother to visit Bristol. For God's sake, the capacity for self-deception in this House never ceases to amaze me.

Then we are told that 1688 was the birth of our democratic rights. Only 2 per cent. of the population, all of them rich men, were represented in this House in 1688. No working people or middle-class people and no women were represented. That had nothing to do with democracy and that is no doubt why the National Front joined the Prime Minister in welcoming the glorious revolution. It has endorsed it and, when Exeter celebrates the landing of William III at Torbay, the National Front will be there because it knows what it was about.

This is all to justify a celebration in Westminster Hall on 20 July. The contractors have not waited. They are already building the structures in Westminster Hall to allow the Queen to reply to a Humble Address that we have not even passed. If we want to have a celebration, have a celebration, but do not ask the House of Commons to falsify history to justify a party in Westminster Hall. Do not ask us to do it. Do not ask us to confuse the electors about democracy.

Let me give a parallel. If this was the birth of democracy, will the Prime Minister tell us whether, if the Russians adopted the principles of 1688, she would welcome it? If Gorbachev said that he intended to be a hereditary monarch, would that be a great advance towards democracy? If the Supreme Soviet were to be hereditary and the prerogatives of the General Secretary of the Communist party were to be the same as the royal prerogative, would that be a great gain? Who is the House trying to deceive by passing the motion? There is also the American standing army here to which I have referred; and the power of the European Commission over our Parliament.

I do not mean to be controversial. The House knows that it is not my practice ever to be controversial on constitutional matters. But I would not be human if I did not express my deep resentment at having to listen to a speech on democracy from the butcher of the GLC—the person who tried to destroy the civil liberties of our people, the Prime Minister who has pursued Peter Wright around the world at enormous cost to prevent him telling the truth about the crimes committed by MI5 against an elected Government. I will not listen to a lecture from her on democracy.

If we were to celebrate parliamentary democracy, we could perhaps celebrate Wat Tyler's campaign against the poll tax. We could celebrate the Levellers. We could celebrate Tom Paine, whose books are still not allowed to be read by the prisoners in the Maze. We could celebrate Tolpuddle, or the Chartists, or the Suffragettes.

I must tell you, Mr. Speaker, that I am going to put a plaque in the House. I shall have it made myself and screwed on the door of the broom cupboard in the Crypt because in that broom cupboard on the night of the census in 1910 a suffragette hid herself so that when she filled in the census she could say that she lived in the House of Commons on the night of the census. Those are the people who gave us parliamentary democracy. Indeed, the Prime Minister would not be Prime Minister if the suffragette had not broken the law.

Mr. Gow: Before the right hon. Gentleman leaves that part of his speech, will he reflect on the fact that there are many Conservative Members, and vast numbers outside, who think that for him to lecture this place about freedom and liberty in the light of his conduct during the miners' strike is a disgrace?

Mr. Benn: All that the hon. Gentleman has done is to show that this is not an all-party motion; it is an occasion to argue about the meaning of democracy. The day that the Labour party and the Tory party agree about democracy, I shall apply for the Chiltern Hundreds, so I hope that we never end that sort of argument. Of course, this is about controversy. But if we have an opportunity 300 years later to discuss what democracy is about, let us discuss it properly.

My amendment is of inordinate length, Mr. Speaker, but you allowed me to table it. I think that that must have been on the clear understanding that I did not move it, but that is another matter. I have tabled in my amendment, first, that Crown prerogatives should be replaced by statute law. There is no justification whatever for powers to be exercised in this country that have not been endorsed by Parliament. Let me list the powers of the Sovereign today, most of them exercised by the Prime Minister—to make Orders in Council, to declare war, to make peace, to recognise foreign Governments, to sign or ratify treaties, to grant pardons, to grant charters, to confer honours, to make appointments, to establish commissions, to grant commissions, and to issue orders. Those are prerogative powers and sitting on the Government Front Bench is the person who exercises them.

I asked the Library to tell me a bit about the Prime Minister. Since she has held office, she has made 170 peers —170 of them sitting in the other place, not by virtue of democratic right but because of patronage. The Prime Minister's predecessors all did the same. She has made four hereditary peers, 11 Lords of Appeal, and 56 bishops. Those appointments were made under prerogative powers. They were never discussed in Cabinet or in Parliament. How long shall we pretend that a system of law that rests on feudal prerogatives, even if exercised by the monarch sitting on the Government Front Bench, has anything to do with democracy?

Then we come to the House of Lords itself, a subject in which I have some interest. But when I saw those old peers who were given a map of London, their rail fare and £100 to support the poll tax, I must confess that I understood why the House of Lords is so beloved by the Conservative party. The poll tax is the best thing that has ever happened to the stately homes of England.

Then we come to the third point in my amendment, that people be allowed to know and understand the decisions taken in their name by the Government. We are now told that anyone who ever serves the public must swear confidentiality for life—except Bernard Ingham, who leaks state secrets at 11 o'clock every morning. That includes members of the Cabinet who publish their memoirs. We are Crown servants too. This is an attempt to suppress information about what happens in Whitehall and the Government so that the public do not know, and if they do not know, they cannot exercise their vote in order to change the society in which they live.

Then we come to the powers of the European Commission, the right to equality of treatment and the right to be granted free speech in assembly and free trade unions, the right to have elected local and national authorities to meet the needs of the community and that the armed forces of foreign powers should be subject to the annual Army Act. What is wrong with the House of Commons deciding every year whether it wishes American troops to remain here? Every year we go through the farce —it is a farce—of re-endorsing the disciplinary code for our Army. Why cannot we say about the American army

[Mr. Benn]

what we can say about the British Army—whether we want it to continue in order to ensure that it does not threaten our liberty?

Then we have the Church of England. We are part of a Parliament that believes in equal rights for women, but the Synod is still discussing whether women priests are to be permitted. The House of Commons, which does not have to be Chrisitian, let alone Anglican, and a Prime Minister, who does not have to be Christian, let alone Anglican, have the power to endorse or reject the Synod's decisions, appoint bishops, and so forth.

Then we come to the oath. I have been looking at the oaths and my next Bill will seek to amend the Promissory Oaths Act 1868. When one looks at the oaths of a Privy Councillor, a Member of Parliament and the Sovereign at the coronation, they throw an interesting light on the obligations by which we are bound. The reality is that nobody takes an oath to uphold democracy in Britain. The Queen takes an oath to govern the country and uphold the rights of the bishops. We take an oath to the Queen. Nobody in the House takes an oath to uphold democracy in Britain, and one does not need to have watched "A very British coup" to realise that that might have some relevance at some future date.

We must now terminate the jurisdiction of Britain in Ireland. I asked the Ministry of Defence to give me the figures. The war in Ireland costs £722 million a year—£13 million a week on repressing Ireland, and that must stop.

Finally, I come to the last point in my amendment about common land belonging to the people of Britain. It took me some time to realise that the privatisation of British Telecom was not an intention of the Prime Minister. The Enclosure Acts were medieval privatisation. They took the common land and gave it to the great landowners who have benefited greatly by it.

I finish with the words of my amendment:

> "and humbly pray that proposals that would give effect to these demands be brought forward for an early decision by the House of Commons, in line with the manifest need for a genuine restructuring"—

a rough translation of a word that is becoming familiar—

> "of the institutions of the state to replace its present feudal nature and introduce a new sense of openness"—

another rough translation—

> "which is necessary if democracy is to be entrenched in the hearts and minds of the people, and to meet their needs and satisfy their aspirations, which are the only ultimate safeguards of its maintenance and development in this, or any other, country."

I beg hon. Members not to make the House of Commons look a fool by endorsing this Humble Address, and to vote against it, or, if they cannot do that, to abstain, so that at least we do not have to tell children that democracy had nothing to do with the franchise; it was all because William of Orange had to give an assurance to justify the fact that he landed an army in Torbay and took over, in order to repress the Catholics and the Irish. I recommend that course to the House.

6.40 pm

Mr. Julian Amery (Brighton, Pavilion): When I came to the House this afternoon, it was not my intention to intervene in this debate, which I thought was likely to be a formality. However, the speech of the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) has moved me to seek to catch your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The right hon. Gentleman is himself the finest product of the glorious revolution. His speech was possible only because of the political evolution that we have enjoyed since those days. Had he made it in some other assembly, and had we not had the glorious revolution, his head might well have rolled.

Mr. Benn: It may yet.

Mr. Amery: The right hon. Gentleman says, "It may yet," but I do not wish to anticipate the Labour party conference.

The difficulty is one of definition. The right hon. Gentleman has told the House what he considers to be undemocratic about the last three centuries and about today, but he has not given a clear definition of what is democracy. When I first looked out of my political cradle and submitted my draft speeches, as a candidate in 1945, to the scrutiny of my father's eagle eye, he always crossed out the word "democracy" and substituted "constitutional government".

Mr. Benn: That explains a lot.

Mr. Amery: I believe that my father was profoundly right and that the freedoms we enjoy and the progress that has been made results from having a constitutional Government. We learnt three centuries ago what the Soviets are learning now—that there is no progress without freedom. However, freedom represents a threat to authority and a balance must be struck. I believe that we can claim, over those three centuries, to have struck that balance fairly well.

I am not sure what the right hon. Gentleman means by the word "freedom". The essence of the motion is our faith in parliamentary democracy—not direct democracy or trying to discover from day to day, through public opinion polls or by any similar method, what people think at any given time, on any given issue. The old phrase has it that a politician with his ear to the ground must inevitably have his bottom in the air, and he must not be surprised if it gets kicked. The essence of our system is that we deliberate in this House on what we think is right and vote according to our conscience. That was the doctrine of Burke, but I believe it is also the philosophy of the right hon. Member for Chesterfield on issues such as capital punishment, where public opinion would almost certainly be against that of the House. We need rather more definition before opposing the motion, which I wholeheartedly support.

I turn to the speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow), who warned us of the dangers of a European federal government. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has spoken on that issue in relation to a central bank and a monetary union. I confess to being surprised at the way in which we so easily accept that the choice is only between a federation and national sovereignty. M. Delors and others have spoken about a monetary union; but we are the experts on that subject. Nobody ever ran a monetary union without gold, until we started doing so in 1931, when we operated the sterling area with enormous success until the 1960s.

It was a monetary union of sovereign states using central banks. In its early days, before exchange control was imposed with the onset of war, it was a monetary union of sovereign countries, sometimes having varying parities. Its members merely banked their reserves with the Bank of England, without losing control of them. That was an enormous success, and all those in the sterling area came out of the pre-war recession long before the rest of the world. When the gold standard was stopped, everybody thought that the heavens would fall in, but, because of sterling, they did not.

That system was a miraculous success, and it continued through the war with the pooling of the gold and dollar reserves—and the situation which was even more difficult financially after the end of the war. We can teach others more about monetary union than they can teach us. Instead of saying no to the different proposals, we should say, "You ought to listen to us, because we know much more than the German or French banks and can teach them lessons."

To take it further, up until the mid-1950s, the Commonwealth was a remarkably successful economic, political and military association of sovereign nations working together on a basis of joint consultation, yet with nothing like the apparatus that Europe already has. In those days, there was no Commonwealth secretariat, and nothing like the European Commission and the regular European meetings which there are now. We can set the pace in the way in which a monetary union should develop. It may be that the old Commonwealth system—and I do not mean the hotchpotch we have today—could also provide a pattern more suitable to mature and historical nations than a federation of the kind now being proposed.

It is in that spirit that I say that our country, as the author of so many contributions to democracy—sorry, constitutional government—in the past, should set the pattern again in the future, in both the monetary and political fields.

6.46 pm

Mr. Eric S. Heffer (Liverpool, Walton): I am not surprised that the father of the right hon. Member for Brighton, Pavilion (Mr. Amery) crossed out from his speeches the word "democracy" and substituted "constitutional government". The fight for democracy had to be wrung out of the class of which the right hon. Gentleman's party has been representative since the days of the 1640 revolution; democratic rights have not been handed to the people of this country.

I too wish to quote Christopher Hill, because my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition referred to him. In his book on "The English Revolution 1640", Christopher Hill quotes the Leveller Rainborowe in 1647, and then makes a point that is vital in understanding and debating our democratic rights and freedom. He wrote:

> "It is struggle that wins reforms, just as it is struggle that will retain the liberties which our ancestors won for us. And if the people find the legal system 'not suitable to freedom as it is', then it can be changed by united action. That is the lesson of the seventeenth century for to-day. It was of us that Winstanley was thinking when he wrote at the head of one of his most impassioned pamphlets:
>
> When these clay bodies are in grave, and children stand in place,
> 'This shews we stood for truth and peace, and freedom in our days'.".

I hope that the House will take note of that for which our forefathers fought.

I return to the "glorious revolution". It was neither glorious nor a revolution. It was not a revolution because the real revolution had already taken place when, the day after the king's head was cut off in 1649, the House of Lords was abolished. It was restored, incidentally, in 1660, when James came back to the throne—[HON. MEMBERS: "Charles."] I am sorry, Charles II. I am not well up on kings. To be honest, I do not think much of them.

When the monarchy was restored, the House of Lords was brought back. That is the important thing to remember: the real revolution was that revolution. But, in the process, those who were fighting for real democracy were suppressed by the Cromwellians, who put down the Levellers and others in the part of the world where I was born. The people of property asserted their power. That is what the English revolution was about. A group who had property—the landed aristocracy—were superseded by a new class that had arisen, with new kinds of property.

But they made a mistake. When the monarchy was restored, they discovered that this guy unfortunately still had ideas of the past. That was not entirely acceptable to them, because he was going to restore to some extent the right of the kings over those of the property owners who were the real rulers. So William and Mary were brought in and used. *[Interruption.]* Hon. Members may laugh, but there are other interpretations. For instance, we heard about the Whigs. Although they claimed that they supported William and Mary, the real people who brought them in and supported them were the high Tories of the day. Some hon. Members would do well to read a little about the history of the period and to think about where we are today.

There are some mythologies about 1688. If we examine the Declaration of Rights of 1689, we see that the Catholics were put in their place, both here and in Ireland. My right hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) made that clear in what he read out to us. But one of the myths is that William, the great Protestant leader, got into such a position on his own.

I do not know whether hon. Members have read the very interesting "A Concise History of Ireland" by Maire and Conor Cruise O'Brien. I hope that Conservative Members will not suggest that Conor Cruise O'Brien is not a capable historian and a man of great ability—he does not necessarily endorse everything that I believe in. In that book, he says:

> "This internal simplification had been effected by an external complication: the Pope was not, this time, on the Catholic side as far as the civil war in James's dominions was concerned. The quarrel between the Holy See and the French monarchy, over the question of the liberties of the Gallican Church, rendered impossible any Vatican support for Louis's protégé, James. In Ireland, the contending parties felt themselves to be fighting 'for' and 'against' the Pope, but the Pope was not in reality where he was expected to be. The fact remains an embarrassment to those on both sides who cherish simple historical pieties. In our time, the Parliament of Northern Ireland"—

this was written when Stormont was still in existence—

> "which venerates the memory of the victory of Protestant William over Papist James, once acquired and displayed a portrait of their deliverer. The portrait was hurriedly withdrawn when one of the figures shown as hailing—and perhaps even blessing—the Protestant hero was identified as Pope Alexander VIII. Louis, at war with the Emperor and the Dutch as well as with England, could spree little for war in Ireland."

The mythology is that it was just a question of the suppression of the Catholics. The truth is that it was power politics and class politics. It has been class politics ever since. It is most unfortunate that the conflict tends to be viewed as Catholics versus Protestants, when in reality the Catholic and Protestant workers of Northern Ireland and in Ireland as a whole—and in this country—have more in

[Mr. Eric S. Heffer]

common with each other with which to fight the class that the Conservative party represents. I am informed that the day that Rome learnt of the battle of the Boyne, the Pope had all the bells rung and a special mass was celebrated in St. Peter's.

Another part of the mythology is that democracy came through the Tory party. The Tory party is in favour of democracy only for as long as it can use it for its own people and its own interests. The day that democracy is used properly and effectively against them, the Tories will be no different from many other people in the world in overturning democracy and using other methods to suppress the real democrats.

I would like to say much more, but let me finish by talking about the place at the other end of the Corridor. I am sorry that the amendment was not selected. It is a modern Declaration of Rights, and one that is vital. At this juncture, we have a Government who are upsetting, undermining and slowly but surely destroying all the real freedoms that have been achieved by the British people over the years.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett (Pembroke): The people voted for us.

Mr. Heffer: The hon. Gentleman's great-grandfather was one of those tough men who fought for the freedoms of the working man. He would be ashamed of the hon. Gentleman. The real rights that we have in this country have come because of the struggle of the mass of ordinary people over the centuries. Such rights have never been achieved by people looking down from on high and handing them to us on a plate; we have had to fight for everything that we have. Our trade union movement is now being tied up with worse anti-union legislation than in any other European country. It is not much different from what is happening in Jaruzelski's Poland—indeed, it is perhaps slightly worse.

I know that some people were relying on the other place to stop the abolition of the GLC. They thought that if a number of amendments were passed it would be a setback. But the other place is an instrument used by the Conservative party against the interests of the British people. That anti-democratic organisation has existed for too long; the wisest thing that the Cromwellian Parliament did was abolish it. It is time that we returned to the real revolutionary attitudes and got rid of it as quickly as possible, rather than allowing it to be used againt real democracy and the people of this country.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. I remind the House that we have a good deal of business to get through.

6.59 pm

Mr. James Kilfedder (North Down): The hon. Member for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Heffer) has referred in disparaging terms to the Ulster Unionists and to the Stormont Parliament which existed for many years, and identified the class system with the Unionist people of Northern Ireland. The people of Northern Ireland, apart from a few, know nothing at all about the class structure. They find it ridiculous. I was born in a little whitewashed thatched cottage on a tiny farm, and my family know more of hardship than does any other hon. Member in the House. The time has come for people in this country to do away with talk about class structure and get people working together.

The hon. Member for Walton spoke about the Pope as if the Unionist people of Northern Ireland were trying to hide the fact that the Pope was instrumental in getting William III to fight against James II. When I was Speaker of the Northern Ireland Assembly, I brought into my office at Stormont the very portrait to which the hon. Gentleman has referred, the portrait believed to be of the then Pope blessing King William on his way to the Battle of the Boyne. It is not a portrait of King William. Certainly it is a figure of the Pope. I was proud to show that painting to everyone who came to Stormont, including some hon. Members of the House. I did not try to hide it. Irrespective of whether we disagree about incidents that happened over the decades and the centuries, we should look upon history as something on which we can build for the future.

The right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn), who has left the Chamber, attacked Edmund Burke. I am sorry that he made that vicious attack.

Mr. Norman Buchan (Paisley, South): Before the hon. Gentleman leaves the subject of the precious painting in his office in Stormont, is it not the case that the popular belief in Northern Ireland, as expressed through their songs, is exactly the opposite? The presence of the Pope in violent language, and the support of the Pope at the battle of the Boyne, when they were

> "steeped to the knees in Fenian blood, knee-deep in slaughter",

was rejoicing at the defeat of the Pope. That is the popular image that was presented, no matter what the portrait shows.

Mr. Kilfedder: There is no doubt that at a time of controversy when people feel at risk, and when their existence is at peril, they adopt black and white attitudes to history.

The Ulster people were a greater thorn in the flesh of the British Government over the centuries than what would now be termed the nationalist people of Ireland. The Ulster people were always complaining, fighting and arguing. At one time, because of the religious persecution, whole congregations of Presbyterians moved to America and helped to form the United States of America.

Many leading Roman Catholic clergy supported Ireland as part of the British Isles. We must never forget the distinguished Unionists who represented in the House constituencies in what is now the Irish Republic, and who were Roman Catholics.

The right hon. Member for Chesterfield launched a vicious attack on Edmund Burke. Every time the right hon. Gentleman enters the House by the main entrance at St. Stephen's, he passes Edmund Burke on one side and Henry Grattan on the other. Everyone who enters this Parliament through the main entrance must pass those two distinguished Irishmen. I defend Edmund Burke, as I am the vice-president of the Dublin College historial society which was founded by Edmund Burke. Professor Laski went to Dublin to deliver the bicentenial address in praise of Edmund Burke. It was wrong for the right hon. Gentleman to launch a vicious attack upon that distinguished Irishman of the past.

Following the Prime Minister's eloquent speech in support of this motion, she and the Prime Minister of the Irish Republic should meet next year on the site of the battle of the Boyne. Perhaps that would demonstrate the closeness between the two countries.

I resent the attitude of some hon. Members. The right hon. Member for Chesterfield criticised the cost of maintaining the Army in Northern Ireland. The basic right to life is worth preserving, no matter what the cost. During the past six months three IRA atrocities have received national and international attention. A number of innocent people were slaughtered on Remembrance Day at Enniskillen, and it was only by a miracle that hundreds were not killed. More recently, there was the murder by the IRA of three soldiers at Lisburn. They were taking part in a charity marathon. It was only by a miracle that hundreds of innocent men, women and children were not slaughtered by that IRA bomb, as it was a family reunion and many families were out and about in Lisburn that night. Last week there was the IRA bomb attack on the school bus. I believe that that little girl is still fighting for her life. It is only by a miracle that all those children were not murdered by that IRA bomb.

I do not think that one can put a price on protecting human life. I do not think that the right hon. Gentleman did his cause any good by saying that it was too costly to maintain the Army in Northern Ireland.

In conclusion, although William III by his success in the battle of the Boyne ensured that we have parliamentary democracy today, there is not much democracy in Northern Ireland. As a result of the Anglo-Eire Agreement, which I believe was sponsored by Sir Robert Armstrong, the then Secretary to the Cabinet, the people of Northern Ireland are now in a worse position than they were before the agreement was signed. More people have died in Northern Ireland since that agreement was signed than in the same period before. We in Northern Ireland feel that we are being ruled as if we were some far off colony in the last century and there is great basis for that feeling. In addition, a foreign Government now have a say in the government of Northern Ireland.

I hope that we can more forward with good will. Perhaps when people recollect the battles of the past and the need for people to come together, the people of Northern Ireland will come together and make progress. Perhaps there will be a devolved Parliament at Stormont which will be fully representative of all the constitutional parties in Northern Ireland.

7.8 pm

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): I am pleased that the hon. Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow), who is not in his place—I am in no way criticising him for that—took the view, which I strongly share, that much of our sovereignty in the House is constantly undermined and eroded as a result of the treaty of Rome. We are now debating the event of 1688, but it may well be that in a few years time, certainly before the end of this century, we will end up having less economic power in this Parliament than do many of the individual states within the United States. That should cause all of us deep concern.

Unlike my right hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn), I do not want to go over the background to the events of 1688. However, it is interesting to note that few hon. Members would have been allowed to be in the Parliament of that period, either because they did not have sufficient property or wealth, or because of their religion or race. Therefore, it is nonsense to believe that 1688 created a democracy which we should be celebrating.

I tabled my amendment—I realise that it was not selected—because while the Prime Minister's motion refers to the

"constitutional freedoms under the law",

one or two aspects cause anxiety. The Prime Minister takes the complacent view that all our rights and freedoms are perfectly intact and there is no need to worry, but so long as the security services are not accountable to Parliament, the officials employed in them will remain largely a law unto themselves.

Unlike Conservative Members, I believe that Cathy Massiter performed a useful public service in telling us of the abuses that occurred when she was employed by MI5. We learned from her that, before my hon. Friend the Member for Peckham (Ms. Harman) was a Member of Parliament, she was the subject of an investigation by the security authorities—the Government have not denied it —because she was the full-time legal officer for the National Council for Civil Liberties. Cathy Massiter, who should understand these matters because she was employed by MI5, said that anyone employed by the NCCL, anyone on its executive and any local activist was the subject of an inquiry and that a file was kept on him or her by MI5. Much the same occurred with the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, yet Ministers have repeatedly said that campaigning for nuclear disarmament is perfectly legitimate.

It may be said that this is an obsession of the Left, that no one should take these allegations seriously and that there is no foundation for these claims. Yet the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath), who was in charge of the security services from 1970 to the beginning of 1974 so should know about them, said in his speech on the Protection of Official Information Bill:

> "However, I also met people in the security services who talked the most ridiculous nonsense and whose whole philosophy was ridiculous nonsense. If some of them were on a tube and saw someone reading the *Daily Mirror*, they would say, 'Get after him, that is dangerous. We must find out where he bought it.'"—[*Official Report*, 15 January 1988; Vol. 125, c. 612.]

A Prime Minister should have a good insight.

The Minister for Trade (Mr. Alan Clark): The Prime Minister was irresponsible.

Mr. Winnick: I would have thought that the people who were irresponsible were those who allowed inquiries into members of CND and the NCCL. It is irresponsible to have in our parliamentary democracy—I believe that we do live in a parliamentary democracy—the type of abuses which Cathy Massiter exposed. No Conservative Member has raised the matter because Conservative Members are not worried about it. We say that on the Labour Benches we treasure civil liberties far more than Conservative Members and it is illustrated by our concern about these matters.

There are also the allegations made by Wright. For all I know, as I have said previously, he could be a liar. He could have made up the allegations merely to sell his book. Incidentally, he has not done too badly. He has become a

[Mr. Winnick]

millionaire mainly because of the Government's stupid action in trying to ban a book which everyone in this country can read whenever they choose.

Wright alleged that he and other officers in the security services were involved in trying to destabilise a Labour Government. Those allegations should be the subject of a judicial inquiry. I may be wrong, but I do not know of one Conservative Member who has said that those serious allegations should be investigated. How do we know, for example, whether some of those involved in that conspiracy who worked with Wright do not remain in the security services? Should we not be worried? Is it not part of our constitutional freedom under the law to know that? That is a reason why I am not happy with the motion.

My hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Heffer) touched on a further reason. It is a misreading of our history to believe that the freedoms we enjoy and the civil liberties which I certainly appreciate were established in 1688. It is interesting to note that in the present debates in the Soviet Union it has been suggested that the Soviet Union should learn from the experiences of the British Parliament. Clearly, it must be to our advantage, despite our weaknesses and limitations, that important figures in the Soviet Union want a more open society and those who seek it look on us as some sort of guide if not a model. This democracy is one of the best, but I am not complacent about it. If I were, I would not be making this speech. To live in a democracy is a million times better than to live under any form of dictatorship, whether in the Soviet Union, Poland, Romania, Chile or Guatemala. Another difference between Conservative Members and us is that we are not selective; we are opposed to all forms of dictatorship and are in favour of parliamentary democracy.

The important point is that so much of our freedom and democracy was not given by Parliament, but had to be campaigned for outside. When I look at the statues and paintings in the Palace of Westminster I see hardly a reference to those who made it possible for us to be in Parliament. The Prime Minister did not mention the Tolpuddle martyrs. If our constitutional freedoms were established in 1688, why were those men persecuted for belonging to and being active in a trade union, and then deported to Australia? Why is there no memorial to or painting of them here?

What about all the campaigning last century for the right to vote? It is almost impossible to believe that at the beginning of this century and for 18 years afterwards half the population were denied the right to vote in general elections and the right to stand for Parliament, for no other reason than that they happened to be women. One would have expected the Prime Minister to refer to that, but not at all. Before 1918, no women were allowed in Parliament and even after that there were some qualifications. Until 1918 incidentally there were qualifications on the right of men to vote. Those qualifications were being much reduced but did not disappear until 1918, and then not for women.

Those matters are extremely important and relevant. For the motion to ignore all the struggles that took place to establish parliamentary democracy is like Soviet history, which until recently did not mention those murdered by Stalin and his associates during the years of terror and the purges. I would have been much happier if the motion had dealt with these matters, recognised the fights and campaigns to make us a democratic country, and recognised some of the abuses which undoubtedly continue, mainly in the security services, which should be subject to parliamentary control and accountability.

I hope that I have not been too critical, but I thought it only right and proper to state these reservations about the motion.

7.19 pm

Mr. Gerald Howarth (Cannock and Burntwood): I shall speak briefly in support of the motion. This is a very historic occasion. I am sorry that the hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) was somewhat dismissive of the glorious revolution. I agree that certain refinements have been made since that revolution, but he was ungenerous not to acknowledge that it was a great milestone in our constitutional history.

It is often said that we have no written constitution. The events whose tercentenary we are celebrating give the lie to that. The Bill of Rights is very much a written document. It is not a quaint museum piece, with no relevance to modern times—it is unlike the Labour party in that respect. It is very relevant to our present-day concerns.

I remind the House that when William and Mary were offered the throne, it was essentially a contract between Parliament and the new sovereigns. The declaration of rights set out the conditions under which, effectively, they were offered the throne. On 13 February 1689 it was declared:

> "the execution of laws by regal authority without consent of Parliament is illegal; . . . That levying money for . . . the Crown . . . without grant of Parliament . . . is illegal; That the raising or keeping a standing army within the kingdom in time of peace, unless it be with the consent of Parliament, is against the law; . . . That election of Members of Parliament ought to be free; That the freedom of speech and debates . . . in Parliament ought not to be impeached or questioned in any court . . .; That excessive bail ought not to be required, nor excessive fines imposed, nor cruel and unusual punishments inflicted; . . . And that for redress of all grievances and for the amending, strengthening and preserving of the laws, Parliaments ought to be held frequently."

Those words are as relevant today as they were in 1689.

We are about to move on to other business—voting money for the Defence Estimates. It is an inheritance of 1689 that no standing army may be kept in this country without the full authority of the House. That is why such matters are debated in the House annually. If the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) thinks that the stationing of American troops in Britain flies in the face of the rights and liberties of the people, which were guaranteed in 1689, it is open to him to submit a motion to the House and to seek its endorsement. The sad fact for him is that the House would not accept such a motion, nor would the people of Britain. However, he is free to submit such a motion.

Mr. Benn: The merits of having such an army here are not the significant factor. What is significant is that the House was never told about that army; the prerogative was used, as on several other occasions. It cannot be argued that Parliament endorsed the army. The army came here and if we were to vote against it it might be asked to leave—whether it would leave is another matter. Parliament was never told. The prerogative overrides parliamentary control of central matters.

Mr. Howarth: I accept that, but it is open to the right hon. Gentleman to submit a motion to the House because the House is sovereign in these matters and the House will decide.

Freedom of speech and debate in the House is guaranteed by the Bill of Rights, which states that they

"ought not to be impeached or questioned in any court".

If it were not for the declaration of rights of 1689, the right hon. Member for Chesterfield and the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) would be in grave difficulty with the courts over libel. Freedom of speech is enjoyed in the House today as a direct result of 1689.

The events that we celebrate today are of great constitutional importance because the 1688 revolution established our present constitutional tripod of sovereign, Parliament and people. It has been refined by universal suffrage and tested, and it may be tested again. In 1689, the popular belief was that our country could have been subverted by a foreign power—in this case, the papacy —and could have been undermined. I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow) that we may face a constitutional threat to the House, posed by the European Community, which must ultimately be for the people of Britain to decide. Having said that, we have every reason to be grateful for the 1688-89 revolution and I warmly endorse the motion.

7.24 pm

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): It is entirely right that we should be debating this motion, and it is unfortunate that the amendment of my right hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) has not been selected for debate.

We have chosen to celebrate the tercentenary of the so-called glorious revolution of 1688 rather than the triumph of the armies of Parliament over the armies of the King during the civil war—or any of the other extremely important events in the history of democracy in this country—because that revolution was all about the corruption of the state by the power of the landowners and the power of wealth. It was about the manoeuvrings of Lord Shaftesbury to prepare the ground to bring over William and Mary to take over the crown. William and Mary would for ever guarantee the powers of the landowning classes as well as bringing with them the Protestant religion and the discrimination against Catholics that followed. There is no historical basis for the selection of William and Mary except that it suited the landowning classes of the time to have a Protestant King and Queen and to guarantee their own power as against that of the people defeated during the civil war as a result of the corruption of Cromwell.

There is an important place in my constituency. In 1648 there was a historic—in some ways seminal—meeting between Cromwell and the leader of the Levellers, John Lilburne, who warned Cromwell that unless he was prepared to do a deal with the Levellers and accept the fundamental democracy of Parliament he would become a despot and pave the way for the return of the monarchy, which he did in 1660. That meeting is an event worth celebrating, and it took place in the Nag's Head on the Holloway road in my constituency.

We should recognise, too, that the so-called glorious revolution of 1688 paved the way for the processes of imperialism and colonialism. Implicit in the wording of the Bill of Rights is the domination of colonies throughout the world and all the disgusting and degrading events that followed from that, such as slavery and the domination of subject peoples. All of them stem from the Bill of Rights and the glorious revolution of 1688, which once more imposed the monarchy on this country.

Many hon. Members have referred to what followed from the glorious revolution. I have a copy of the Bill of Rights, printed in a book entitled "A Documentary History of England", which was given to me by my mother and father when I was 15. They said, "One day, it will come in handy", and it has. One section of the Bill of Rights has been used to dominate the people of Ireland, and that domination continues. The Bill of Rights says:

"all and every person and persons that is, are or shall be reconciled to or shall hold communion with the see or Church of Rome, or shall profess the popish religion, or shall marry a papist, shall be excluded and be for ever incapable to inherit, possess or enjoy the crown and government of this realm and Ireland and the dominions thereunto belonging or any part of the same, or to have, use or exercise any regal power, authority or jurisdiction within the same; and in all and every such case or cases the people of these realms shall be and are hereby absolved of their allegiance;"

That specifically says that the Protestant religion is to take hold and that Catholics are to be discriminated against. We should commemorate the retribution meted out to the Catholic people of Ireland as a result of William and Mary coming to the throne by remembering that the only way we can ever bring peace and freedom to all the people of Ireland is by the reunification of Ireland and removal of British troops from it.

My right hon. Friend the Member of Chesterfield rightly drew attention to the section of the Bill of Rights that refers to the imposition of a standing army. Clause 6 of the preamble says that

"raising and keeping a standing army within this kingdom in time of peace without consent of Parliament"

is against the law.

As my right hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield pointed out, there are 30,000 American troops and 140 bases here, while we have no control over what happens there. It is nothing more than an insult to celebrate the glorious revolution when we have a Government who have centralised more powers than almost any other Government since 1688, who are busy pushing through the poll tax—the most unfair, unjust tax imaginable—and who allow poverty to grow at unparalleled rates and people to sleep on the streets. At the same time this Parliament passes taxation laws that are a gift to the wealthiest.

We have nothing to celebrate. The concluding sentence of the Address states:

"established those constitutional freedoms under the law which Your Majesty's Parliament and people have continued to enjoy for three hundred years."

Many people have not enjoyed those freedoms. They have been won by struggle and are all under threat while the Government and their ilk—their landowners, wealthy people and banking system—continue to repress people and take away the freedoms to organise in trade unions, to demonstrate on the streets and to organise politically against the Government. We should demand guarantees of freedom for the people, not celebrate a glorious revolution which brought a land-owning class to power and kept it there, for fear of the success of the civil war and the revolution that went with it in 1840.

7.31 pm

Mr. Brian Sedgemore (Hackney, South and Shoreditch): As one who was born in Devon and has walked on the beaches and landing grounds where it all began, I feel the urge to speak, even if no one has the desire to listen.

I was puzzled that the Prime Minister—a Tory with the instincts of an 18th century Liberal—should invite the House to celebrate a 17th century Whig theory of history. It is in the spirit of celebration, good will, good humour and grace which always characterise everything that I say that I am prepared to put that down to the fact that she was badly briefed rather than ignorant of history. I see that a historian is here—the Minister of Trade—but I do not think that he was here for the speech by the Prime Minister, which is sad, or he would have been able to put the right hon. Lady right.

The Prime Minister wishes to celebrate the glorious revolution because it saw the British establishment at its best—suave, cunning and deceitful. The Prime Minister invites us to celebrate the rule of law and parliamentary democracy which she claims arose from that revolution. Yes, we celebrate the rule of law, but surely we should be a little careful about celebrating a rule of law that saw Ireland drenched in the blood of virgins and Catholic priests. Surely we should be a little careful about celebrating a rule of law when E.P. Thompson in his book "Whigs and Hunters; The Origin of the Black Act", which dealt with the 18th century, said that the laws of England have always been bent and manipulated in the interests of the ruling class. Surely we should be a little chary of celebrating a rule of law which, after 1688, was largely administered by the same people who administered it just before 1688.

A painting in the corridors of this building shows the infinite mercy of the English legal system. It shows that Alice Lisle, who harboured a fugitive at the battle of Sedgemoor on 7 July 1685, was sentenced to be burnt at the stake. The English legal system, backed by the rule of law and administered by the same people after 1688 as before, in its infinite mercy commuted that sentence so that she was hanged!

Surely we should be slightly worried about the development of parliamentary democracy. I do not want to go into constitutional history or a modern theory or analysis of parliamentary democracy, but two things only can be said with certainty about parliamentary democracy. First, power does not reside in Parliament. Secondly, there is nothing that is democratic about the exercise of that power. Who said that? It was said not by Trevelyan, as one may think, not by Macaulay or by Hill, but by Sedgemore in the first paragraph of his book "The Secret Constitution". I suggest that the House should adjourn and read that book, rather than go into the Lobby and support the motion.

7.34 pm

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): The right hon. Member for Brighton, Pavilion (Mr. Amery) asked, "What is democracy?" He felt that the debate required a definition of it, but did not offer one and I will not either, because there are flaws in seeking to offer definitions behind which one may hide. When asked to define trade unions, George Woodcock refused and said that it was like looking at an elephant—a person might not know how to define an elephant but he knew it when he saw it, and a person knew a trade union when he saw it. Likewise, democracy depends perhaps less on definition and more on recognition. There may be some characteristics that we would expect a democracy to have.

The first characteristic of a democracy is a voting system based on a universal franchise. Our universal franchise was fought for long after 1688 and was pushed considerably from the bottom. My right hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) is an advocate of the principles of Chartism in the 19th century. Most of its principles were finally adopted, apart from the provision of annually elected Parliaments. I do not know whether I go that far, but I believe that we should seek annual elections in local government.

An election requires choice, and we see the Soviet Union as being inadequate in that respect. Schumpter defined an election in "Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy" as being a competitive struggle for the people's vote. Voting is not entirely democratic. Other provisions must be there in connection with it. It requires not only that the vote is freely and fully exercised but that society has within it a wide range of civil liberties so that the majority do not decide to take action willy-nilly and so that the electoral system does not throw up Governments based upon 42 per cent. of the electorate who willy-nilly push through items without considering individuals' rights.

My hon. Friends the Members for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) and for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) have stressed civil liberties. We need great freedoms in terms of expressing views, demonstrating, organising and ensuring that central Government do not have detailed control over what is done. Information for one purpose—for example, housing benefits—should not be used against people by the state—either the local state or the national state.

Another characteristic of a democracy is that there are some limits to the amount of centralisation. In 1688, the problems of totalitarianism did not exist. They were largely the creatures of the development of the 20th century. Governments can control centrally and operate controls over the media, as we have seen in Nazi Germany and Stalinist Russia. Social and economic developments in this country should worry us and we should make sure that there is a pull against them and that there is decentralisation, local government and local democracy.

Democracy should also have concern about fairness and public service. In 1867, the franchise was first extended to elements of the working class—but not to all—and shortly after an Education Act was introduced by Foster, saying that we must "educate our masters now". Because of the fight for the extension of the franchise, we have had public education, public services and provisions and the development of the welfare state. That has all happened because ordinary people have been able to vote for greater distribution of wealth. Left to itself, the free market brings hardship and exploitation. If we do not have a democratic system to distribute wealth, we are in trouble.

We can now compare the 1688 glorious revolution with the 1979 revolution, which started gradually but which has been pressed through at an ever increasing rate. It may become known as the inglorious revolution.

I have already mentioned the four characteristics of democracy, and I would like to say something about our supposed heritage from 1688 which working people have fought for and established. With the poll tax comes a cut in the franchise. We know that there is a hidden agenda for the poll tax. The results are emerging in Scotland, Manchester and Kensington, where it is clear that the number of electors is falling. It is falling in areas where people oppose the poll tax. It is a means of perpetuating, without devices such as the enabling acts used in Nazi Germany, the Conservative Government's life. That is a very serious matter because it goes against traditions that go back not so much to 1688 as to the 19th and 20th centuries and the democracy that the working class fought for. We should be fantastically worried about the cut in the franchise.

We should also be worried about what is happening in local government, where there is an attempt to fix election results. The recent Conservative party political broadcast showed that their intention is to pressurise people into voting Conservative and to get rid of Labour's base in local government. That should worry us tremendously, as should the smashing of local government and the development of further centralisation.

The second characteristic of democracy concerns civil liberties, which others have dealt with. Poll tax registrars will invade a whole host of sensitive information that was never previously registered. That information will be used to ensure that people pay the poll tax. It has been said, and confirmed by the Leader of the House, that the ancient right of petitioning, which predates 1688, is affected. Before 1688, petitions tended to be about personal grievances, whereas after they tended to be about matters of public policy. Petitions will now be available to poll tax registrars to make sure that the signatories are on their registers. That is an invasion of a right that dates back before the franchise. Indeed, it was one of the limited rights that ordinary people had even in 1688.

Thirdly, poll tax represents excessive centralisation. The Government have introduced a host of measures which advance the development of something akin to a gentle corporate state. There must be some Conservative Members who believe in the free market and the freedom of competition and that centralised authority is something that we should all fight against. Too much power is going in that direction.

The philosophical stance of some Conservative Members is nonsense. It is almost as though they have turned their backs on the freedoms enjoyed under capitalism and returned to Hobbes' "Leviathan", in which he suggested that there could be either anarchy or absolute centralisation, with authority and sovereignty resting with one person or one group of people in Parliament. Others, he suggested, should be excluded completely.

Fourthly, there is the terrible unfairness of the poll tax, but there is no need to go into that as Conservative Members know the vast social difficulties that it will cause. How can we call this democracy when it does such things? Has it not been eroded to such an extent that we must fight solidly to defend it and oppose what is taking place? The poll tax is the most serious interference with our liberties since the glorious revolution of 1688. We should all stand up and fight it.

7.47 pm

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): I do not propose to detain the House for long, but I want to register my objection to the motion, which I find offensive. Opposition Members who vote in favour of it will have different reasons for doing so, but we must deal with the motion on the Order Paper. It is reasonable to recognise that 1688 was a short step on the path to accountability and the right to dislodge the Executive, but that is not what the motion says. The motion states that some sort of millennium was established and that our people have enjoyed constitutional freedoms under the law for 300 years. It is patently offensive to suppose, for example, that the people who lost limbs and lives in the factories during the industrial revolution enjoyed anything at all, especially when their average life expectation was less than 30 years in the huge developing industrial towns in the north, such as Bradford, Manchester and Leeds. The motion will be left behind after all the arguments have gone, and that fact is overlooked.

I do not know the mechanism by which the motion came to the House, but if any Labour Members were involved, the motion should have recognised the years of struggle and bloodshed undergone by ordinary people. The first Factory Act to control the bloodshed among the people who, according to the motion, were enjoying constitutional rights was not introduced until 1802. It was then applied by a venal, corrupt and ineffective magistracy, who owned most of the factories and therefore were not keen to apply the law. The people who looked to the magistrates for the constitutional rights did not receive much consolation.

I am concerned about what the motion says, because it omits any reference to the bloodshed in the factories and the rise of the trade union movement. I will not go into that in detail because my hon. Friends have dealt with it powerfully, but trade unions were developed to protect ordinary men and women, and their families, against the outrages that were visited upon them. The workers and their organisation had no constitutional privileges or rights to enjoy.

It is folly for any hon. Member to talk about constitutional freedoms being enjoyed for 300 years, when in the post-war period we have had the threat of nuclear weapons. What sort of constitutional right have ordinary people over the Prime Minister if, for example, she decides to use Polaris when she receives information from United States-controlled radar installations—and we know how reliable they are—that the Soviet Union is promoting an attack upon us?

The right hon. Lady is organising the building of £11 billion-worth of Trident nuclear weapons. What constitutional rights does the citizenry enjoy to control the Prime Minister in the use of those weapons? The answer is, none at all.

We cannot isolate the motion from the realities. I am not here to get involved in the niceties of Parliament and to rubberstamp motions emerging from some committee. The reality is that our nation is retaining means of mass extermination on a scale that, by some fortunate stroke, has hitherto never been experienced, and is building at a cost of many billions of pounds nuclear weapons which could exterminate even more effectively and efficiently than Polaris.

The whole question of rights over those new weapons of mass extermination is ignored in the motion. It is on that basis that I shall vote against it.

7.50 pm

Mr. Graham Allen (Nottingham, North): I should like first to apologise to you, Mr. Speaker, and to colleagues of all parties for not having heard all the contributions to the debate. No disrespect was intended. My speech will be brief and I intend to refer only to my amendment, which I wish had been selected.

When I first became a Member of this place, I had no thoughts of tabling amendments mentioning a written constitution and a Bill of Rights. However, my experience of this place—brief though its is—has changed my mind fundamentally on some key constitutional issues. I believe that Parliament, as currently constituted, no longer acts as the main constitutional brake on the Government. We seriously need to consider a major constitutional settlement that would entrench the rights of individual people and define the institutions in our constitution that could defend those rights effectively.

We are meant to be celebrating the 300th anniversary of the Bill of Rights. There are many ways of celebrating. One would be to pickle that Bill of Rights, to put it into aspic and say, "It is a marvellous thing. We should have a drink and a bit of a sing-song." That would be a celebration. However, the people who brought forward that Bill of Rights would expect us to celebrate it in a far more serious way and to review where we have gone in those 300 years and say where we should like to go in the next 300. I fear that if we entrust our civil liberties and the defence of our rights to this Chamber, in 300 years' time we may not be celebrating even those few rights that are enshrined in the 1688-89 settlement.

I therefore put forward some proposals in my amendment. Those proposals do not bear particularly on my constituency. Like many of my hon. Friends, I could repeat the history of the democratic struggle that has taken place in my constituency and area. There are three unmarked graves in a church close to our shire hall in Nottingham. If those three unmarked graves were in a country fighting for its democratic rights in this day and age, they would be shrines. In fact, they are the unmarked, uncelebrated graves of three individuals who were plucked out of a crowd in 1830 and hanged on the steps of the shire hall in Nottingham. They were the victims. They were people who were merely trying to get the right to vote. I could quote many other examples from the Labour history, the trade union struggle and the struggle for the fight to vote in my city, not least the burning down of the famous Nottingham castle. However, that would not get us very far in discussing what I proposed in my amendment.

I suggested first a Bill of Rights to entrench the individual liberties of all citizens, regardless of decisions made in this Chamber. They should be entrenched by a referendum and amended only by a referendum so that, whatever the political complexion of this Chamber, there would always be a marker against which any individual would know his or her rights against our Executive and legislature.

Secondly, I suggested a written constitution so that at any point anyone in our society would know the institutional relationship between the various parts of our constitution, and so that people could make up their own minds about what we were doing and whether we were doing it properly in this Chamber of the House of Commons.

Mr. Winnick: My hon. Friend has referred to a written constitution. He will know that I am critical of certain aspects of that, hence my remarks about three quarters of an hour ago. Why should we believe that a written constitution would give our citizens greater freedom? Would it not take away from this House and give to the courts powers which we should not give away—all the more so, bearing in mind the position with the EEC, which was referred to earlier? Why cannot this Parliament control the Government? Previous Parliaments have done so. Surely it is a question of majority.

Mr. Allen: The courts have that power now, but the citizen has no guide or marker by which to measure any judgments. The citizen cannot say, "This is my inalienable tangible right which I will test against the judgment of any member of the judiciary." If my hon. Friend believes that this place has acted as a defence for the rights of individuals, trade unionists and people who would wish information to be more widely available in our society, he is living in dreamland.

My final point is that this place should ensure that it, rather than any other part of our constitution, becomes the decision-making chamber. That is why I suggest in my amendment the abolition of the House of Lords. That was and remains the policy of my party and should feature in any serious constitutional settlement 300 years after the previous one.

7.56 pm

Mr. David Alton (Liverpool, Mossley Hill): I wish to speak only briefly, but want to place on record the reasons why I shall vote against the Humble Address. I shall do so because it is deeply insensitive to the House to pass an address which commemorates in an almost celebratory way an event which, in 1688, led to enormous harm and distress to many people living in these islands. With a family from the west of Ireland, and having seen for myself the ravaged homes, hamlets and small villages which were depopulated as a result of what happened in the period after 1688, I find it difficult to celebrate the tercentenary of those so-called historic events, because for those families they were tragic events. The trouble with motions such as this is that they stir up old memories and hatred. For that reason, the motion is deeply offensive to many of Her Majesty's loyal Catholic subjects. I am surprised that the Government have shown such insensitivity.

I also believe that there is a danger of becoming prisoners of our own history, especially when it is history as selective as that incorporated in the motion. It is absurd to table such a motion without any reference to the events which a number of other hon. Members have touched on.

The period in the aftermath of the war with the French and after the battle of Peterloo is infinitely far more important for our constitutional rights than the battle of Waterloo or 1688. The battle of Peterloo took place on the fields of St. Peter's, outside Manchester, where the reformers demanded suffrage. For me, the Chartist movement, the emancipation of Catholics and Jews, and the anti-slavery movement which was led by William Wilberforce and other Members of this House are the events that we should be celebrating, rather than choosing selective parts of our history as in the Humble Address.

The House will not be surprised that I have another reason for resisting the Humble Address. I personally find it difficult that the greatest right of all—the right to life

—is not enshrined in this great celebration of the tercentenary of the events of 1688. Indeed, it is impossible in this House even to bring about a vote on the question of the right to life. In 1948 the United Nations stated that everyone should have the right to life, yet hon. Members are not allowed a vote on that subject because Parliament has become so enfeebled that it will not provide the time necessary to arrive at a conclusion on that question. In these circumstances, there is, therefore, no way that I would be able to support what I regard as a sham.

There is a third reason why I shall vote against the Humble Address. It is because of the way that we run our democracy in this country. It is fraudulent and often corrupt and phoney. Governments can be elected with just one third of the votes and yet receive two thirds of the seats in the House. That we can have a system of government that is so centralist and secretive and so often rides roughshod over the wishes of the people whom we seek to serve is the antithesis of democracy.

While I agree with what the hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) said about our system of government being one of which we can be proud, it was E. M. Forster, in his book "Two Cheers for Democracy", who said that only love, the beloved republic, deserves three cheers. Certainly that is true. Democracy, as we experience it in this country today, is highly inadequate. We need a new constitutional settlement which looks again at many of the questions raised during the debate. A proper Bill of Rights, freedom of information legislation, a Select Committee system that is able to hold the Executive accountable, a proper and fair electoral system, a decentralised form of government—those are the developments that we should be looking forward to, instead of simply looking back to a period that does this country no great credit, and is a period of which we should be deeply ashamed.

For those reasons, I certainly cannot support the Humble Address.

Question put:—

The House divided: Ayes 139, Noes 18.

Division No. 402] **[8.1 pm**

AYES

Adley, Robert
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amery, Rt Hon Julian
Amos, Alan
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Ashby, David
Atkinson, David
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Body, Sir Richard
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brazier, Julian
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carttiss, Michael
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Churchill, Mr
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Cran, James
Cummings, John
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Day, Stephen
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Emery, Sir Peter
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Forth, Eric
Fox, Sir Marcus
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gow, Ian
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Gregory, Conal
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Harris, David
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayward, Robert
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Holt, Richard
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howells, Geraint
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Janman, Tim
Janner, Greville
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
King, Rt Hon Tom *(Bridgwater)*
Kirkwood, Archy
Knapman, Roger
Knowles, Michael
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lightbown, David
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New Forest)*
Mans, Keith
Mates, Michael
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Michael, Alun
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Monro, Sir Hector
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
O'Neill, Martin
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Page, Richard
Pawsey, James
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Ryder, Richard
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Sims, Roger
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Spearing, Nigel
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Squire, Robin
Steel, Rt Hon David
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(Hertfordshire N)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thurnham, Peter
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Ward, John
Wheeler, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. David Maclean and
Mr. Stephen Dorrell.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cryer, Bob
Gordon, Mildred
Heffer, Eric S.
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Meale, Alan
Nellist, Dave
Patchett, Terry
Skinner, Dennis
Wise, Mrs Audrey

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Harry Barnes and
Mr. Brian Sedgemore.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved,

That an humble Address be presented to Her Majesty, as follows:

Most Gracious Sovereign,

We, Your Majesty's most dutiful and loyal subjects, the Commons of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, in Parliament assembled, having in mind the acceptance by Their Majesties King William and Queen Mary of the Declaration of Rights presented to them on 13th February 1689, and recalling also the Bill of Rights passed by the Parliament of England and the Claim of Right made by the Estates of Scotland for vindicating and asserting the ancient rights and liberties of the people of the two Kingdoms, beg leave to express to Your Majesty our great pleasure in celebrating the tercentenary of these historic events of 1688 and 1689 that established those constitutional freedoms under the law which Your Majesty's Parliament and people have continued to enjoy for three hundred years.

Resolved,

That the said Address be presented to Her Majesty by the whole House.—*[Mr. Wakeham.]*

Ordered,

That such Members of this House as are of Her Majesty's Most Honourable Privy Council, do humbly know Her Majesty's Pleasure when She will be attended by this House with the said Address and whether Her Majesty will be Graciously pleased to permit the invited representatives of overseas Parliaments of the Commonwealth to accompany this House in attending Her Majesty.—*[Mr. Wakeham.]*

ESTIMATES DAY

[2ND ALLOTTED DAY]

ESTIMATES 1988-89

Class I, Vote 1

DEFENCE (PERSONNEL COSTS)

Merchant Shipping and Civil Aviation

Motion made, and Question proposed,

That a sum, not exceeding £4,503,563,000, be granted to Her Majesty out of the Consolidated Fund to defray the charges which will come in course of payment during the year ending 31st March 1989 for expenditure by the Ministry of Defence on personnel costs etc. of the Armed Forces and their Reserves and Cadet Forces etc., personnel costs etc. of Defence Ministers and of certain civilian staff employed by the Ministry of Defence on movements; certain stores; supplies and services; plant and machinery; charter of ships; certain research; lands and buildings; sundry grants; payments abroad including contributions and subscriptions to international organisations and grants in aid.—*[Mr. Ian Stewart.]*

8.12 pm

Mr. Michael Mates (Hampshire, East): It cannot often fall to the lot of one Back Bencher to have the good fortune to open two debates in the House in as many months. I am sure that most of my hon. Friends will agree when I say how glad I am that, as I rise for the second time, I do so in an air of considerably less controversy than the last time I found myself opening a debate in this House.

I am grateful to the Liaison Committee for recommending this estimate for debate today and I am extremely grateful to my Committee for the hard work it put in to the report that we published a short while ago and that is relevant to the debate. I must say, having said how grateful I am to it, that I am wondering where its numbers are now. They were due to be here, but perhaps they have heard the sound of my voice for too long in Committee to want to listen to it again. I am also grateful to the Select Committee on Transport, which is chaired by the hon. Member for Glasgow, Shettleston (Mr. Marshall), for its excellent report on the overall state of the merchant fleet. Our report looked only at the defence implications of the decline that has been taking place in that fleet.

"I told you so" is never an edifying remark to make, but where the defence role of merchant shipping is concerned, there must be many people who are qualified to make it, not least our friend and former colleague Sir Edward du Cann. He spoke out on this matter for many years in this House and warned of the consequences of the decline that was taking place. As long ago as 1980, when I was first appointed to the Select Committee on Defence, we voiced our concern about the strategic importance of the British and NATO merchant fleet and the implications of their decline. In the 1983 Parliament, the Defence Committee again and again highlighted the importance of merchant shipping to our defence capability and warned of the possible effect of the crisis then facing our merchant fleet. The Defence Committee's fourth report of this Session appears on the Order Paper today and in it we bring the story up to date. The House will see that we find no reason to come to conclusions any more optimistic than those of our predecessors.

I can be brief in introducing this debate because our views are set out in the report, but I shall pick out some of its themes. First, the fulfilling of the defence requirement for merchant shipping must be set against a background of the continuing decline in the British merchant fleet. As we note in paragraph 13 of our report, the previous Defence Committee took evidence on this subject in 1985 and it put to Ministers the prediction made by the General Council of British Shipping for the following two years. In reply we were told that that prediction was too pessimistic and that the methodology was wrong. However, the decline has continued at pretty much the rate forecast by the General Council of British Shipping. There may be a temporary remission now as the Department of Transport has claimed, but the trend is still downward.

Second—I am happy to say this—although there is little actual shortfall in ships in the categories required by the Ministry of Defence—security considerations prevented us from going into great detail in our report—the squeeze on those assets is inexorable. In paragraphs 40 to 47 we identified the categories in which there are particular or potential problems. They include fishing vessels for mine counter-measures, product tankers, dry cargo freighters, which are being replaced by container ships and which are much less useful and less flexible for carrying military equipment, and, with the advent of the Channel tunnel, roll-on/roll-off ferries.

Third, we are extremely worried that, in a time of tension or war, the military demand on available merchant shipping for the transatlantic reinforcement of Europe, for the reinforcement of Europe from the United Kingdom and for the direct support of the Royal Navy will leave few assets for the task of economic shipping. That would be vital in a period of tension or war and the Merchant Navy would be required to bring in the supplies to keep this country going and our people alive.

Elsewhere in our report we draw attention to potential manning problems. The availability of British personnel to man ships used for British defence purposes is most important. However, not only is the number of British seafarers declining steadily, but the numbers joining the Merchant Navy are lower than ever before. We examined that matter in paragraphs 54 to 60 of our report and we find that trend extremely worrying. We also point out that other NATO countries would have difficulties in finding the ships that they would have to provide and we expressed our surprise that NATO has not taken more vigorous action about such trends before now.

Although many of our conclusions relate to the needs during a period of tension or war, there is a regular requirement for shipping for use in exercises. I do not believe that I am the only person who was disappointed that, for the major tri-service exercise, Purple Warrior, which took place in late 1987, the Ministry of Defence had to charter Danish vessels, ally in NATO though Denmark is. As we say in the report, it would surely have been of greater benefit to our long-term national security if British shipping earmarked for requisition in conflict had been chartered for that major exercise, even if the cost had been slightly greater.

Since the Defence Select Committee in the last Parliament began looking in detail at the defence requirements for merchant shipping there has been some recognition within the Government of the practical problems of providing the right shipping in the right place at the right time should the worst happen and we were faced with a major crisis or hostilities. I am not sure how far that realism has progressed. In the course of our inquiry we asked the Department of Transport what would happen if a foreign owner of a United Kingdom registered vessel trading outside NATO waters refused to make his ship available. Somewhat to our surprise witnesses told us that they envisaged that the Royal Navy could be called on for assistance—but I think that by that stage the Royal Navy would have a few other tasks on is plate.

It is not our task as a Defence Committee to make comments or recommendations on ways of reversing the decline in the merchant fleet. However, what worries us is that there appear to be aspects of Government policy that lack drive and, above all, co-ordination. That is why we repeat in paragraph 73 the recommendation of our predecessors that these things should be co-ordinated and directed by the highest level of Government. Our views can be summed up in the words of paragraph 66 of the report and I can do no better than to end my remarks by quoting it:

> "The ready availability of adequate merchant shipping resources represents a very significant element in the make-up of deterrence. The lack of such resources represents a grave deficiency in our ability to deter. The availability of merchant shipping for defence purposes is governed by three key factors —the number of UK flagged ships, their accessibility when they are needed and the availability of a pool of British seafarers to man them."

We believe there are grounds for concern on all three counts, and in asking the Government to examine closely what we have said I hope that these concerns will be addressed, because, although there is no crisis yet, the trend is the most worrying aspect of all. The last thing I want is to return to the House this time next year and say that there are areas in which we simply cannot do the task.

8.24 pm

Mr. John McWilliam (Blaydon): I am grateful to the hon. Member for Hampshire, East (Mr. Mates) for his speech. I also thank him, as a member of his Committee, for his humour, forbearance and integrity as we went through these matters.

This is yet another unanimous report from our Select Committee. That is important because it means that we are interested in the facts, rather than what some of us might wish—or others might not—to be the case. Robert Burns said:

> "Facts are chiels that winna ding."

Roughly translated, that means that one cannot ignore the facts when they exist.

One of our problems was getting at the facts. Paragraph 8 of the report, dealing with statistics for the merchant fleet, shows the problems that arise because of different statistical bases and different ways of including or excluding vessels. For example, I fail to see the relevance of including dredgers in ships available to us in times of war. Perhaps we shall need to dredge out a harbour, but presumably we keep our harbours well dredged out now so as to get near them.

What are the facts? The Select Committee on Transport was told that there were 410 United Kingdom registered merchant ships of more than 500 gross registered tonnes. But we were given the figure of 906. That poses an immediate problem.

What about the sort of ships that we want, and the roles we expect them to play? First, there is transatlantic

[Mr. John McWilliam]

reinforcement from Europe. We have a 30-day commitment to such reinforcement, and I shall return to that issue. Then there is reinforcement of continental Europe from the United Kingdom. Most of the American forward-base supplies are in this country and must be moved from here to continental Europe. Next comes direct support of the Royal Navy. There are few ships equipped to do that—there are some ro-ros and other bits and pieces that could be used, but some of them are not up to the standards that we would expect, for various reasons. There is also the category of economic shipping. In a crisis, this country would still have to exist.

We tried to deal with all these problems, but our considerations were not helped by two things. One was the lack of an agreed criterion of which ships to count; the other, I am sorry to say, was the problem of calculations about attrition. We have tried to discover whether we can have a support convoy system of the sort that we should have for reinforcement across the Atlantic. According to the MOD, we will not. It is calculated that somehow or other all Warsaw pact hunter-killer attack submarines will be bottled up to the north of Iceland, Scotland and Norway. That is a difficult argument to sustain, given that they are not all there anyway. In any sudden period of tension there is no reason why they should suddenly all head for home and then be bottled up. The logical conclusion is that that will not happen. So the sort of attrition figures that we are dealing with were quite different from those that the MOD seems to be considering.

We are worried about what is happening, because the numbers do not add up. It seems that categories of shipping such as stern trawlers, deep-sea trawlers and oil-rig supply vessels can be used fairly quickly in emergency roles. But we are worried because we do not have the right number of vessels. The number of bulk carriers that we have seems to keep falling. In the report, we make the point that the slowdown in that fall appears to be more of a remission than a cure of the trend. I come from Tyneside and I can say that there is no sign of the sort of vessels that we need being built, or of the sort of facilities that we need to build them being maintained. We must keep that clearly in mind when we are considering this report.

It gives me no great pleasure to talk about this subject. I was educated at Leith academy, which was established in 1452 for the education of the sons of mariners, and it taught the skills of mathematics and navigation. It fed candidates for deck officers, cadets, and candidates for marine radar, radio and electronic officers to the nautical college. My school is still there but Leith nautical college is not, and the manpower that we need is not being trained. We are dangerously short of the skilled seamen and officers that we need to man our ships in the sort of situation that we are talking about.

Our merchant marine has served us well through two world wars. In both wars, the convoy system was said to be unnecessary but suddenly it was necessary. If there was any major conflagration in central Europe it would be necessary again. The same mistakes have been made again and again and we should learn from our history. We are told that everything is all right and that somehow or other we will have the ships. But somehow or other is not good enough.

I repeat the famous words by Robert Burns:

> "Facts are chiels that winna ding."

The facts are there, and it is up to the Minister to assure us that the Government are taking active steps to ensure that we will have the capability to sustain on a conventional basis any future war in central Europe. If the Government cannot say that, then they are admitting something that they have not admitted before, that they have given up any idea of a conventional war being sustainable in western Europe and would have to move very early to the nuclear alternative.

I have two daughters who I hope will raise their own families. I hope that my daughters' children will have families and I find that nuclear alternative deeply disturbing. Because of our inactivity, the nuclear threshold has obviously come down. I want to hear from the Minister what he proposes to do to raise the nuclear threshold so that I can be confident that my children and the children of other hon. Members can look forward to the future. On the basis of the information in front of us, I have no such confidence, and I look to the Minister for reassurance.

8.33 pm

Mr. Ian Bruce (Dorset, South): I asked a question in the House the other day and declared an interest because my brother works in a nuclear power station. After all the trouble I have taken to try to get into *The Daily Telegraph* I suddenly found myself in the Commons sketch column. I shall declare an interest at the beginning of this speech because for five days prior to arriving here on Monday I was the guest of Her Majesty's Navy bouncing up and down in the north Atlantic. I enjoyed some very good food and got to know a little more about the Navy.

One of the great advantages of those five days was that I had to eat my meals with the officers and ratings and during our off-duty hours we spent much time talking about all the aspects of present day naval warfare. One of the most gripping things we learnt about was the worry of the Navy that our merchant fleet may not be up to the job if there is a war.

We have a standing Navy and it is an expensive asset for us to maintain. It is essential that it be maintained but there is a certain amount of the chicken and egg argument about it. The Navy has a clear role to protect merchant shipping, but what is its role if we have no merchant shipping to protect? Our Navy cannot do its job unless it has merchant vessels to call on. The Falklands war clearly demonstrated that the flexibility of being able to call upon our merchant fleet was essential for prosecuting that war.

As we see security in Europe becoming stronger and the threat of a land war reducing, we have to take into account the fact that we might have to use our naval resources and our Merchant Navy in a peacekeeping role in areas where we would not expect to use it. Our Merchant Navy would be essential. The excellent report gives clear figures about the reinforcement of our NATO commitment and about getting American forces to Europe. Many people who know about the vast amount of money spent by the Americans on their forces forget that 90 per cent. or perhaps more of the manpower available to fight a land war in Europe comes from European nations. Everything else that the Americans would have to bring into such a war would have to come by air or by sea. We would be in an extremely difficult position if we did not have merchant vessels available to do that.

Merchant vessels have military roles. We saw that in the Falklands war because one of our aircraft carriers had been a container ship and it worked very well. Most of the systems that are now being supplied to the Navy are in boxes. That applies to missile, radar and communication systems which are often designed to use a container that will fit on a ship and give it the flexibility to play its role in a specific aspect of our defence.

For many years the merchant service has provided our basic manpower. The hon. Member for Blaydon (Mr. McWilliam) spoke about the role of the merchant shipping fleet in training the manpower that we need. The town of Weymouth is in my constituency and contains an enormous number of people with merchant shipping experience. Over the years many of them have been made redundant and have had to find other careers, other ways of earning a living. Their children are no longer being sent to naval colleges and that resource of merchant shipping experience will not last much longer.

We have to start to think again about where we go from here. Our merchant fleet is depleted and we must proceed to a healthier position. We seem to have abandoned the idea that the United Kingdom will ever again be a great shipbuilding nation. Many products of Britain demonstrate that with the right economic climate and improved productivity we can start to compete with other nations. I would never say that we should close the door on any industry and would welcome a regime under which shipbuilding could start to grow again. Employment is important and shipping in all its forms can have a valuable effect on our economy.

On the Front Bench there are two excellent Ministers from the Department of Transport and the Ministry of Defence, but it is deficient in that there is no one on it from the Treasury. Tiny little non-states in most parts of the world have provided tax regimes to persuade our ship owners to re-register their ships. Surely it cannot be beyond the wit of the Treasury to work out a scheme by which we can bring those merchant vessels back under our own flag. It is noticeable that the decline has stopped temporarily. Perhaps that is because the Armilla patrol is doing a successful job of protecting British ships in the Gulf and it therefore becomes a plus factor to have a ship with a British flag on it. The Navy depends on a merchant fleet to support it, and that merchant fleet appreciates having the best Navy, man for man, in the world. We should be asking the Chancellor of the Exchequer to think seriously, before the next Budget, about what he can do to bring vessels back under our flag.

The cost of light dues and of using United Kingdom ports needs to be considered. Opposition Members, on their packed Benches, may not like me saying this, but I believe that the national dock labour scheme prevents us from being as economic as we should be in our ports. I do not want to attack the ports. I want more people to be employed in Weymouth port, instead of the dozen or so who are currently employed there. We want to see more people employed in the ports and I want to see the removal of, or a great change in, the national dock labour scheme.

I have touched on a number of subjects in a random way, but I believe that there is a future for our merchant fleet. We must always take into account the fact that our merchant fleet is part of the defence of the realm. We are willing to pay a high price for the defence of the realm and we cannot do that job without proper merchant shipping.

8.41 pm

Mrs. Ray Michie (Argyll and Bute): I am glad to have the opportunity to contribute to the debate. I wish to commend the Chairman and his Committee on the production of the report.

The Government are now highly vulnerable, not only because of the rundown of the merchant fleet and the decline of the shipbuilding industry, but also because recent criticism from the Select Committee on Defence and others relating to the fragile size and preparedness of the Royal Navy surplus fleet means that the cumulative effect has worrying strategic implications. It is extraordinary that a Conservative Government should have neglected a defence issue of this nature. There is not much point in having a seamless robe of deterrence if the conventional end, like the merchant fleet aspect, begins to look increasingly threadbare.

A number of Select Committee reports chronicle the worsening situation. We know from the last war that the role of the merchant fleet has been and is vital in transporting essential materials, such as food and supplies, to our country. Now, as part of Britain's role in the NATO defence plan, it would carry divisions of the United States army to Europe. Both those operations would have to take place at the same time and it is difficult to imagine how that double task could be achieved, given the drastic decline in United Kingdom flagged vessels.

One of the dangers with the decline of the fleet is that it weakens the potential to deter. Not only do we need a good many merchant vessels and a good many trained seafarers to sustain the country, but, just as important, we need to convince a potential enemy that we can sustain a conventional war of any length. As has been said, it is now highly doubtful that the United Kingdom could mount a Falklands-style operation again. The Conservative Government take great pride in their strong stand on deterrence in nuclear matters, yet they appear at best slipshod in naval deterrence. The Soviet Union does not need to be able to read semaphore to observe the United Kingdom merchant fleet weakening fast. The Government appear content to shrug their shoulders indifferently. That is simply not good enough.

There is also a shortfall in special categories of shipping, for example, fishing vessels for mine countermeasures. The decline in the fishing fleet has resulted in a shortage of large stern trawlers available for that purpose. I believe that there are now only about five such vessels. Even the decline of the fishing fleet has a knock-on effect on our defence capabilities. I have a particular interest in that because, in my constituency, we have an excellent fishing fleet and we build fishing vessels.

The far-flung nature of the Merchant Navy means that a numerical sufficiency of ships is not necessarily the practical and accessible number of ships. The scope for double-counting the availability of a dwindling fleet is considerable. The demands on merchant shipping for transatlantic and economic shipping, as well as for defence purposes, would lead to impossible competition for the same resources. How can we easily get back ships, many of which would need refitting, from the other side of the world and make them available for defence purposes?

[Mrs. Ray Michie]

The same applies to the availability of men to man ships in an emergency. The report warns of a continuing decline in the recruitment of new cadets and trainees. Trained seafarers are vital because foreign crews cannot be a substitute for United Kingdom personnel in a time of strife. It would be simply impossible to train large numbers of United Kingdom seamen to man requisitioned ships, if they could be obtained, to deal with an emergency.

Hon. Members have talked about a shortage of skills, but that is not universal throughout the United Kingdom. I know very well that there is not a shortage of skills and knowledge and that there is an honourable tradition of seafaring in the Merchant Navy in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland. During the last election, I came across many men who had been laid off and lost their jobs in the Merchant Navy. It was with great sadness that they came to me and said, "What are the Government doing to our once proud merchant fleet?"

The number of United Kingdom flagged ships has declined rapidly, leaving a smaller and smaller pool on which to call in times of emergency. It is a sad story. There has been a decline from over 1,600 ships of 50 million deadweight tonnes in 1975 to no more than 645 ships of less than 17 million deadweight tonnes owned by British companies at the end of March this year.

There is no point in the Government waving the flag over national defence when there are now so few ships sailing with the flag at their masthead. Virtually nothing has been done to encourage investment in shipping. The need for a proper fleet would give our shipbuilding industry a much-needed boost.

Although the Government's help for training and repatriation of crews and the concession on income tax for seafarers serving on ships trading largely outside the United Kingdom are welcome, it is all too little and could be too late.

The Government should consider, in conjunction with the Department of Transport, the need for a Merchant Navy strategic reserve contract under which owners would receive substantial compensation and a crew-related allowance payable in respect of each British seafarer employed by United Kingdom owners regardless of flag. Such measures are needed if the fleet is not to shrivel into insignificance, or at least to a level where it is impossible to provide the essential requirements.

The real question is whether it matters to Britain that there should be a significant British presence in the world's merchant shipping fleets of the next decade. If the answer is yes, it lies within the Government's influence. The Government's failure to act could lead to Britain's failure in time of war.

8.50 pm

The Minister of State for the Armed Forces (Mr. Ian Stewart): The House is grateful to the Select Committee on Defence for the valuable report that we are debating this evening. I should like to add my appreciation on behalf of the Government for the work that has gone into producing such a useful document.

The report rightly draws attention to anxiety over the consequences of the decline in the size of the British merchant fleet in recent years. That, as my hon. Friend the Member for Hampshire, East (Mr. Mates) has said, has also been the subject of a recent report of the Select Committee on Transport.

The Government will give detailed written responses shortly to both reports. I do not want to anticipate the details of those, but rather to cover in general terms some of the main issues that those reports raised, particularly concentrating on that which is covered by the title of the Defence Select Committee's report—the defence requirement for merchant shipping.

My hon. Friend said that he recognised that there is no crisis yet. The Government recognise the importance of the subject and we are determined to ensure that there will not be a crisis.

Before I go any further, let me respond on one point to the hon. Member for Blaydon (Mr. McWilliam). He suggested that there are no plans for a system to protect transatlantic reinforcement and resupply as necessary. I should make it clear that there are well-developed plans for naval control of shipping which are regularly exercised and they include the use of convoys when required.

Mr. McWilliam: I am particularly grateful to the Minister for making that point because that was not the point made by the Ministry of Defence spokesmen to the Select Committee when they were specifically asked about that very question. If the hon. Gentleman is now saying that there are plans for convoy systems, suitable escorts and the kind of anti-submarine measures that need to be taken, I am sure that the House will be grateful, but so far that evidence has not been given to us.

Mr. Stewart: I am glad to have been able to reassure the hon. Gentleman. Although one cannot go into details in such matters, the plans that I have described are in place.

The Royal Navy and the Merchant Navy have a long history of working together and that is a two-way process. The Navy has an honourable tradition of maintaining the freedom of our ships to trade around the world while our merchant ships have invariably played a vital role in supplementing and supporting the Royal Navy in times of war. I want to say a quick word on the first part of that two-way process following the remarks of my hon. Friend the Member for Dorset, South (Mr. Bruce).

Since 1980, the Armilla ships have accompanied a great number of British ships through the Strait of Hormuz and in the Gulf. The House may be interested in the latest figures. In 1987 there were 405 movements of British shipping in that area accompanied by Royal Navy ships. In 1988 so far there have been over 350 movements, so we are already nearly up to the total of the whole of last year.

During that time British warships have accompanied about twice as many merchant ships as those of all other Western countries with navies in the Gulf put together. That is a record of which we can be proud. I should like to take this opportunity of expressing my appreciation, having visited them on occasions, of the devoted and skilful service of our sailors in that difficult and dangerous task.

Let me now deal with the availability of merchant shipping for defence needs. That has two clear dimensions —first, the direct requirements of the United Kingdom and, secondly, the collective NATO responsibilities which, generally speaking, is the transatlantic dimension of the question.

In crisis or war, merchant shipping has four main roles, which I shall list, not in order of importance—first, to support the reinforcement of Europe from the United Kingdom; secondly, to support the operations of the Royal Navy; thirdly, together with our NATO allies to assist in the transatlantic reinforcement of Europe by the United States; and, fourthly, to resupply the civil economy of the European countries.

I emphasise first the direct needs of the United Kingdom, because the Ministry of Defence is primarily concerned with the first two of those tasks in that context. We identify the military requirements and the Department of Transport takes the lead in identifying and making available civil shipping to meet those requirements. The other two requirements are collective NATO tasks across the Atlantic.

I refute what the hon. Member for Argyll and Bute (Mrs. Michie) said about there being insufficient ships in the British merchant fleet or that the Government were not concerned with that. The opposite is the case. Of course, the decline of the British merchant fleet has been a matter of anxiety to us all. But let me stress at the outset that at no time has the supply of ships fallen below that needed to meet British national defence needs. In general, for the reinforcement of Europe from the United Kingdom and the support of the operations of the Royal Navy, we have a comfortable margin of vessels available from the United Kingdom and dependent territories. However, I accept that the margin is tight in some categories of vessels.

For example, we are closely monitoring the position of cross-Channel ferries. I agree with the Select Committee that cross-Channel ferries will continue to be important for reinforcement planning. But I remind the House that our NATO partners have large, modern roll-on/roll-off fleets which will be able to give assistance and we would not have to rely solely on our own resources.

It was suggested that there was something wrong in having a continental ferry or two involved in the Purple Warrior exercise rather than our own. The reason for that was that our ferries were all busily occupied, but that was not the case with all the continental ones.

Mr. Martin O'Neill (Clackmannan): I was interested in the Minister's comment concerning exercise Purple Warrior and the reasons why British ships were not used. Does he deny that one of the other reasons was that British ferry companies' charges were too high?

Mr. Stewart: Yes, because the reason was that British ship operators in that category were not interested in offering their ships at an economic price. They were already engaged on satisfactory tasks of another kind, whereas there was a surplus among some continental countries, which we then drew upon.

Mr. O'Neill: The price was too dear.

Mr. Stewart: No, I refute the hon. Member's remark. If he thinks that we should pay whatever rate is necessary for British ships that are fully occupied, against the availability of foreign ships from NATO countries, I fundamentally disagree. That would not be in our interests.

I turn to the subject of fishing vessels, of which there are now relatively few suitable for mine counter-measures. We expect to be able to use North sea support vessels, whose adaptation for that purpose is feasible, and of which adequate numbers are available. Transatlantic reinforcement and civil resupply is a matter of some concern to us. It is a problem that affects the NATO Alliance in general and is not specifically British. The number of product tankers and large bulk cargo ships is particularly tight. NATO is currently examining ways of increasing the availability of vessels for transatlantic reinforcement, particularly in the early stages.

The report notes that at a time of war NATO nations would pool vessels of more than 1,600 gross registered tonnes for civil resupply of food and raw materials. In many cases, other countries have not assessed their wartime needs. However, resulting from a British initiative, NATO has now embarked on a study of the supply and demand for civil resupply, and I am glad that it has done so. That study is designed to establish the extent, if any, of the shortage of civil resupply vessels, and I hope that it will be completed by the end of next year.

In addition to NATO's specific study on that subject, it also has a planning board for ocean shipping that keeps regularly under review assets available for Atlantic reinforcement and for fuel supplies to Europe on a continuing basis. I do not for one moment wish to belittle the problems posed by the merchant fleet's decline. We all want to see an industry that is prosperous and that can meet our needs in an emergency or in war. However, I wish to stress three points. First, the phenomenon is a general Western one, and the problems posed by it are NATO-wide and are not confined to this country. Secondly, although we must not minimise the problem, we must not exaggerate it. There are signs that we have been experiencing not a secular, long-term trend of decline but the reverse slope of a considerable build-up of tonnages that occurred a decade or more ago, which created unmanageable overcapacity in the industry in recent years.

Recently, there have been encouraging signs in regard to the British-owned fleet. One key event for the shipping industry in 1987 was, in the words of the director general of the General Council of British Shipping,

> "The stabilisation of the size of the British-owned fleet of trading vessels after many years of decline."

Within the overall figures, there has been a marked shift between registers, but in the short-term at least there are other indications that the United Kingdom-owned fleet will continue at roughly the same level, although not necessarily on the same registers. The British fleet is now slimmer, but I have no doubt that it is also more efficient. Recently, certain United Kingdom companies have been showing their confidence by placing orders for new ships to be registered in the United Kingdom, or elsewhere in the British registry system. In 1987, new orders by tonnage were higher than in 1986, and they rose again sharply in the first quarter of 1988. There has also been secondhand buying since the turn of the year.

Perhaps the most encouraging sign of all is the movement in freight rates over the past two years. At the bottom of the cycle two years ago, at the end of the first half of 1986, the composite index stood at 85. By the end of 1986 it had risen to 95, and after the first half of 1987 it stood at 131. By the end of last year the index had increased to 176, which was no less than twice the level it had been 18 months previously. The figures now available for the first quarter of 1988 show that the index has risen to 234, which is more than 30 per cent. up again on last year's figures.

[Mr. Stewart]

I strongly reject the suggestion that the Government have not given, or are not giving, enough priority to these issues. Let me pick up a point made in paragraph 73 of the report. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister made it clear in an answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Eastleigh (Sir D. Price) a week or so ago that she personally has been examining regularly the implications of the decline of the British merchant fleet.

We cannot simply encourage shipowners to invest in or retain uneconomic tonnage; that would only aggravate the problem. But we have done many other things. We are negotiating agreements with "flag of convenience" states to minimise any legal difficulties in obtaining use of British-owned vessels on their registers. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport announced this very afternoon that we have signed a memorandum of understanding with the Bahamas under which the Bahamas agree to allow British ships to be made available to Her Majesty's Government in the event of crisis and war, and that is an important step. We have also negotiated comprehensive agreements for access to smaller ships such as coasters owned by our NATO allies, which might be needed at short notice.

My right hon. Friend the Chancellor, far from being unmindful of this matter, announced in the Budget that, in the case of ship chartering, the business expansion scheme limit on the finance that can be raised by a company in any one year will be increased from £500,000 to £5 million. We now propose that that higher limit should be extended to companies operating their own ships.

In addition, we have developed comprehensive war risk insurance arrangements for ships on both British and foreign registers. Such arrangements would encourage neutral states in particular to trade with the United Kingdom and other NATO allies under the threat of war or in time of hostilities. All those measures should help with the availability of vessels.

Mr. Terence Higgins (Worthing): Will my hon. Friend comment on the extent of subsidies provided by other EEC countries? As those countries are constantly complaining in other contexts about the evils of subsidies, why can we not take positive and definite action to speed matters up? The delay is not tolerable.

Mr. Stewart: I am fully aware of the point that my right hon. Friend has made. I have to say, in the presence of my hon. Friend the Minister for Public Transport, that this is a matter for his Department rather than mine, but if unfair competition can be demonstrated we shall want to pursue it.

Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith (Wealden): As the Minister for Public Transport is present, perhaps he will tell us later, if he cannot do so now, what, if any, representations have been made on the point raised by my right hon. Friend the Member for Worthing (Mr. Higgins).

Mr. Stewart: My hon. Friend tells me that we must have specific facts on which to base our judgments, and detailed information is difficult to come by. I have no doubt, however, that my hon. Friend the Minister for Public Transport would more than welcome any further information that would enable the matter to be followed up.

The question of crews and manpower has already been raised. As the Committee's report acknowledges, we have taken useful measures in the Merchant Shipping Act 1988 to assist with the cost of training and repatriation. We are also setting up a Merchant Navy reserve with a potential membership of up to 5,000, which we hope will come into being next year.

Since the Defence Committee published its report we have announced an important change in the foreign earnings deduction for tax purposes, which should help both seafarers and shipowners. It will come up next week when the Finance Bill goes on Report. We broadly estimate that it would exempt another 7,000 deep seafarers from tax, making 11,000 exempt in all. It would be equivalent to up to 15 per cent. of crew costs, which should help to ease pressures on shipping companies' operating costs, making it more competitive for them to operate ships from the United Kingdom and to employ United Kingdom crews.

Let us not forget that, despite the decline in recent years, there are about 35,000 British seafarers—more than half the size of the sea-going and land-based manpower of the Royal Navy.

The message is clear. The Government take seriously the implications for defence of the decline that has taken place in the merchant fleet, but there is no cause for despondency. As a result of the measures that we have already taken, the industry is in better shape than it has been for some time. Our national defence requirements certainly can be met. We are in the lead in addressing the problems in the context of the wider NATO Alliance.

I welcome the report. If I have any general criticism of it, I think that the Committee underestimates the potential impact of the many measures that we have already taken, once they are fully in operation. In addition, it is clear that since the Committee took its evidence and prepared its report, there have been further accumulating signs to suggest that the shipping industry is beginning to pull out of the trough of the mid-1980s.

In paragraph 14 of the report, the Committee states:

> "we suggest it would be premature to regard the arrest in the decline as anything other than a temporary remission."

With the new information that is now available, especially the remarkable figures on freight rates that I have quoted, there are grounds for believing that that may be too pessimistic an assessment.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hampshire, East asked us to look closely at the problems described in his report. I can assure him that we have done, and we shall continue to do so. But I also hope that the measures already taken will serve to reassure him of the Government's commitment to ensure that the concerns that he and others have expressed are not realised.

9.11 pm

Mr. Martin O'Neill (Clackmannan): It is an unhappy coincidence that we are debating a report on the merchant fleet's contribution to our national defences on a day when many of the ships are co-operating with the Royal Navy and the Fleet Air Arm in a humanitarian exercise in the North sea. That merely serves to underline the close co-operation between our merchant marine and all the services that we have at our disposal in peace and in war.

The Chairman of the Select Committee, in his characteristically helpful manner to the Government, glided over some of the more critical elements in the

Committee's report. Certainly he did not quote some of the paragraphs containing criticisms that might be more difficult for the Minister to wriggle out of.

Nevertheless, I wish to pay tribute to the hon. Member for Hampshire, East (Mr. Mates) and his colleagues for producing yet another frank, useful, constructively critical report on the defence of this country under the stewardship of the Minister and his colleagues. We owe them a debt for the manner in which they addressed the problem, which enables us to consider matters systematically this evening.

It is broadly agreed that the purposes of a merchant fleet in respect of defence are fourfold: the transatlantic reinforcement of Europe, the reinforcement of continental Europe from the United Kingdom, the direct support of the Royal Navy and economic shipping—the civil traffic which brings fuel and supplies to the United Kingdom. Some of those involve the use of the same craft, so we have to be very careful to avoid the overlap of competing claims on our resources.

The report, in setting out those tasks and analysing the effectiveness of our capability to meet them, has served to underline what many of us have spoken about in defence debates and service debates generally during the past few years. The Chairman of the Select Committee paid tribute to one of his former colleagues, a former Chairman of the 1922 Committee, who repeatedly came back to these matters in his capacity as chairman of the all-party maritime group.

It is no consolation to read in 1988 a re-run of what we said in 1983 or 1985. Paragraph 70 sums up concisely what many of us feel when it states:

> "The optimism of the ... official evidence to our predecessors has been demonstrated to have been unjustified; in fact, the 'worst case' forecasts about the likely size of the UK merchant fleet in the late 1980s have been realised."

The report outlines the confusion both in the Ministry of Defence and between the MOD and the Department of Transport about how many ships we have available. The much-criticised fiddling of unemployment statistics seems nothing compared with the mess that the Government have got themselves into on counting ships. I do not know whether it is because of the movement of ships or because people get seasick when they think about them, but they certainly seem incapable of finding a basis for comparison. Within the confusion there may be some method in the madness.

In February 1988 the Transport Select Committee was told that there were 410 ships, but by May the figure had decreased to 402—hardly bearing out the assertion that the decline had been arrested. In May 1988, the MOD told the Committee that the number was not 410 or 402, but 906. However, when we look at this more carefully—the forensic skills of the Committee must be praised—we find that the reason for the difference is that different criteria were used. The Department of Transport had included only the trading elements, while the Ministry of Defence had included United Kingdom-registered non-trading craft in excess of 500 gross registered tonnes.

Until 1986 the weight threshold was 1,000 gross registered tonnes, but in 1987 and 1988 the threshold was not 1,000, nor even 500, but 300 gross registered tonnes. The Minister did not touch on the reasons for the confusion and I hope that when he has had more time to think up a reply to the Committee we shall receive an adequate response, not only about fiddling the figures, but about the clear attempt to distort the statistics and to fool the Committee—an exercise in which the Government and their officials have singularly failed.

Mr. Ian Stewart: Naturally we shall produce the explanation which the hon. Gentleman seeks. But if figures are requested by a Committee, they are given in the context in which they are asked. There is no difference between the figures understood by the Ministry of Defence and the Department of Transport. A problem arises from the disaggregation of figures into small groups because the Ministry of Defence looks not only at the total number of ships, but at the number of ships in a particular category to deal with a particular task. The information that the hon. Gentleman seeks about the reconciliation of these figures will be available.

Mr. O'Neill: I am grateful to the Minister, but if we were to look at each category, we would end up with the same story—one of decline and confusion. I shall not delay the House. Suffice it to say that it is nothing short of criminal for the Government to seek to inflate figures by including craft which are either inappropriate for defence purposes or are already committed to naval use, such as the 38 royal fleet auxiliary craft. Little wonder that there is a note of desperation in paragraph 31 of the report, which says that there is a

> "need for clear understanding and a consistent approach in the use of statistics."

That is what the Committee said. The confusion over the use of shipping is even more serious when we realise that transatlantic and economic shipping, both of which are critical, require the same product tankers.

Paragraph 38 of the report states:

> "it must be apparent that once the UK had fulfilled its commitment to provide transatlantic shipping, the number of UK-flagged vessels available for civil resupply would be minimal."

The report identifies other areas of concern with which hon. Members have dealt, such as the dire shortage of large stern trawlers for mine counter-measures and the problems caused by the fact that all available craft are accounted for by the Armilla patrol. The Minister has the support of all hon. Members when he pays tribute to the effective role that the Armilla patrol plays in accompanying ships in very dangerous waters. I use the word accompanying, which the Minister used, I am pleased to note, but which has slipped out of the Prime Minister's vocabulary. The conditions for the men are very uncomfortable and trying and the Opposition are happy to join the Minister in paying tribute to them.

The Minister should have told us what he believed to be the significance of the Committee's suggestion about the possibility of entering into some understanding with the Norwegian navy to see whether training and practice facilities could be established for existing support craft in the North sea. As I have said, they are playing a sterling role in tragic circumstances. I hope that the Minister will address that problem because it seems, sadly, that the Armilla patrol will be in the Gulf for some considerable time. It would be a dereliction of duty by the Government if they did not explore other opportunities to provide our merchant sailors with proper training in mine counter-measures as soon as possible, not least because if something happened while the Armilla patrol continued in the Gulf, we would have no mine counter-measure facilities available to us in the short term.

[Mr. O'Neill]

The number of product tankers of between 2,000 and 60,000 deadweight tonnes declined by 55 per cent. from 1984 to 1986. Most seriously for the actions that we have in mind, when we study the report and consider the work to be done by product tankers of around 20,000 dead weight tonnes we find that that is where the decline has been greatest. Those tankers were most valuable at the time of the Falklands. That is the critical size of craft about which we have most cause for anxiety and I hope that the Government will address that problem.

We can be more hopeful about cruisers. Shell, one of the main owners of cruisers, has retained all-British crews, although BP has crews with some non-British nationals. The question of the dry cargo freights is very serious. We have the critical problem of transporting large and heavy military equipment, which does not fit easily into containers and the modular arrangements that are part and parcel of container ships. We may need more craft to transport the equipment that has to be brought across the Atlantic, and it will take some time for those craft to be adapted for that purpose.

The Minister spoke about cross-Channel ferries and said that we would have access to a number of foreign ferries; that may be so. He should have spoken about the fears expressed about the decline in the number of craft that will result from the completion of the Channel tunnel. Although we have access to craft in the Channel and in Europe, where our allies are close by, there is the vexed problem of the location of many craft throughout the world. The hon. Member for Hampshire, East referred to that problem.

About 35 per cent. of United Kingdom mainland registered shipping is beneficially owned abroad. When asked how these ships would be brought back, one of the Minister's hapless officials—I choose my words carefully —who is a deputy secretary, said:

> "It would depend on where the ship was, but no doubt the Royal Navy would be called upon to assist."

I can imagine the Royal Navy being rather busy doing other things at that time, especially if its ships were in inconvenient locations in other parts of the world. That does not seem to have been at the forefront of that official's mind when answering questions. I hope that when the Minister gets around to reading the report—which, God forbid, the same official may produce—he will look at that comment and ensure that we are given a better answer.

We shall leave aside the images of the British Navy commandeering ships in foreign ports and acting in a way that some Governments would consider near-piracy. The most serious issue is probably the location of our crews. In the last Defence Question Time but one, the Secretary of State for Defence admitted in answer to my question that this was probably the single most pressing problem. Estimates have shown that in recent years there has been a 50 per cent. drop in the number of officers and a 42 per cent. drop in the number of ratings. More serious is the information that the number of cadets decreased from 5,197 in 1981 to 727 in 1986 and that last year only 180 people joined the service for training. Unless there is a dramatic reversal in the medium and long term, there will be insufficient numbers to man a much reduced fleet. The Defence Committee makes that point. The facts are incontrovertible.

I welcome the provisions of the Merchant Shipping Act and the target of 350 cadets per annum. The support to be given for that training is to be applauded, but we shall have to ensure that it is enough. We must take account of the point made in paragraph 56 of the Committee's report that, as long as a career in the Merchant Navy is seen as unattractive, there is little likelihood of an increase in numbers. It is not enough to provide more money; there has to be a major selling job. Some parts of the country have long Merchant Navy traditions, and the hon. Member for Argyll and Bute (Mrs. Michie) paid tribute to her constituents. Many people joined the Merchant Navy because there was little else for them to do in their part of the world. We all know that unemployment has traditionally been the best recruiting sergeant. In the 1990s, as the dip in the birth rate in the 1970s and early 1980s is reflected, there will be a demand for youth labour. There may not be the present level of youth unemployment. It will be incumbent on ship owners to provide much more attractive conditions in terms not only of the image of the Merchant Navy but of the profession's career structure.

Many British ships are crewed by non-British nationals —people from the far east, including Hong Kong, and from Comecon countries. Those men may not, to say the least, be depended upon in a time of conflict. It is dangerous to assume that those men will go to sea and wish to fight on our behalf. I would like to think that they will, but that is not a calculation that we can necessarily make. After 1997, people from Hong Kong will no longer be citizens of the British Commonwealth. That matter must be dealt with seriously and carefully and I do not believe that the Merchant Shipping Act and the changes in taxation will necessarily solve it.

We can see from paragraph 62 of the report that it came as a surprise to the Committee

> "that it has taken so long for the Atlantic Alliance, and in particular the United Kingdom with its long maritime tradition, to recognise a grave and worsening defect in strategic capability."

The Government's proposals are not so radically different from those that Ministers and officials offered the Committee. I say that not because I wish to carp and criticise, but because I believe that the Government would be deluding themselves if they considered that their proposals would make that much difference. The Committee said:

> "they offer only marginal prospects for improving the situation."

The Minister's additional proposals do not go anywhere near as far to deal with the problem.

The Committee has attacked the optimism that has been described as demonstrably unjustified. It also noted that the worst case scenarios have been realised. The measure of the Committee's despair was shown by the fact that, in extremis, it turned to the Prime Minister to take charge. However, the fox has been shot on this occasion, because we have been told that the Prime Minister has been keeping an eye on it and that it has been one of her major concerns. She can barely sleep at night because of her anxieties about the Merchant Navy. We believe that the Prime Minister's anxiety might be of some additional assistance. If it is, so much the better.

The requirements are clearly set out by the Committee —and, with respect, they are not for the Prime Minister or her Ministers of State—and they concern the availability of merchant shipping for defence purposes, which is governed by three factors—first, the number of flagged ships; secondly, their accessibility when they are needed; and, thirdly, the availability of a pool of seafarers to man them. Those three factors require us to look at the ownership of our merchant fleet, to find ways of returning ships to the British flag, and to increase the size and capacity of our fleet. We must find better tax and social security regimes to encourage young people to go to sea. All those things must be carried out quickly or the next time we discuss such a report we will be discussing not our merchant fleet but an obituary on it.

9.32 pm

Miss Ann Widdecombe (Maidstone): I am grateful for the opportunity to speak in the debate, but as other hon. Members wish to speak I will try to be brief.

I too congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Hampshire, East (Mr. Mates) and all the members of the Defence Select Committee on their report. I also congratulate my hon. Friend the Minister and the Government on their measures to counteract the decline of the merchant fleet. Although my remarks will be somewhat critical of what is happening, they in no way diminish either my gratitude for those measures or my respect for the deep thought that has gone into them.

The fundamental point to remember is that the British merchant fleet must play two roles. It can be called upon to play a wartime role, but during the long intervals of peace in between it essentially plays a merchant and economic role. Therefore, it must be subject to economic forces. The decline that has occurred during the 1980s is not because the Government have allowed that decline, or for any other Government inspired reasons. Rather it is because economic factors have led to a contraction in merchant shipping in general. Those factors include the move towards containerisation, the wages and taxes prevalent in the United Kingdom, and the fall in oil imports.

Such factors, or other economic factors, will always influence the size of the merchant fleet. That is why I do not wholly share the optimism expressed by my hon. Friend the Minister of State for the Armed Forces. Although I am perfectly happy to say, "Yes, the terrible decline, not just of the 1980s generally, but especially of the past three years during which there has been another substantial decline, may well have been arrested," and I am even quite happy to say, "We may see the shipping industry improve somewhat," that does not mean that we shall not enter a future period of adverse economic factors. If that happens, we are moving from too weak a base to sustain that base. That is my principal worry.

Concern has been expressed this evening about the differences in the figures that have been supplied. Going back even a few months and looking at the Government's own defence estimates, there is enough evidence to provide a terrible warning. It is said that if it is necessary to requisition vessels from the merchant fleets across NATO, 1,642 available vessels will be required. We are told that all those would be needed. A reserve is not built in to the strength of the available fleet. I repeat that all of them would be needed.

We are too dependent on the good will of those operating foreign registers and on the geographical dispersal of all those ships at the time they are needed for us to have any room for manoeuvre. A slight improvement in the size of the merchant fleet will not mean a major improvement in the base from which we operate because we should already have slightly more ships than we can foresee needing, and not simply an adequate number of ships.

The decline is well known and the statistics do not need detailed rehearsal. However, it is worth noting that in the past five years stern trawlers, fishing trawlers, cargo vessels, liners, roll-on/roll-off ferries and tugs have all shown a substantial decline. A slight arrestment of that decline will not supply us with a good base for the future.

Furthermore, we were told at the time of the defence estimates that there was an estimated deficiency of 2,000 to 3,000 officers and 2,000 to 3,000 ratings should we have to call up all those ships at a time of emergency. Although I congratulate the Government on their efforts to increase the number of cadets recruited into the Merchant Navy, that deficiency nevertheless exists.

It is not enough to say that the fleet may be smaller but that it is more efficient, because this is one area in which numbers are crucial. We must have a certain number of ships to call on in an emergency and one may have to have them in given locations. It is not enough simply to have an efficient fleet; there must be enough ships, men and equipment to call upon and to call up fast, efficiently and with complete certainty. I am not convinced that we have that base or that the measures that have been taken so far —although I welcome them—are such as to enhance it for the foreseeable future. They certainly will not do so in the medium term.

We need to address ourselves to the somewhat unfair competition that we face and to address much more closely the question of subsidies and what other countries are doing. I echo the regret expressed by my hon. Friend the Member for Dorset, South (Mr. Bruce) that there is not a representative of the Treasury present because the role of the Treasury is crucial.

No matter what the difficulty of trying to combine an economic and efficient force with the uneconomic factors against it, we must accept that we must do so even if it means an element of subsidy. I would welcome some further elucidation from my hon. Friend the Minister of State and our right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport about what we are planning to do in the next five years, not to maintain our base, but substantially to enhance it so that in a few years' time we do not see in the defence estimates the age-old statement, "We will need all these ships"; we should see, "We shall need most of these ships."

9.40 pm

Mr. Julian Brazier (Canterbury): My hon. Friend the Member for Maidstone (Miss Widdecombe), in her very eloquent speech, set out the difficulties in the market place which have led to the shortages of shipping. I must reinforce what she says, having worked, most recently last summer, for a shipyard which specialised in ship repair. The situation in the shipping markets is desperate, and unfortunately, in the United Kingdom, for a number of reasons, it is likely to get worse in some areas.

To mention just one reason that came up earlier in the debate, it is absurd not to recognise that the Channel tunnel will inevitably lead to a very significant decline in the number of ferries. I do not say that against the Channel tunnel; the decision has been made on that. We are looking

[Mr. Julian Brazier]

at a world shipping market with grotesque oversupply in some categories of ships, in which almost every country in the world is now subsidising its merchant navy.

The Soviet Union is very conscious of the importance not just of merchant shipping but of every category of supposedly civil vessels. All of them are centrally planned and co-ordinated: their fighting navy, their merchant vessels, their ubiquitous fishing fleets and, indeed, the research vessels which nominally belong to various Soviet universities. To mention just one category of supposedly civil ship, they are producing large numbers of ice-strengthened dry-cargo ships for use along their northern coastline. Many of those ships are built outside the Soviet Union, in, for example, Finland. In all cases they have strengthened hoists so that they can carry heavy weapons on their decks. In many cases the larger ones are nuclear driven and some are even fitted to carry hovercraft for transporting goods to shore. I need hardly say that their secondary role in war would be all too obvious.

The same applies with civil aviation, and the debate is supposed to be about civil aviation as well as shipping. Many Aeroflot aircraft are designed to have a secondary war role. They have strengthened floors so that heavy equipment can be put into them and they are convertible, in some cases, for use for parachuting, the Soviet Union having eight airborne divisions.

Two basic aspects have come up time and again in the debate—two reasons why we should be concerned about the Merchant Navy and the civil aviation fleet. One is direct support for the fleets and the RAF in time of war, and the other is the wider economic needs of the nation.

On the direct support side, I put it to my hon. Friend the Minister that there is enormous scope for cost-effective use of civil assets in a secondary military role. With the Atlantic Conveyor we see a small example of the sort of thinking that could be used here. This extends, however, far beyond the larger merchant vessels. There are many other examples of civil assets that could be used in a secondary military role with a very small amount of money spent up front: a lot of our civil engineering equipment, for example, and many civil aircraft.

Eighteen months before the Falklands war we were given an opportunity to fit some TriStars being sold to British Airways with equipment that would have made them available in a secondary role for air-to-air refuelling. The cost of doing it in advance would have been very modest, but the idea was turned down.

More important than that are the economic needs of the nation, which have been mentioned time and again in the debate. I cannot stress sufficiently that the Soviets recognise this. They are subsidising their cargo vessels, which can compete against us very effectively because they are subsidised. Almost every country in the free world is subsidising its merchant navy to some extent.

My hon. Friend the Minister stressed the problems with subsidies within the EC. In fact, of course, the EC's fleet, as a proportion of total world shipping, is falling. Outside the EEC large subsidies are provided. Two years ago I visited the largest shipyard in Venezuela and it provides enormous subsidies for its merchant fleet.

As an enthusiastic supporter of Adam Smith, I wish to God that there was a way in which we could maintain our merchant fleet without looking for artificial subsidies and supports of one sort or another. But our merchant fleet will be squeezed out if we are unwilling to subsidise it. I do not wish to pooh-pooh or thrust aside the steps that the Government have taken. The measures in the Merchant Shipping Bill are welcome, especially the late amendment on cabotage. I hope that the powers in that Bill will be used by the Secretary of State for Transport. Of course, it is sensible to have a merchant naval reserve and the enlargement of the business expansion scheme from £500,000 to £4 million is a welcome measure. They are modest measures, however, compared with what most other countries do.

A rollover relief which would enable our shipowners to re-equip would be extremely valuable. It would also enable our ships to become vastly more competitive. Sweden, for example, suffers from the problems of extremely expensive crews. By re-equipping its fleet with modern vessels, which can survive on small crews, the Swedish navy is becoming extremely competitive despite its high labour costs.

One of the difficulties that we face is that the cost of Third world crews is a great deal less than the cost of British crews. We cannot contend with some of the reasons for that, but, to be frank, a number of Third world ships, manned by Third world crews, have health and safety standards that would be unacceptable on a vessel using British seafarers. We could go some way to solving that problem by considering removing the national insurance contributions of British seafarers who spend a large proportion of the year at sea. The Select Committee on Defence and the Select Committee on Transport have published extremely effective reports and they highlight the serious problems that we face because of the potential shortage of vessels in a time of tension and war. That shortage could imperil our ability to keep ourselves going under the threat of war. The potential effect of that shortage would be to diminish the conventional stance of our armed forces. I do not believe that we will solve the matter by making it an MOD responsibility. Civil defence is not an MOD responsibility and for a long time it has been effectively organised by the Home Office. I welcome the increase in the civil defence budget.

The problems faced by our merchant fleet will be sorted out only when we have one Minister with clear responsibility for all aspects of shipping and, dare I say it, shipbuilding. That Minister should be in the Department of Transport and he should be responsible for monitoring the defence aspects of merchant shipping, as he would be the only man who would have authority to do something about it. He should be answerable to the House on that matter.

We need a proper co-ordinated policy that takes into account tax, employment and trade factors and a Minister who is answerable to the House for all those matters. We will then have a shipping policy that meets the needs of the nation and, God save us, our potential needs in war.

9.49 pm

Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith (Wealden): It is probably rather rash of me to say anything at this late moment in the debate, which has been attended by so many hon. Members who are great experts on this matter. However, I do not want the moment to pass without congratulating my hon. Friend the Member for Hampshire, East (Mr. Mates) on his skilled chairmanship—and thanking the members of his Committee. I assure him that when I go abroad as chairman of the military committee of the NATO Assembly I find the reports that he and his Committee have produced immensely valuable, not only in a British, but in a NATO context—none more so than the report on this subject.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has a difficult task, not least because he must face up to the issue of scarce resources. Many military demands apart from those that are the subject of this debate are made on us. He is also faced with the ambiguity of NATO's defence policy, about which I have listened to a great many briefings. NATO does not speak with a voice that makes it easy for us to carry out a single-minded policy of reinforcing the forces that we already have. No one is quite sure whether we will reinforce before or after hostilities have started.

If I had more time I should use extracts from the report by the Select Committee on Defence—specifically from the excellent memorandum submitted by Mr. F. E. C. Gregory of the department of politics in the university of Southampton. To judge from some briefings, one might imagine that we were going to fight world war I all over again, with great convoys steaming across the Atlantic —or even world war II. Many people would dispute that. In the memorandum, Mr. Gregory quotes distinguished people such as one of our former Chiefs of the Defence Staff, Lord Carver:

"Unless reinforcements and supplies reach this side of the Atlantic before hostilities start then I have not much hope, whether they come by air or sea, that they will be very relevant to the situation."

Others, too, have made the point. As one United States army officer put it, the next war

"is going to be . . . a come as you are war."

This sort of ambiguity makes it extraordinarily difficult.

Mr. O'Neill *indicated assent.*

Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith: I am glad to see the hon. Member for Clackmannan (Mr. O'Neill) nodding his agreement.

Apart from the numbers of surface vessels of the Royal Navy, we should also consider that the effectiveness of our forces does not depend on numbers but on the extent to which such vessels provide effective modern weapons systems. My hon. Friend the Member for Dorset, South (Mr. Bruce) made the interesting point that in the Falklands war we were able to clip on to our merchant ships—thereby making them extremely effective—container boxes that contained modern effective weapon systems. I discovered at first hand the other day, when visiting the Westland-Augusta project in Italy, that helicopters such as the EH101 could greatly increase the value that could be given to our ships by strengthening the Royal Navy's efforts to deal with anti-submarine warfare. We might concentrate our attention on that aspect rather than—as we too often do—on the numbers of merchant vessels that we have.

I hope that as these arguments are developed—we have not reached the end of them—we shall hear rather more about what the agreed strategy is and about how we can make our existing ships more effective by using more effective up-to-date weapons systems.

9.53 pm

Mr. Mates: This has been a useful debate and I congratulate all hon. Members who have taken part in it. It has been an extraordinary debate too, in that hon. Members from both sides of the House have spoken with one voice—a voice of concern. The House seems to be entirely unanimous about this and, to be fair, the Minister was by no means complacent.

It was apt for some hon. Members to remind us that perhaps deterrence starts with strategic nuclear weapons but finishes at the lowest level with conventional troops and civilian shipping, without which total deterrence looks less credible. It is back to the old phrase

"For want of a nail, the shoe was lost."

While this may not be a very romantic part of the whole of the Western Alliance's deterrent, it is nevertheless crucial.

The dilemma is evident and is mentioned not only in our report, which looks just at defence, but in the Department of Transport report as well. For economic reasons, some of which are understandable and some of which are less than attractive to contemplate, the fleet has been in a constant state of decline. That decline is not only in numbers and in deadweight tonnage, about which there can be no argument, but in the specific quality and type of ships that are most useful for defence purposes should we come to a period of crisis or tension that might lead to war.

My right hon. Friend the Minister has accused us in our report of being too pessimistic. In the report we say at some length that we do not think that the Government's optimism is justified. Those two remarks are there. We have been making these warning sounds for eight years, which is as long as the Select Committee on Defence in its present form has existed. It was one of the first subjects that we tackled because it seemed to us then to be an important element that was giving rise to concern. Successive Committees have come back to it no fewer than three times. If nothing else does, that shows, the House the consistency of our concern.

So far we have not been wrong. Our figures were brought out and we were told that we were wrong, especially three years ago, but the proof of the pudding this time round is that we were right and the Government were wrong. We were not working on the wrong figures. We had taken the right advice and the decline has proceeded, as we predicted. It gives me no comfort to say this, but I hope that it adds force to the fact that, whatever else we have done, we have produced a unanimous report right across all shades of opinion and have looked at this matter as carefully as possible.

If we have been too pessimistic no one would be more delighted than I to own up to that if, as I suspect, we return to this matter next year or the year after. If the Government have been too optimistic I hope that the Minister will have the good sense to realise that he cannot put this problem off. It is serious and we have to keep watching it and keep our finger on its pulse.

Inevitably, my right hon. Friend the Minister and his colleagues in the Ministry of Defence are looking at much more crucial and immediate matters such as the size of the surface fleet, for example. Had we been discussing the report on that he and I could have had a rather more rigorous debate. I think that this report takes us a good distance down that road.

The problems of the future procurement of aircraft, tanks and all the other things must gravely concern the Ministry of Defence because it does not have the funds to match the commitments put upon it. The Ministry has our sympathy about that. This matter is bound to be neglected, not least because, as my hon. Friend the Member for

[Mr. Mates]

Canterbury (Mr. Brazier) said, it is one of those things that falls between the stools of two Departments and therein always lies a danger. One Department is looking towards the other. The Department of Transport says that the merchant fleet is its business, but that it is not really interested in defence, only in the economic side. The Ministry of Defence says that the merchant fleet will be needed only if we go to war and that the Department of Transport is looking after it.

One of the more important recommendations that I hope will be taken up and considered across the board is co-ordination between Departments. We must ensure that this, above all, is monitored properly. If the Minister says that we have rung the alarm bells too loudly, I am prepared to be judged on that, but the most criminal thing of all would be to ignore the alarm bells until the fleet had declined to such an extent that it was too late to do anything credible about it and thereby damage the deterrence on which we have spent so much time and effort.

It being Ten o'clock, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *proceeded, pursuant to paragraph (5) of Standing Order No. 52 (Consideration of estimates) and the Order this day, to put forthwith the Questions necessary to dispose of the proceedings on Estimates, 1988-89 (Class I Vote 1, Class IX, Vote 1 and Class X, Vote 1).*

Resolved,

That a sum, not exceeding £4,503,563,000, be granted to Her Majesty out of the Consolidated Fund to defray the charges which will come in course of payment during the year ending 31st March 1989 for expenditure by the Ministry of Defence on personnel costs etc. of the Armed Forces and their Reserves and Cadet Forces etc., personnel costs etc. of Defence Ministers and of certain civilian staff employed by the Ministry of Defence on movements; certain stores; supplies and services; plant and machinery; charter of ships; certain research; lands and buildings; sundry grants; payments abroad including contributions and subscriptions to international organisations and grants in aid.

CLASS IX, VOTE 1

HOUSING (ENGLAND)

BED-AND-BREAKFAST ACCOMMODATION

Resolved,

That a sum, not exceeding £1,120,244,000, be granted to Her Majesty out of the Consolidated Fund to defray the charges which will come in course of payment during the year ending 31st March 1989 for expenditure by the Department of the Environment on subsidies, improvements and investments, grants to housing associations and the Housing Corporation and other sundry services. —*[Mrs. Roe.]*

CLASS X, VOTE 1

ENVIRONMENTAL AND PLANNING SERVICES (ENGLAND)

GIPSY SITES

Resolved,

That a sum, not exceeding £6,530,000, be granted to Her Majesty out of the Consolidated Fund to defray the charges which will come in course of payment during the year ending 31st March 1989 for expenditure by the Department of the Environment on other water supply, conservation and sewerage, local authority and other environmental services (including recreation), and town and country planning (including compensation).—*[Mrs. Roe.]*

Church of England (Ecumenical Relations) Measure

10 pm

Mr. Michael Alison (Second Church Estates Commissioner, Representing Church Commissioners): I beg to move,

That the Church of England (Ecumenical Relations) Measure, passed by the General Synod of the Church of England, be presented to her Majesty for her Royal Assent in the form in which the said Measure was laid before Parliament.

In an increasing number of places throughout the country, the Church of England has been seeking closer relationships, since the 1920s, with the Protestant Free Churches in England and, since the late 1960s, with the Roman Catholic Church in England. Central to that co-operation have been shared acts of worship when clergy and ministers have preached and led prayers in one another's churches and congregations have joined in united services of worship.

Such co-operation increased rapidly in the 1960s and 1970s and today is widespread. There are more than 700 local councils of churches and almost 500 local ecumenical projects at present. The latter are places where local churches are often working together closely and where there is a considerable measure of shared worship. In many places, and in various ways, that shared worship has run ahead of the law. For example, section 15 of the Act of Uniformity 1662—to take the House back a little in this tercentenary year—requires everyone who preaches in the Church of England to have the bishop's licence. That provision has never been repealed. Therefore, technically, every time a Roman Catholic priest or Free Church minister preaches at a Church of England service, an offence is committed.

The Sharing of Church Buildings Act 1969 made it legally permissible for the first time for the Church of England and other churches to enter into binding agreements to share buildings. Although that Act allowed a measure of shared worship, that was not its primary aim. In 1980, the House of Bishops issued a code of practice on ecumenical relations to provide guidelines for ecumenical co-operation, particularly as regards the participation of Anglican clergy, non-Anglican clergy and lay people in each other's worship.

That code was an interim document. It was anticipated that the progress towards unity at a national level might soon make substantial changes in relationships between the Churches. However, sadly, those anticipated changes did not occur. For example, the proposal for a covenant between the Church of England and three of the Free Churches failed to win sufficient support in the General Synod of the Church of England in 1982, and thereafter lapsed.

Therefore, the House of Bishops established a working party under the chairmanship of the Right Reverend Cyril Bowles, lately Bishop of Derby,

"to discuss the Anglican involvement in local ecumenical development, and in particular, in Local Ecumenical Projects".

In 1984, the working party recommended that the time had come to change the law in order to make permissible a certain measure of shared worship while retaining certain safeguards.

The Measure before the House and the two canons that are proposed attempt to implement the recommendations of the Derby working party report. Therefore, the Church of England (Ecumenical Relations) Measure has been drafted in the form of an enabling provision and clauses 1 and 2 make it lawful for the General Synod to promulgate canons on ecumenical relations.

Two canons have been drafted and they are set out in the annex to the report of the Ecclesiastical Committee. One is of general application, draft canon B43, entitled "Of relations with other churches", and one deals specifically with local ecumenical projects, draft canon B44, entitled "Of local Ecumenical Projects".

It should be noted that the draft Measure gives legal authority for the Church of England, its ministers and lay people to collaborate with other churches, but there are at every point carefully drafted safeguards. For example, clause 3(a) provides that services of holy communion according to the use of the Church of England may be celebrated only by episcopally ordained priests. Clause 3(b) requires marriages according to the rites of the Church of England to be solemnised only by clerks in holy orders of the Church of England.

Clause 4 allows priests and deacons from the United Churches of south India, north India, Pakistan and Bangladesh—Churches which include former Anglicans —when visiting England for a limited period, to exercise their ministry both in the Church of England and in another church to which the measure applies. Up to now, those clergymen have had to opt either to minister in the Church of England or in the Free Church with which they are in communion.

Clause 5 gives power to the Archbishops of Canterbury and York jointly to designate the Churches to which the measure applies. It should be noted from subsection 2(c) that the measure and the proposed canons will apply only to churches which subscribe to the fundamental doctrine of the Holy Trinity and which administer the sacraments of baptism and holy communion.

Clause 6 sets out various definitions in the Measure. Clause 7 makes it possible for persons who do not hold a bishop's licence—for example, ministers of other Churches —to preach in a Church of England church, notwithstanding the provisions of the Act of Uniformity 1662, to which I referred earlier. Clause 8 contains a saving in respect of the place where Church of England marriages may be solemnised. Clause 9 is in common form.

The Measure and the canons do not go as far and as fast as ecumenical enthusiasts would like. However, they have received the overwhelming support of the diocesan synods and of the three houses of the General Synod.

At this time, when no national union schemes or proposals are before the Church of England, it is necessary to establish some rules for local Church of England churches to follow in their ecumenical relations. The draft measures enable such rules to be established.

10.8 pm

Mr. Frank Field (Birkenhead): I was going to say that after the introduction that we have heard from the Second Church Estates Commissioner, I would defy anybody to give a competent speech on this matter, but I see two Social and Liberal Democratic Members who are well known for their oratorical skills. Therefore, I should withdraw that challenge immediately because I know perfectly well that they will rise to the occasion.

I have only three small points to make and I do not possess the skills to weave them into a good debating point. Therefore, the best thing that I can do is to list them. First, as I listened to the Second Estates Commissioner I could not help thinking back to the essay written by Thomas Arnold well over 150 years ago. He thought that the Church was in such danger that it would do well to worry less about dogma and more about its comprehensiveness. Indeed, he thought that the test should be dropped, so that most citizens, apart from Roman Catholics, could become part of the then established Church. It says something about English society that 150 years later we have moved a small way towards the ideal that Arnold laid down for us. For that reason, I welcome the Measure.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): Was it not also Thomas Arnold who, as headmaster of Rugby school, said:

> My object will be, if possible, to form Christian men, for Christian boys I can scarcely hope to make."

Although that indicated Thomas Arnold's understanding of his pupils, did it not also give some evidence of his general outlook on life?

Mr. Field: It did, but to those hon. Members who understand how to give a coded message, I say that I accept the rebuke of my hon. Friend—as I shall call him tonight—the Member for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway), that in pointing to the eloquence of the Social and Liberal Democratic Members, I did not also point to him as somebody who can make a speech out of a point that did not exist at all. I look forward to hearing his contribution later.

My second point is that, in the Measure's preamble, it would have been possible for the Church to proceed by laying bishops' orders rather than seeking legislation. It is part of the Church of England's sickness that whenever there is an opportunity to ask for legislative changes, it does just that. That is all part of the politics of decline. Being a member of the Labour party and aware of the difficulties in which it finds itself, I recognise the symptoms when I see them in another body. One of the crosses I must carry is belonging to both organisations.

My final point is that, given the Synod's legislative programme, this is probably the last Measure that will come before the House and pass without a vote, as I hope it will tonight. There are stormy times ahead, and I look forward to participating in those events. Tonight I welcome this Measure, and I congratulate the Second Estates Commissioner on the eloquence with which he presented it to the House.

10.11 pm

Mr. David Wilshire (Spelthorne): I take this opportunity—the first since my election to the House—to make a general comment about Church matters. I enter this area with some trepidation because I am not an Anglican, and it is that which makes me want to speak. I am saddened that the long-awaited coming together of various Christian denominations should need the House's formal approval. My general point for the record is that the sooner there is

[Mr. David Wilshire]

disestablishment, the better—because Christianity is something that can work happily without politicians intervening.

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): Does the hon. Member for Spelthorne (Mr. Wilshire) accept that there is a strongly held view in the Anglican Church that disestablishment would be good for that Church, as it is for all the other denominations?

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Order. I remind the House that in debating this narrow Measure, it is not in order to discuss disestablishment. I realise that the hon. Member for Spelthorne (Mr. Wilshire) is still on his preamble, which is allowed before he speaks to the Measure.

Mr. Wilshire: I am touched by your generosity, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I take your point, as I take that of the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) with whom I do not disagree.

I find it enormously encouraging—as I am sure all hon. Members present in the Chamber do—that this Measure is for our consideration tonight, because clearly the concept of Christian unity is alive and well, which is something we should welcome. I hope that all hon. Members of whatever denomination rejoice in the fact that the House is being asked to consider this Measure tonight. I too hope that it will win unanimous approval.

10.13 pm

Mr. David Alton (Liverpool, Mossley Hill): The hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) said that it was possible for politicians to make points where none existed, and we are all guilty of that from time to time. But it would be wrong for a Measure of this importance to go through the House without hon. Members from every party making brief contributions to say why they support it.

I welcome the Measure. It is almost paradoxical that just two hours after our debate on the tercentenary of 1688, in which we heard so much about the old prejudices, the old bigotry and even the old hatreds, the House is now putting behind it past injustice and persecution and the glorification of such events, and thinking instead of the future and considering how much progress we have already made towards the goal of Church unity and Christian reconciliation that so many hold dear.

Many who were present at Canterbury when Pope John Paul and Archbishop Runcie came together in that historic meeting were very touched to see the culmination of a process of which the late Archbishop Ramsey was the major initiator. It is worth recalling that fact, just a week after the memorial service that was held for him in Westminster abbey.

I come from a mixed marriage, with an Anglican father and a Catholic mother—and, in two and a half weeks' time, will consummate my own ecumenical act by marrying an Anglican, the daughter of a Church of England clergyman. The hon. Member for Birkenhead will be glad to know that she comes from the broad church that he describes—in the sense that I suppose she would regard herself as coming from the evangelical wing of the Anglican church, and her father from the Anglo-Catholic tradition.

Sometimes, however, such labels can be misleading. In the Roman Catholic Church, people are often surprised at the breadth of thinking exemplified by the renewal movement of charismatics and evangelicals. We are debating this Measure in a week when the Roman Catholic Church has seen its first schism in over a century caused by those who hanker after the Tridentine rite. That split is the result of feeling among some people that progress has been too fast. Many of us feel that it has been too slow.

I agree entirely with what the hon. Member for Birkenhead said about the difficult waters that lie ahead. It will be extremely difficult to bring every Christian towards the objective of Christian unity. While the hon. Gentleman reflected on the problems in his party, my hon. Friend the Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) and I reflected that we too knew something about the problems that a merger can create—vide the mess in the Liberal-SDP alliance. If anyone has any doubts about going for the lowest common denominator or easy merger options, let me say that I do not think that that is particularly to be commended. What is commendable is a respect for one another's traditions, and a recognition of the validity of each other's orders and rites of service.

Although my Church has moved a long way in the 40 years since my parents were married, I was surprised to learn that I required dispensation to marry someone of a different religion. I had to ask permission to be married to an Anglican. I find that offensive, and I hope that it will not be long before it is changed.

Mr. Harry Greenway: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman understands—if he does not, let me explain it to him—that the same is true in the other direction. When an Anglican is marrying a Roman Catholic he is required to sign over the children, which is very sad.

Mr. Alton: That is true, although I should point out that there have been changes in the past 40 years. Forty years ago, people were expected to sign a declaration that they would bring up their children in the Catholic faith, and a partner on the other side of the mixed marriage was expected solemnly to sign such an undertaking. I am glad that that is no longer the case. I must add that the form to which I have referred does not refer to a partner's denomination, but classifies an Anglican as a person from another religion.

Mr. Frank Field: In this case, as the hon. Gentleman is marrying an Anglican, surely he would not have to sign a declaration about bringing up the children in the Catholic faith, as the Anglican Church claims to be part of that faith.

Mr. Alton: That is the point that I am making. Yet the declaration has to be made nevertheless. The form of words has been slightly mellowed from what it was 40 years ago. I have to give an undertaking that I will do my best to ensure that any children are brought up in the Roman Catholic faith. I find that difficult at this time, and I do not understand why, given the great movement that there has been, Christians cannot decide what is best for their children and ensure that they have the best possible education and are brought up with an understanding of both our traditions.

I recall that the day after I was elected to the House, the late Airey Neave was assassinated in the precincts of the House of Commons. When I made my maiden speech a couple of days later, just before the House was dissolved for the general election, I referred to my city of Liverpool. I pointed out that when I was first elected to the council in 1972 the old Protestant party still sat on the council. There was still sectarianism in that city, which has such a bitter past. Perhaps Belfast, particularly, can learn from the reconciliation that has occurred over the years in Liverpool

In 1929, when the Catholic authorities tried to obtain planning permission to build its cathedral, the Protestant party on the council, in coalition with the Conservatives, turned down that application, after the revered Councillor Longbottom, the leader of the party, led a great campaign against the construction of the cathedral. The following year, the Labour party came to power and by just one vote it gave planning permission to build the cathedral, leading the Archbishop of Liverpool at that time, Archbishop Downing, to comment that it was better to win by a hair's breadth than to lose by a Longbottom.

The city of Liverpool, its Archbishop, Dereck Warlock, and its Bishop, David Sheppard, have put the old hatreds behind them. Yet, as recently as 1949, Archbishop Warlock's predecessor, Archbishop Beck, wrote to *The Times* to say that he could not say the Lord's Prayer with an Anglican. He also refused to give a joint blessing with the Anglican Bishop of Winchester on the grounds that the bishop did not have valid orders and was only a layman.

We have come a long way since then. We have come a long way since 1829 when, as a result of Daniel O'Connell's intervention in the County Clare by-election, he was able to force the Duke of Wellington's hand to give Catholics emancipation and allow them to sit in this place. However, there are still memories. Some of the churches in my constituency were built in the form of tithe barns so as not to give offence to the established Church. Yes, we have come a long way, but it seems slightly bizarre to me that a house of 650 hon. Members, all of them I am sure waiting outside in the Lobbies in case a Division is called, should be considering matters like this at all. Surely these matters are better resolved between Christians.

I have some sympathy with the remarks of the hon. Member for Spelthorne (Mr. Wilshire) about disestablishment. It is ironic that we are debating this Measure in the week when the Church of England Synod has been talking about women priests, an issue which will cause great problems and impede reconciliation in future. We cannot dodge the possible side effect of that in terms of Christian unity. Nothing should be done to restrict the most important task of all for Christians—reconciliation.

The Measure is a useful step in that direction. One has only to look at Northern Ireland to see the scandal for Christianity when religion is used to set people at odds with one another. I pay particular tribute to the Rosstrevor community of the Church of Ireland, St. Columba house in Derry, which is run by a group of Catholics seeking reconciliation, and the Maranatha and Corrymeela groups and all those who are working in Northern Ireland trying to build bridges. It gives the lie to the atheist who points the finger and says, "See how these Christians love one another."

I am arguing for a fulsome response to Measures such as this from Catholics in the country. Respect for each other's orders and rites and a willingness to pray, worship and celebrate the eucharist together does not seem unreasonable.

We are considering a Measure allowing for joint services, including services of holy communion presided over by a minister of any other participating Church. The problem is that even if we pass this Measure, as Roman Catholics we are not allowed to participate. However much I welcome such a Measure, until my Church recognises, as it does for the Greek Orthodox Church, the right for Catholics to receive the eucharist inside the Anglican tradition, such motions are simply measures of good will and expressions of hope, rather than anything that will bind our Churches closer together.

We sometimes fool ourselves into believing that great strides have been made in accepting and respecting the beliefs of other Christian traditions. There is still hostility and suspicion. Ecumenism is sometimes only skin deep. I feel a growing sense of anger and frustration at the narrowness of vision and the obsession with Church positions which place strict limits on how far Christian laymen may go in terms of reconciliation. Arcane rules and restrictions on worship cause bewilderment, pain and hurt. It is Christianity at its worst.

These Measures are a movement in the right direction, but they are a long way short of reconciling two traditions which have so much to offer to each other. I hope that it will not be long before the right hon. Member for Selby (Mr. Alison) will introduce other Measures which will truly bring our Churches much closer together.

10.24 pm

Mr. David Nicholson (Taunton): I associate myself with my hon. Friends, if I may so term them, on both sides of the House who welcome the Measure. The hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) referred to future controversies and no doubt we shall look forward to debating them. The hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton) referred to earlier debates today on an anniversary of a subject of political and religious controversy. As you will know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, since you are a neighbour, my constituency has reason to recall from 300 and 303 years ago events such as the battle of Sedgemoor and Judge Jeffreys and the Bloody Assize—examples of political and religious intolerance and not, as an Opposition Member remarked earlier, myths. They were facts and realities.

This year we are celebrating another great anniversary —the defeat of the Spanish Armada. I believe that I am right in saying that today the university of Cambridge—not an institution with which I am closely acquainted or associated—gave honorary degrees to the King and Queen of Spain in respect of their great contributions to history and democracy in recent years. A particular college flew the Spanish royal standard today because it was established by King Philip and Queen Mary some 400 years ago. That shows how time can heal these great historical rifts which many of us were told in our schooldays were almost impossible to heal. This evening we must remember and recommend that lesson.

For those reasons I am pleased to speak briefly in this short debate and welcome the Measure.

10.27 pm

Mr. Michael J. Martin (Glasgow, Springburn): I apologise for not being present for the opening speeches, but I had an appointment outside the House and, unfortunately, I could not find a taxi.

[Mr. Michael J. Martin]

As a practising Catholic, I welcome the Measure. Like Liverpool, Glasgow inherited an Irish tradition from both sides of the divide—from Ulster and Eire. In my grandfather's time there was a great deal of bigotry. In my parents' time, some of that had died down. In my young days when a Catholic girl and a Protestant boy were going out with one another it caused anger and arguments in the families about which Church they would be married in.

I clearly remember an argument in the street between two future mothers-in-law. The son at the centre of the problem went up and said to them, "Perhaps we should discuss this out of the gaze of all the neighbours." He was told to go away and mind his own business as it had nothing to do with him. Fortunately, that was back in the 1950s. When my wife, who is a Protestant, and I were married both families were happy. I have an excellent relationship with my father-in-law and mother-in-law which meant that there was no bitterness at the wedding. That attitude exists in Glasgow at the moment. It has meant that our children have a different outlook on religion. They have more respect for other people's religions and for their parents, and that is a very good thing.

Nowadays, blatant discrimination has gone. People are not discriminated against in employment and promotion as they used to be, and companies no longer have a policy of employing only Protestants or only Catholics. Some small and, in my opinion, stupid things remain to be ironed out. When I first came to this place I heard debate about whether the heir to the throne should be entitled to marry a Catholic. I was asked to sign an early-day motion. I said, "I have an even bigger problem. There's a bowling club down the road from me, which is 150 years old and it has not had a Catholic member in all that time." These stupid things cause aggravation and small-minded people would allow them to continue.

Since I came to the House I have considered myself to have two parish churches—my parish church at home and the parish church here in Westminster, at which I have regularly attended services shared by hon. Members from all parties. That means that I now know the true meaning of the ecumenical movement. Even with all the differences of opinion that we have in this place—it is right and fitting that we do—every month or so we can meet as Christians and share in a common bond and belief which builds up our friendship.

That principle should be extended into the community as a whole. One thing that being a Member of this place has taught me is that people are willing to come together to try to break down barriers, and I am thankful for that.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That the Church of England (Ecumenical Relations) Measure, passed by the General Synod of the Church of England, be presented to Her Majesty for her Royal Assent in the form in which the said Measure was laid before Parliament.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(5) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.)

TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING

That the draft Town and Country Planning (Assessment of Environmental Effects) Regulations 1988, which were laid before this House on 14th June, be approved.

HIGHWAYS

That the draft Highways (Assessment of Environmental Effects) Regulations 1988, which were laid before this House on 17th June 1988, be approved.

HARBOURS, DOCKS PIERS AND FERRIES

That the draft Harbour Works (Assessment of Environmental Effects) Regulations 1988, which were laid before this House on 24th June 1988, be approved.

CUSTOMS AND EXCISE

That the Customs Duties (ECSC) (Amendment No. 1) Order 1988 (S.I., 1988, No. 1065), dated 16th June 1988, a copy of which was laid before this House on 17th June 1988, be approved.

RATING AND VALUATION

That the Docks and Harbours (Rateable Values) (Amendment) Order 1988, dated 31st May 1988, a copy of which was laid before this House on 10th June, be approved. —*[Mr. Boscawen.]*

Question agreed to.

WELSH GRAND COMMITTEE

Ordered,

That during the proceedings on the matter of the Effect of Government Legislation on the People of Wales the Welsh Grand Committee has leave to sit twice on the first day on which it shall meet, and that, notwithstanding the provisions of Standing Order No. 88 (Meetings of standing committees), the second such sitting shall not commence before Four o'clock nor continue after the Committee has considered the matter for two hours at the sitting.—*[Mr. Boscawen.]*

School Building (Cornwall)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Boscawen.]*

10.33 pm

Mr. Robert Hicks (Cornwall, South-East): Through you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, may I thank Mr. Speaker for allowing me the opportunity to raise again so soon the important subject of Cornwall's school building requirements. As you, Sir, will know, I was to have raised this matter some three weeks ago, but unfortunately the day nominated for the debate does not exist in the annals of this House; it was Wednesday 15 June.

I thank my hon. Friend the Minister for his kind attendance this evening, and take this opportunity to thank him publicly for the support that he has given me over the years in respect of schools in Cornwall. He has certainly been as supportive as the restraints imposed by other Government Departments would allow him to be. From a so-called Tory wet to one who is not normally associated with my ilk in the party, that is praise indeed.

My principal reason for asking for the debate is to persuade the Department of Education and Science to recognise Cornwall's need for a meaningful capital allocation which allows the county to sustain a rolling programme of new school building—to accommodate rising numbers—and bring about a replacement and improvement programme for existing school stock. I appreciate the fact that my hon. Friend the Minister cannot give commitments about the level of future capital funding, but I want him to acknowledge publicly Cornwall's school building requirements over the next five years and assure me that his Department recognises our specific needs.

I wish to concentrate on the primary school sector, but should like first to draw attention to three other specific matters. The first concerns secondary schools, of which there are 33 in Cornwall. Nine, including Liskeard in my constituency, still occupy split sites. Clearly, that is not cost-effective. We are not making maximum use of our scarce financial and human resources. It is a waste of time and of valuable resources.

In 1973, I took a delegation to see Lord Belstead, who was then Under-Secretary of State for Education and Science. We emphasised the need for an integrated secondary school development at Liskeard. Alas, 15 years later, all the problems and frustrations associated with a split site at Liskeard still remain.

My second point is about post-16 education in the county. In recent years, there has been a tremendous expansion, albeit starting from a low base. Over the past six years, there has been significant further education provision in Saltash, the largest town in my constituency. So far, there has been a two-phase programme, with a capital injection of £1·5 million. There is enormous demand, which represents unfulfilled potential. We need developments and extensions of the progress that we have made. I remind my hon. Friend the Minister that the money for these much-needed projects must come out of the same capital allocation.

My third point relates to the new building regulations, which are to be introduced in 1991, governing school premises. Hitherto such regulations have applied only to new school buildings. After 1991, all schools should comply with the provisions in the regulations. Cornwall's estimate of the cost of implementing the new regulations to bring all existing schools up to standard is between £70 million and £80 million. That shows the scale of the financial requirements.

In 1988-89, Cornwall's capital allocation to the primary school sector was £6·4 million. All parties on the county council, all my parliamentary colleagues who represent Cornwall constituencies and I were pleased with and grateful for this allocation.

I am reminded that two years ago—I do not want the House to think that I spend all my time taking delegations to see Education Ministers—the late David Penhaligon and I went to see the then Secretary of State for Education and Science, Keith Joseph, to emphasise the needs and requirements of Cornwall. We took with us the chairman of the county council, the then chief education officer, and the former chairman of the education committee. I like to think that, on that occasion, the late David Penhaligon and I paved at least some ground and made some headway in emphasising the needs of Cornwall.

I do not wish to be ungracious, but there is a need for the £6·4 milllion not only to be sustained, but also to be improved on if the rolling programme, to which I have referred, is to be achieved.

In 1992, Cornwall's primary school population will exceed 40,000 which will be the highest number in its history. Furthermore, in 1987, the birth rate in Cornwall was the highest since the 1960s. That surely shows that movement into our county is responsible for the increased school population, and that there is also population growth within the county.

Our county chief education officer estimates that there are some 50 projects, of which 50 per cent. can be classified as major—in other words, projects involving more than £200,000-worth of work—that would merit urgent priority if there were sufficient funds. Most of those 50 projects would involve a substantial element of rebuild, replacement and improvement.

I will give two examples in my constituency—Pensilva and the St. Blazey-Biscovey area. Pensilva is a village that has grown significantly over the past decade or so. Five of its six classes have been housed in temporary accommodation since 1980. The old main building of the original school is in a bad state of repair. Cornwall is caught in a chicken and egg situation, because naturally it is reluctant to spend on upkeep and maintenance—although there is a very real need because the buildings are deteriorating—because it hopes that sooner rather than later funds will be available for a new primary school at Pensilva. It is an excellent school. The staff do a superb job in difficult circumstances, and the parents are very supportive.

Another typical example is in the St. Blazey-Biscovey area. The St. Blazey primary school is on a very restricted site, adjacent to a main road, and with very limited playing space, all of which is tarmacadam—indeed, it is the classic 19th-century Victorian school. In another part of the town, there is the Lodge Hill junior school. It is overcrowded. There is no hall or dining space. It also has a hard play area, and the nearest field for play and sport is 15 minutes away. The number of pupils is growing. None the less, it is a well run and happy environment, and all credit is due to the staff and pupils, who are well supported by an active parent-teachers association.

The problems were acknowledged in 1970. The then chief education officer wrote to the then chairman of school governers, "Something must be done," yet

[Mr. Robert Hicks]

relatively little progress has been made. The irony is that we have a new site for a school. If it were built soon, we would realise the valuable assests of the two existing sites, and by building one school serving the St. Blaxey-Biscovey area we would satify the aspirations of two schools which are on the waiting list.

I can only describe the situation in Landrake as a saga. I have had the honour to be the local Member of Parliament for 18 years, and Landrake has featured in my regular mailing list and correspondence files since 1970, and I imagine it was on those of my predecessor. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will be able to say that we are making progress. It is a voluntary-aided school. St. Germans and Stoke Climsland are also in desperate need of a new primary school.

Many requirements arise as a result of the combination of a growing school population and the need to upgrade existing buildings. The problem is especially acute in the Plymouth travel-to-work area. In the three major towns in the easternmost part of my constituency—Saltash, Torpoint and Callington—there will be a need for new schools or major extensions to existing ones in the foreseeable future because of the growth in population.

In the surrounding villages, which we might call the growth villages of the Plymouth travel-to-work area, of Landrake, Stoke Climsland and St. Germans, there is tremendous pressure on existing primary schools. Cornwall has allocated all of them as sites for new primary schools, but unfortunately resources are not available.

The Cornwall education authority faces an almost impossible—some might say invidious—task each year when determining priorities. Naturally, every community believes that its school should be top of the list. I appreciate that the problems are magnified by the fact that, during the 1950s and 1960s, relatively little was spent by a somewhat mean Cornwall county council on improving and extending school buildings—hence the backlog today.

I have not mentioned the 70 primary schools which still have outside toilets. I hope that I have conveyed to my hon. Friend the Minister the need for expenditure, whether it be on new schools or on the remodelling of existing ones. A tremendous task lies before the Cornwall education committee. It is essential that the Department of Education and Science recognises our requirements and provides sufficient resources to enable a meaningful rolling programme to be established in Cornwall.

10.49 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education and Science (Mr. Bob Dunn): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Cornwall, South-East (Mr. Hicks) on his success in obtaining this Adjournment debate on Cornwall's school building requirements. From his excellent speech, his correspondence to me and the questions that he has put to me over the years I recognise that it is an issue which has stimulated a good deal of local interest, concern and discussion.

I begin by reminding the House that since, 1980, control of local education authority expenditure has been exercised through the block allocation system introduced by the Local Government, Planning and Land Act 1980. Before that legislation, the Department of Education and Science produced lists of individual named projects to be started in a particular year.

My hon. Friend will be aware that allocations are not grants. They represent limits on the capital spending that local education authorities can undertake. They can finance projects from revenue or by borrowing. Such expenditure, including loan charges, is assisted by central Government through the rate support grant mechanism.

Again, the House will be aware that allocations are made for each of six services—education, housing, transport, social services, urban aid and other environmental services. The education allocation covers all sections of education and includes expenditure on furniture, equipment, plant and machinery, land and professional fees, as well as actual construction costs.

Local authorities are, of course, free to apply their allocations as they wish. They may move resources between services, and to a limited extent between years, but may not exceed the total of their allocations except by the application of a specific proportion—30 per cent. in 1988-89—of their accumulated capital receipts, and in a few other special circumstances.

At the same time as allocations are made to local education authorities, allocations are also made for governors' expenditure at aided and special agreement schools. These are also spending limits, but 85 per cent. of governors' expenditure is reimbursed through grant aid by the Department and, except for minor works, the Department lists those projects that can start in a particular year.

I assure my hon. Friend that the Government are well aware of the particular problems faced by Cornwall—in particular, that it retains a large number of schools housed in aging, pre-1903 buildings. Furthermore, we recognise that the school-age population in Cornwall is beginning generally to increase, especially in towns such as Liskeard and Saltash where large housing developments are planned. Consequently, there are likely to be an increasing number of "basic need" cases in the county, and these projects will, of course, be given the most careful consideration by the Department of Education and Science, along with other school improvement projects in the county, when the capital expenditure allocations for 1989-90 are decided on later this year.

I should also like to indulge myself by mentioning the level of allocations that Cornwall LEA has received in recent years, particularly in respect of "prescribed" expenditure on county and voluntary controlled schools. In 1988-89, for example, the notional schools element of the authority's prescribed allocation—at £6·274 million —is 18 per cent. higher than that of the previous year and represents 78 per cent. of its total plans, compared to a national average of 47 per cent. Furthermore, the national average was exceeded in both the two previous financial years—my hon. Friend was good enough to recognise that. In 1986-87 the authority secured 53 per cent. of its plans compared with 51 per cent. nationally and in 1987-88 it secured 77 per cent. of its plans, compared with a national average of 46 per cent.

I assure my hon. Friend that projects at aided schools will continue to be looked at sympathetically. I know that accommodation problems at the aided school at Landrake are giving rise to much concern locally. Statutory proposals relating to the school were, I understand, published on 10 June. Should those proposals be approved by my right hon. Friend in due course, the required building work would, of course, automatically receive an allocation, as the promoters would be under a duty to implement them.

My hon. Friend will, I hope, accept my assurances that I have listened carefully to what has been said tonight and that I have fully noted his concerns. The points that he has raised so well will be taken into account, along with any other representations that we may receive, before a decision is reached later this year upon the capital expenditure allocation to be provided for Cornwall in 1989-90.

I congratulate my hon. Friend on his speech and on his determination, at the second attempt, to secure this debate.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at five minutes to Eleven o'clock.

House of Commons

Friday 8 July 1988

The House met at half-past Nine o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PETITIONS

Tail Docking

9.34 am

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): I beg to ask leave to present a petition in the name of Mrs. Trediwell of the voluntary Society for Animal Protection in Middlesex. It is addressed to

the Honourable the Commons of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland in Parliament assembled. The Humble Petition of the Society for Animal Protection sheweth that tail docking of dogs is routinely carried out because the result is thought by most official docked breed associations "to improve appearance". The Royal college of Veterinary Surgeons and the British Veterinary Associations have long argued that tail docking is an unnecessary and painful surgical mutilation, sometimes causing extreme suffering and serious complications. Moreover, there is no benefit to a dog having a docked tail.

I strongly support the petition and hope that Her Majesty's Government will be able to take action in this important matter.

Wherefore your Petitioners pray that your Honourable House will amend the Protection of Animals Act 1911, to protect dogs against such unnecessary mutilation. And your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray, etc.

To lie upon the Table.

Swimming

9.36 am

Mr. Harry Greenway: I wish also to present a petition on behalf of the Amateur Swimming Association, which collected 30,000 signatures in a week. It was presented to me recently by the association and by Mr. Duncan Goodhew, an international swimmer who is well known in the House. It is addressed to

"the Honourable the Commons of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland in Parliament assembled. The humble petition of members of swimming classes, affiliated to the Amateur Swimming Association sheweth, That swimming is the most popular active recreation in the country, That the Amateur Swimming Association has 1,690 affiliated clubs with a total of approximately 300,000 members, That approximately 250,000 children and adults are taught to swim in Britain each year by swimming clubs and their members, That the ability to swim contributes both to personal safety and the good health of individuals, That the Secretary of State for the Environment and the Minister for Sport are mindful that local authorities should not put out to tender the management of publicly owned swimming facilities, without safeguarding the interests of swimming clubs and their members, That without local authority control of charges and concessionary charges, opening hours and the programming of the pools for such uses as teaching and competitions, the survival of swimming clubs, the training of swimmers for state and Olympic competition and the teaching of swimming to both children and adults will be under very grave threat."

The Amateur Swimming Association is well aware of the welcome concessions made by the Minister with responsibility for sport in his statement last week. However, it is still concerned and it has my strong support.

"Wherefore your Petitioners pray that your Honourable House will use its best endeavours to prevent the compulsory introduction of private management of publicly owned swimming facilities without safeguarding the interests of swimmers and swimming clubs.

And your petitioners as in duty bound will ever pray, etc."

To lie upon the Table.

Orders of the Day

Malicious Communications Bill

Lords amendment considered.

Clause 1

OFFENCE OF SENDING LETTERS ETC. WITH INTENT TO CAUSE DISTRESS OR ANXIETY

Lords amendment: No. 1, in page 2, line 2, leave out "level 3" and insert "level 4".

Read a Second time.

9.38 am

Mr. Greg Knight (Derby, North): I beg to move, as an amendment to the Lords amendment,

Leave out '" level 4"' and insert '"level 5"'.

I should like to congratulate my hon. Friend the hon. Member of Sherwood (Mr. Stewart) on getting his Bill through the other place largely in the form in which it was drafted. However, in my view the Bill can still be improved.

Hon. Members will probably be aware that the Bill provides for courts to impose a maximum fine of £400 on anyone found guilty of sending a malicious communication. The Lords amendment increases the fine to a maximum of £1,000, but my amendment seeks to give courts power to impose a maximum fine of £2,000. I hope that when my hon. Friend the Member for Sherwood has heard what I have to say, he will be prepared to give some ground and move away from the present maximum of £400.

On Second Reading, my hon. Friend the Minister of State, Home Office gave the reasons why he thought the maximum of £400 was correct:

> "People do not like this offence, and want to try to stamp it out, but we must get the penalty fixed at the right level. My hon. Friend"—

that is, my hon. Friend the Member for Sherwood——

> "suggests that it should be fixed at £400. In the trade that is a level 3 fine, and I think that it is probably about right". —[*Official Report*, 12 February 1988; Vol. 127, c. 635.]

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): What does a level 3 fine mean?

Mr. Knight: I accept that the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) is not a lawyer. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Skinner: Did the hon. Gentleman hear his hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Worcestershire (Mr. Forth) say that if I was a lawyer I would make a fortune?

Mr. Knight: Knowing the cantankerous nature of the hon. Member for Bolsover and the way in which he is always ready to support a good fight, I have no doubt that if he were a lawyer he would make a fortune.

The scale of fines set down by Parliament for level 1 is £50, for level 2 it is £100 and for level 3—the level to which I referred when quoting my hon. Friend the Minister—it is £400. My amendment seeks to increase the fine to level 5, which is £2,000.

Mr. Skinner: Is there anything above that?

Mr. Knight: There is nothing above that that we could properly debate today.

What is my reason for suggesting this increase to £2,000? It is not a figure that I have plucked out of the air. I should like to refer the House to the Law Commission's report on poison pen letters, published by Her Majesty's Stationery Office. The Law Commission set up for this purpose was composed of the following commissioners: the honourable Mr. Justice Ralph Gibson, who was its chairman, Mr. Trevor Aldridge, Mr. Brian Davenport QC, Professor Julian Farrand and Mrs. Brenda Hoggett. The commissioners were charged with examining the scope of the existing provisions of the criminal law for dealing with people who send poison pen letters and similar material. The review that they undertook arose out of the Law Commission's examination of the common law offence of criminal libel and was part of the programme of codification of the criminal law in England and Wales.

In quite a lengthy report, the Law Commission recommended the creation of a new statutory offence to penalise people who send or deliver poison pen letters and similar messages for the purpose of causing distress or anxiety. It concluded that the new offence should be triable only in a magistrates court. It submitted with its report a draft of what it said should be in a Malicious Communications Bill.

I am aware that my hon. Friend the Member for Sherwood based his Bill largely on the Law Commission's report, but he departed from its recommendations in respect of the penalty that was recommended. Paragraph D on page 27 of the Law Commission's report says:

> "Our working paper proposed that the maximum penalty currently available in magistrates' courts should apply in this case, that is six months' imprisonment or a fine of £2,000"—

for the benefit of the hon. Member for Bolsover, that is level 5—

> "or both. Only one commentator disagreed with our provisional proposal and suggested that three months' imprisonment might be more appropriate on the grounds that six months appeared excessive in comparison with the maximum penalty for making obscene telephone calls which is at present limited to a maximum fine of £400 (level 3), without the possibility of a sentence of imprisonment being imposed."

9.45 am

Clearly my hon. Friend the Member for Sherwood believes that the maximum penalty should be £400 because it is in line with other similar provisions. What does the Law Commission say about this matter? Paragraph 4.48 of its report says:

> "We must first explain why we favour giving magistrates' courts the power to imprison a person convicted of sending a poison-pen letter. In the working paper we gave two reasons: first, we could conceive of circumstances in very serious cases in which a sentence of imprisonment might be the only suitable form of punishment; secondly, the availability of a number of different types of sentence in magistrates' courts depends upon the existence of the power to imprison in relation to the particular offence of which the defendant has been convicted."

A magistrates court cannot make a hospital order under section 37 of the Mental Health Act 1983 unless the defendant has been convicted of an offence that is punishable by imprisonment. As some of those who will send poison-pen letters are likely to be suffering from a condition of the mind that requires medical treatment or help, I took the view in Committee that it was desirable for powers of imprisonment to be available to magistrates.

Mr. Robin Corbett (Birmingham, Erdington): The last time that we debated this subject, it was rightly said that imprisonment was not appropriate. The hon. Member for Derby, North (Mr. Knight) acknowledged that, as imprisonment is not attached to conviction in cases arising under the Bill, magistrates do not have powers under the Mental Health Act 1983, but there are many other routes by which they can advise that a convicted person should receive help and treatment.

Mr. Knight: The hon.Gentleman makes a fair point. He canvassed this matter in earlier debates on the subject, and I accept what he says. However, I can envisage occasions when the letter is so malicious and the effect on its recipient so dramatic that courts may decide, even in the absence of any medical condition, that a short period of imprisonment is appropriate.

I defend the Law Commissioner's view, which I share, that imprisonment should be available. That, however, is not the strict purpose of my amendment. I mentioned imprisonment to show the House that respected opinion that has considered this matter—the Law Commission—concluded that we should go further than my amendment. If my amendment is accepted, it will give courts power to impose fines up to £2,000. Those who have examined this subject in detail, who could colloquially be called experts, came to the view that there should be a maximum fine of £2,000 and the provision of imprisonment.

Mr. Dafydd Wigley (Caernarfon): A few moments ago the hon. Member for Derby, North (Mr. Knight) said that the courts should be able to send people to prison for repeated offences or for offences that suggest that they need treatment for a mental condition,. In those circumstances, why is the hon. Gentleman restricting the scope of his amendment to a fine of only £2,000? Why has he not followed the logic of his argument and ensured that, if necessary, the courts should be able to send someone to prison or for mental health treatment?

Mr. Knight: That is a fair question, but since I became a Member of Parliament in 1983, I have learnt that in this place one takes what one can get and that if one seeks to obtain an amendment that is strictly in line with one's views one may alienate a large number of hon. Members. My amendment is a compromise. It does not go as far as I should like, but it goes further than that provided by my hon. Friend the Member for Sherwood. It also goes further than those in another place wanted it to go. However, it is a step in the right direction.

The Law Commission, having examined all the alternatives, said in paragraph 4.50 on page 28 of its report:

> "Accordingly, we recommend that the maximum penalty for the new offence should be six months' imprisonment or a fine of £2,000 . . . or both."

Having examined all the options, the Law Commission did not equivocate. It came down unreservedly in favour of both imprisonment and a fine of the order that I am urging the House to accept. As the hon. Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley) has pointed out, my proposal is more modest than the Law Commission's recommendation.

Mr. Eric Forth (Mid-Worcestershire): I did not take part in the previous proceedings, and I am therefore a little confused about what my hon. Friend the Member for Derby, North (Mr. Knight) has said. Why has it taken so long to arrive at this position? Can he explain why my hon. Friend the Member for Sherwood (Mr. Stewart) set a lower level of penalty during the early stages while at this fairly late stage my hon. Friend the Member for Derby, North is suggesting a penalty that is in line with the Law Commission's recommendation? That is odd.

I should have thought that my hon. Friend the Member for Sherwood would have arrived at that figure straight away. Why are we reaching it by such a roundabout route?

Mr. Knight: That is not strictly correct. The Bill was debated in Committee of the whole House and I urged my hon. Friend the Member for Sherwood to move further up the scale than level 3. In reply, the Minister of State, Home Office, my hon. Friend the Member for Oxford, West and Abingdon (Mr. Patten) said:

> "The sending of a malicious communication certainly causes distress to the recipient, but we must not make the penalty out of proportion to the gravity of the offence and out of proportion to other offences already on the statute book. The penalty at level 3 is the same as that for broadly similar offences under the Telecommunications Act 1984 and Public Order Act 1986."

Both my hon. Friend the Member for Sherwood and my hon. Friend the Minister of State declined to go further, despite my entreaties. They said that level 3 was in line with other measures on the statute book. As the other place took a similar view to that which I expressed in Committee, I am taking this opportunity to push my hon. Friend the Member for Sherwood a little further. When he has listened to the arguments, I hope that he will agree to give some ground. If he is not prepared to go all the way and accept my amendment, I hope that he will at least agree to accept the Lords amendment.

Mr. Forth: It seems that my hon. Friend the Member for Sherwood and my hon. Friend the Minister of State are isolated, because the other place appears to support my hon. Friend the Member for Derby, North (Mr. Knight). I am sure that he will receive a great deal of support from hon. Members. I detect that the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) is attracted by his argument. The Minister of State's judgment is usually impeccable, but it can go astray occasionally. Both he and my hon. Friend the Member for Sherwood are equating this offence with other offences, but my hon. Friend the Member for Derby, North begs to differ. He thinks that the offence is different in its nature, quality and quantity. Is that the right interpretation of my hon. Friend's argument?

Mr. Knight: I agree with my hon. Friend's last statement, because my hon. Friend the Minister of State went on to say:

> "We must be consistent and keep the penalties for similar offences in line."—[*Official Report*, 22 April 1988; Vol. 131, c. 1155.]

I do not want to be unfair, however, to my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department.

Mr. Skinner: What is the hon. Gentleman dragging him in for?

Mr. Knight: I am dragging him in to absolve him of any blame, because in Committee it was the Minister of State, my hon. Friend the Member for Oxford, West and Abingdon who put forward these arguments.

Mr. Corbett: Where is he?

Mr. Knight: My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department is here today. As he is a very reasonable man, I hope that he will accept some of my points and that the Government will agree that we should move up the scale.

Mr. Chris Butler (Warrington, South): Is there not an argument that higher penalties should apply to similar offences, such as malicious telephone calls, that can be deeply disturbing to those who receive them?

Mr. Knight: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. I do not accept the argument that, as the law provides for lower penalties for other offences, we should go along with them. If I understand him rightly, he is saying that we should consider increasing the penalties for other offences. If that is his point, I wholeheartedly agree with him.

The question for the House is, what is the right penalty. My hon. Friend the Member for Sherwood drafted his Bill with the best of intentions, but I think that he has got it wrong. The level is too low and we should increase it. I hope that the House will consider accepting the Lords amendment, even if it cannot accept my amendment.

Mr. Wigley: I, too, was not involved in the earlier stages of the Bill, but am I right in assuming that a letter or other article that conveys a message includes a tape-recorded message, in which case the offence, as the hon. Member for Warrington, South (Mr. Butler) said, could be very deeply offensive and would justify a heavier punishment?

Mr. Knight: I do not know whether the hon. Gentleman is a lawyer, but he has correctly analysed the Bill. It includes tape recordings. It also includes obscene messages put on floppy disks. Such messages would not be read until they were inserted in the computer. The scope of the Bill is fairly wide-ranging and would include obscene messages sent in that way.

Mr. Skinner: I get what can loosely be described as obscene pen letters from Tiny Rowland. He sends them to me on behalf of Lonrho plc to encourage me to send them on to Harrods. I think that he sends them to other Members of Parliament. Would such letters be described as poison pen letters? They are sent by Tiny Rowland to Members of Parliament with a view to causing anxiety and distress at Harrods.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. We are discussing a narrow point, not the Bill in general.

Mr. Skinner: We have to reach a decision about the different levels of penalty. We are not messing around with £400. We are discussing levels 3 and 4, and we could reach level 5. I have to consider the poison pen letters that are sent from Tiny Rowland via me to Harrods. Is that point covered by the amendment moved by the hon. Member for Derby, North (Mr. Knight)? I want to know——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. This is supposed to be an intervention. If the hon. Gentleman wishes to address the House, perhaps he will try to catch my eye later, but interventions must be brief.

Mr. Skinner: I am after the lawyer's advice first. I want to know whether the letter from the Attorney-General that caused anxiety and distress to the right hon. and learned Member for Richmond, Yorks (Mr. Brittan) during the Westland affair could be——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I think that the hon. Gentleman has gone far enough—perhaps too far.

Mr. Skinner: I have certainly got him worried.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The hon. Gentleman has got me worried.

Mr. Skinner: It could be a worrying day.

10 am

Mr. Knight: I am quite prepared to give the hon. Gentleman advice outside the Chamber, but of course he will have to pay the usual fee.

Mr. Forth: The usual exorbitant fee.

Mr. Knight: Indeed—on level 5.

Perhaps Tiny Rowland believes that the hon. Member for Bolsover is running for leadership of the Labour party, and that is why he is sending him these missives. The Bill would cover all communications, including those to a Member of Parliament, so if the hon. Gentleman is distressed or caused anxiety by any letter that he receives, were the Bill to become law he could ensure that the sender was properly prosecuted.

Mr. Forth: If a Member of Parliament sends an offensive letter to a constituent will he be covered by parliamentary privilege, or will he be subject to the provisions of the Bill?

Mr. Knight: The Bill provides that when a letter is sent in the normal course of business that constitutes a defence. I suppose that a Member of Parliament could argue that if his letter was in the proper terms, he had not committed an offence. In my opinion, the defence would not be absolute. I can envisage circumstances in which a Member of Parliament could fall foul of the law.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Douglas Hogg): I am sorry to distress my hon. Friend, but the offence applies only to dunning letters, and I am not sure how often Members of Parliament send dunning letters to their constituents.

Mr. Knight: I suppose that if a Member of Parliament was also a lawyer who was owed some money, and he wrote on his House of Commons headed paper, that might be covered, but I agree that that is an arguable point.

I have read and reread the Law Commission's report and I can see that it was not hesitant in coming to its recommendation on the level of fine. It is not as if it concluded that it was an arguable case, and that there were weighty arguments in favour of level 3 or level 4. It came down unequivocally and unanimously in favour of level 5. With the greatest respect, I think that my hon. Friend the Member for Sherwood has missed the point to some extent, because, if we agree to level 5, we are not saying that in every case there should be a fine of £2,000. We are saying that we are giving the courts power, if necessary, to impose the larger fine.

I will give an example that will be close to the heart of the hon. Member for Bolsover. It is an example vaguely analogous to the Geoffrey Collier case. A stockbroker who is a millionaire sends a malicious communication designed to cause anxiety and distress—perhaps to do with share dealings or some other business proposition that he wants to force through. He causes so much distress and depression to the recipient that the recipient suffers a complete breakdown in health. Are we to say that the fine of £2,000 is too much in that case?

The main purpose of criminal proceedings is punishment, and the courts of course will consider the person they have before them and find out what his income is. They will pitch the level of the fine to some extent according to that person's wealth. If the courts consider that that person should know better and should be setting an example, they will often decide to impose a very heavy fine. If the courts are dealing with someone very wealthy, who has sent a most obnoxious letter that has caused distress, and perhaps injured the health of the recipient, can we say that £400 is sufficient? I say that it is not.

Mrs. Teresa Gorman (Billericay): It is unfortunate that my hon. Friend chose a stockbroker as an example, because, generally, he would be involved in perfectly legitimate and honourable business practices. He would be careful how he writes to people, because his very business depends on good relations with his clients and the public. Will my hon. Friend comment on someone in a powerful position, such as the leader of a trade union, who may well write a letter to one of his members threatening that, if that person does not conform to certain practices, such as an unofficial strike——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Briefly, please.

Mrs. Gorman: —he may be sent a letter saying that he will lose his job. How does my hon. Friend react to that? What level of punishment does he consider appropriate in that case?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. If hon. Members wish to make speeches, I wish that they would do it in the usual way—by seeking to catch the eye of the occupant of the Chair rather than by making long interventions.

Mr. Knight: I do not want my hon. Friend to think that I am mounting an attack on stockbrokers. I was merely giving an example of a case in which the courts might want to impose a far heavier fine than £400. As to the case that my hon. Friend mentioned, it would all depend on the wording of the letter and whether there was an unwarranted threat, which is what the Bill requires. It also requires that the information is false and that the sender knows or believes it to be false. The purpose of the communication should be to cause personal distress or anxiety. I can envisage a case of a trade union official exceeding his authority, being particularly offensive and causing distress, and that being covered by the Bill.

Mr. Corbett: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that such a letter would be written by a general secretary or another officer within the rules of the union, or at the instruction of the union's executive council? The letter would not be written in the context in which we have conducted this debate. The hon. Gentleman may take the view that it is unlikely that the Bill would cover such a letter. There may be other ways in which to deal with it.

Mr. Knight: I agree that such a case is unlikely. I believe that most trade union leaders and officials try to conform to the law. In the normal course of their business, if they sent a letter that is robust but no more, the Bill would not be relevant. My hon. Friend the Member for Billericay (Mrs. Gorman) spoke about a letter which was so offensive and over the top that it would probably be in breach of union rules, but of course there are rogue trade union officials, just as there are rogue stockbrokers. The point of my example, however, was simply to draw attention to the adequacy or otherwise of the proposed level of fine.

I hope that, having heard my examples, the whole House agrees that the proposed level of fine is inadequate. We should send a clear message to the courts that we regard the sending of malicious communications so seriously that we are prepared to empower them to impose very heavy fines when appropriate. Such fines, however, are not mandatory. I believe that level 5 is about right. If my hon. Friend the Member for Sherwood cannot go with me all the way, I hope that he will reflect on the matter and perhaps agree to urge the House to accept the Lords amendment.

I am not particularly wedded to my amendment, but I tabled it so that I could urge my hon. Friend to go further than a £400 fine. After the interventions from hon. Members on both sides of the House expressing the apparently unanimous view that the Bill does not go far enough, I hope that my hon. Friend the Member for Sherwood will consider the argument and agree that we should raise the fine from level 3.

Mr. Andy Stewart (Sherwood): There have already been lengthy discussions in this House and in another place about the penalty proposed in my Bill. Concern has been expressed about whether the penalty is sufficiently high to punish adequately or deter those who send malicious communications. In Committee in the House, I resisted an amendment from my hon. Friend the Member for Derby, North (Mr. Knight) to increase the fine to level 5 on the standard scale to a maximum of £2,000. My hon. Friend the Member for Derby, North has now tabled his amendment again. I still believe that a maximum fine of £2,000 is too high.

Sending a malicious communication can cause serious distress and it is right that such an offence should attract a level of penalty that properly reflects the gravity of the offence. However, £2,000 is the highest financial penalty that may normally be awarded by a magistrates' court. As such, it should apply to offences which may be dealt with by a magistrates court, in particular cases which may cause physical hurt or damage to a person or property or cases where a person stands to gain financially from an illegal act.

Sending a malicious communication is serious. We all recognise the misery that that can cause and agree that the action should be punished. That is the purpose of my Bill. However, it is not a requirement of the offence that distress or anxiety should actually be caused. For that reason, I do not believe that the offence falls into the most serious category of offences with which a magistrates court may have to deal. However, I recognise the concern expressed in the reasoned arguments of my hon. Friend the Member for Derby, North and in another place about the adequacy of a fine of level 3 which I proposed in my Bill. I accept the need to respond to that concern.

When the Bill's sponsor in another place, Lord Campbell of Alloway, sought my views on the possibility of a higher penalty, I was happy on reflection, bearing in mind what my hon. Friend the Member for Derby, North had argued here, to agree that a penalty at level 4—a maximum fine of £1,000—more accurately reflected the seriousness of the offence. The amendment tabled by Lord Campbell in another place was accepted without opposition. I hope that the House will also welcome it today. In view of that, I wonder whether my hon. Friend the Member for Derby, North will consider withdrawing his amendment.

Ms. Jo Richardson (Barking): Like other hon. Members, I was not privileged to take part in earlier stages

[Ms. Jo Richardson]

of the Bill. Nevertheless, I am very interested in what is happening and what might happen when the Bill becomes law, as I hope it will. I very much welcome the Bill and applaud the hon. Member for Sherwood (Mr. Stewart) for introducing it.

We are now considering the narrow point of the penalties. Having thought about this for some time, I think that level 3 at £400, is about right. All the talk about levels reminds me of a department store. One arrives at level 3 and then goes up to level 4. When my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) referred to Harrods, I really felt that I was in a department store—*[Interruption.]* I hope that I may continue my speech without this dialogue taking place on the Benches before me.

All the discussion this morning has concerned malicious communications which might come from stockbrokers or very well-off people. From my constituency experience, I believe that the majority of malicious communications come from poorer people. I am not knocking or defending those people.

I do not want to stray into too many generalities, but I want to refer to some examples. Very often poison-pen letters and malicious communications arise from neighbourhood problems involving feelings of harassment. For example, a person in one house may feel harassed and pressured by someone living next door or in the flat above. I am sure that I need not remind hon. Members on both sides of the House about this. They need only look in their post-bags or go to their surgeries this evening to find cases where people complain bitterly that they have come to the end of their tether because of the problems caused by a neighbour. I can see hon. Members nodding in agreement.

10.15 am

We would hope that those problems would not normally result in a poison-pen letter of malicious communication, but it occasionally does. I have met constituents who are the persecuted and I have also met the persecutors. I have met people who have received malicious communications and poison-pen letters stemming from the difficulties and friction caused by neighbourhood problems.

We must watch out for another point when we are considering the level of fine. I do not want to see people driven to desperation by the problems that they face in their daily lives then subjected to a fine of £1,000 or £2,000.

Mr. Corbett: All hon. Members will recognise the description that my hon. Friend has given of what we will loosely describe as "neighbour" problems. My hon. Friend may be interested to know that Birmingham has established a pilot conciliation scheme with help from one of the universities to try to resolve the problems before they cause people to send abusive or poison-pen letters. Other local authorities might want to consider that scheme in due course.

Ms. Richardson: I am very grateful for that interesting point and I hope that we will consider it.

Many of the people to whom I am referring do not know where to go to make proper complaints. I need not remind hon. Members of the common phrase which constituents use in surgeries, "You are my last resort." My heart always sinks when I hear that. I feel that they have been to everyone else and are now coming to me and I probably have no solution either.

People are not always aware of the fact that the persecutor may have a problem. They may not be aware that a reference to the social services department may be the best course of action. Or, if council tenants are involved, reference to the housing deparment might be the answer.

I believe that the penalty may be over-severe for another category. Some single men and women may be lonely and in some cases unable to go out very often. Those people may spend their time at the window looking up and down the road at their neighbours. They may not invent situations about neighbours, but they might see a young woman going out, temporarily leaving her children in the house. The person watching may think, "How terrible." That person may send a letter which might be construed as a malicious communication. That may sound far-fetched in the rather glorified atmosphere of stockbrokerage that we have just been talking about. However, it is much more the reality than the high-flown kind of malicious communication referred to by my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover in terms of his letters from Tiny Rowland.

Mr. Skinner: When Tiny Rowland writes to me, he is not sending me a malicious communication that would cause me anxiety and distress. I never read the letters thoroughly, but it seems to me that he is trying to cause anxiety and distress to the people who own Harrods, by suggesting that they do not really own it and that they got it by dodgy means. I am being used as the middle man in the exercise, and I know that other hon. Members get these letters in brown envelopes. Would that come within the general ambit of the Bill and, if so, would that alter my hon. Friend's view about the appropriate level of fine?

Then there is another consideration——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The first consideration was long enough.

Ms. Richardson: I have never had a communication from Tiny Rowland, or perhaps I have, but have thrown it away unopened. That is a slightly different scenario from the one that we are discussing.

I am worried about setting fine levels at £1,000 or £2,000 rather than £400, which was the level originally in the Bill. I am sure that the hon. Member for Sherwood (Mr. Stewart) gave the matter a great deal of thought and took advice before fixing the fines at level 3, and did not merely pluck the figure out of the air. Even if the maximum is to be £1,000 or £2,000, there may be variations within those sums. We all know that different magistrates see cases in different ways, just as judges do. We know how the sentences given for rape vary. I am not straying from discussion of the Bill, Mr. Deputy Speaker; I am discussing the level of sentences. We are often outraged that a short sentence is given by one judge in a nasty case, whereas an appropriately long sentence is given in another case. There may be a similar unevenness in fines. The result will be that some poor old gentleman—not Tiny Rowland—or some poor old lady or young woman will be fined more than he or she can afford.

The hon. Member for Derby, North (Mr. Knight) was asked why we did not go the whole hog. I assure the Minister that no pun is intended, incidentally.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Don't worry; I have heard it before.

Ms. Richardson: Am I not right in thinking that if a fine is not paid, a person has to go to prison?

Mr. Skinner: That was my other point. Has my hon. Friend considered the question of non-payment? We hear constantly that the prisons are full and that the number of prisoners is at an all-time record. The Prime Minister was elected on the basis of law and order, but the prisons are so full that prisoners are breaking out. The Prime Minister was going to set the people free, but the prisoners got out. If fines were set at level 5—£2,000—more people might be unable to pay. If they fell into contempt of court, they would be pushed into gaol and add to the numbers in prison. That is why I am still considering whether to support the original provision or the amendment. I wonder whether my hon. Friend can help me. In my case, the jury is still out.

Ms. Richardson: I have never been asked to help my hon. Friend before, because he always knows his own mind. It is a novel experience for me. He has made a serious point.

Mr. Greg Knight: Surely, the point is something of a red herring. If a defendant cannot meet a fine due to a change in circumstances, there is provision for the courts to review the weekly payment, and they invariably do so. Only if the defendant makes it quite clear to the court that he is not prepared to pay the fine or if his behaviour is so perverse that he is putting other things—such as his own entertainment—before the payment of the fine, is he sent to prison. Prison is not really a threat to a person who makes a reasonable effort to discharge the fine imposed by the court.

Ms. Richardson: The hon. Gentleman does not live in the kind of world that I live in. I am not talking about stockbrokers or the well off. It is stupid and wrong to write a poison pen letter and to be caught and fined. However, the guilty person might be a pensioner or be receiving income support. He might be paying back other debts, such as bills for gas and electricity. Such people find it difficult to pay fines, with the best will in the world, and they end up in prison.

All hon. Members acknowledge that our prisons are overcrowded. One has only to look at Holloway, for example, where many women are on remand, often for petty offences such as shop-lifting and non-payment of fines.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The hon. Lady mentioned Holloway. It is important to emphasise that Holloway is not overcrowded.

Ms. Richarson: It is true that I have not been to Holloway for a year or 14 months. When I spoke of it as being overcrowded, I did not mean that there were six persons to a cell. However, the constant complaint at Holloway, which often comes from the Prison Officers Association, is that there are too few prison officers to deal with the number of prisoners and there is a distinct feeling that many of the women who are there for non-payment of fines or similar offences should not be there at all. That point is linked to my argument. I mentioned Holloway because it is a London prison and I know something about it. There are other prisons which are overcrowded and, even if Holloway is not technically overcrowded at the moment, it could become overcrowded.

Mr. Corbett: My hon. Friend is making an interesting point. The prison statistics for England and Wales for 1986 show that fine defaulters accounted for 22 per cent. of receptions under sentence, and that was 1 per cent. more than in the previous year. About 1·3 million men were fined in 1986—I do not have the figure for women.

Ms. Richardson: My hon. Friend has reinforced my argument. I am worried about the level of fines that could be imposed. My hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover said that he was waiting for the jury. I have made up my mind that £400 is the right amount. For that reason, I was disappointed to hear the hon. Member for Sherwood support the Lords amendment, because it sets fines too high. We should keep to the level of fines proposed by the Bill, at least for the time being, and see how that works. If the fines do not do the job that they are intended to do, it would be possible to increase them at a later stage.

Mr. Skinner: When I say that my jury is still out, it is because I am considering tactics. We have three choices: £400, £1,000, as proposed in the other place, and £2,000, as proposed by the hon. Member for Derby, North (Mr. Knight). There are only two Lobbies in the House, the Aye Lobby and the No Lobby. I think that my hon. Friend is bordering on accepting the lower level of fine, just as I am. We may, however, finish up throwing out the baby with the bath water and having an even more censorious fine. We must consider not just our reasons for wanting the lower level but which way to vote to get the lowest possible level on offer.

Ms. Richardson: I do not know, although presumably I should, the fines imposed at levels 1 and 2.

Mr. Greg Knight: Level 1 is a fine of £50 and level 2 is a fine of £100.

10.30 am

Ms. Richardson: Those fines are too low. On the whole, £400 is right. My hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover has made a good point—we do not have three Lobbies. We shall probably end up deciding between a fine of £400, as originally in the Bill, and a fine of £1,000, unless the hon. Member for Derby, North pushes his amendment for a fine of £2,000. I have come to the conclusion—or talked or read myself to the conclusion—that the best idea is to stick to the £400 and see how we go. The measure is an innovation—one which we should all welcome and on which we should congratulate the hon. Member for Sherwood. We should not go over the top but should stick to the £400.

Mr. Skinner: As my hon. Friend has said, the level of fine has ebbed and flowed. When I am making up my mind, I have to consider which decision will least benefit the lawyers. I always do that whenever a vote is to be taken, especially when lawyers are involved. They have different levels as well. I want to know before I walk through the Lobby whether my decision will enable the lawyers to get a big fat bonus. Their level in this matter has not yet been disclosed. I hope that the Under-Secretary of State will explain. The hon. Gentleman may well be able to argue that the legal payments are not a consideration, but

[Mr. Skinner]

that point must weigh in my mind. I do not want to vote for a measure and then, a few years later, have someone say to me, "You walked through the Lobby, Skinner"—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. It is difficult to see how this point arises under the narrow amendment before the House.

Mr. Skinner: You are bound to say that, Sir, because you have a different job. You will not have to go through the Lobby. You will sit in the Chair and no one from Doncaster will come to see you in two or three years' time and ask, "What did you do, Harold, on the day in question when the House lined the pockets of the lawyers?" You will be able to dodge the column. My hon. Friend the Member for Barking (Ms. Richardson) and I will have to listen to all the complaints at our surgeries. Before we decide, I want to know whether this measure will fill the pockets of the lawyers, because there are many in this place.

Ms. Richardson: I take my hon. Friend's point. I am not a lawyer and I am always dropping clangers in terms of what lawyers think should be done. Should we not also consider the need to keep the fine low? I do not know where we stand on, for example, legal aid. A poor person who is up for prosecution and who goes to a lawyer will want legal aid. Will he be entitled to it?

Mr. Forth: Will the hon. Lady consider the point that the levels which we are discussing are maxima and judges will have the discretion to award fines up to those levels? Therefore, the hon. Lady's point about income levels, which I understand, could be catered for. I am sure that the hon. Lady and the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) agree that we want to ensure that effective fines can be applied to the wealthy while allowing the use of discretion to take account of people on lower incomes. If we follow the hon. Lady's recommendation, we may lose out on penalising the wealthy.

Ms. Richardson: The hon. Gentleman was momentarily out of the Chamber when I talked about the maximum.

Mr. Skinner: The hon. Gentleman referred to "maxima".

Mr. Forth: It is Latin for the plural of maximum.

Ms. Richardson: If there is a maximum, magistrates and judges have to decide what to impose. Sometimes they go for the jugular and impose the heaviest sentence. I am concerned about having a fine of £1,000 or £2,000 because it may result in poor people being penalised. I acknowledge that they should not have committed these acts. It is dreadful for anyone to send a poison pen letter, but we must take the circumstances into account. Magistrates and judges may be so annoyed and incensed by the offence that they go for the maximum penalty. I should like a more modest sentence, at least at the beginning. That would be the best way to proceed before we go down this new road.

Mr. Butler: I am attracted by the idea of the availability of higher fines because they would be a deterrent. We are aiming for deterrents, rather than punishments, to stop the offence. The availability of higher fines would provide greater flexibility for magistrates in coping with the varying degrees of gravity of the offence. It would provide some headroom for inflation which, I am afraid, is still too high. Sometimes I wonder why we do not include in our legislation some power for the Secretaries of State to vary fines according to inflation. The availability of higher fines would be beneficial in dealing with persistent offenders. When these cases come before the courts, we shall find that there is a high number of such offenders.

In judging the level of fine to be applied to these offences, recognition should not be given to matters that blow up in the press. That is one reason why I am a little worried about the Criminal Justice Bill, which we have just passed, which allows reference to a higher court for sentences that seem too lenient. I fear that there may be trial in the press and reaction to that.

On Second Reading, I mentioned that I had worked at No. 10 and that Prime Ministers had received hate mail. I deliberately stressed the fact that Prime Ministers in the plural were affected, because Jim Callaghan and the present Prime Minister both received hate mail. From the way in which the incidents were sensationalised in the press, it seemed that such hate mail was peculiar to the present Prime Minister. My hon. Friend the Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) also referred on Second Reading to the responsibility of the press in reporting these matters. There is nothing peculiar about the present Prime Minister receiving hate mail. It is something intrinsic in being a public figure. We all receive hate mail.

Mr. Skinner: I receive hate mail.

Mr. Butler: The hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) receives hate mail.

Mr. Skinner: In relation to hate mail, I was trying to explain that Tiny Rowland has been hoping to use me as a vehicle to express certain views in the House. He is attacking the owners of Harrods because he thinks that they managed to purchase Harrods by some dodgy methods. He has been sending hate mail—it has not caused me anxiety and distress—deliberately to try to cause anxiety and distress for his enemies among the other Tories who were running Harrods. It was really an argument between Tories. That is the top and bottom of it. Would mail causing a third person anxiety and distress be described as hate mail? It has not caused me any worry at all.

Mr. Butler: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman. My understanding was that Tiny Rowland was a supporter of the SDP, rather than a Tory. I, too, have received mail from Tiny Rowland.

Mr. Skinner: The hon. Gentleman is not suggesting for a minute that the SDP, which is now regarded as the provisional army led by the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen), is anything other than a front for the Tory party which, as many people say to me, will eventually——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I do not see how this can possibly arise under this amendment.

Mr. Butler: The hon. Gentleman's point is probably dealt with by the libel laws. I have received such mail. I did not understand it and, to be quite frank, I thought that it was from somebody who was a little deranged. Many hon. Members present will have received hate mail. I suspect that the right hon. Member for Islwyn (Mr. Kinnock) also receives hate mail. It is a fact of public life. The right hon. Member for Islwyn is a nice chap, after all. He is a Welshman, so he must be a nice chap. My right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) also received a large amount of hate mail from old retired colonels. We in public life should not be too sensitive to such matters. They should be weighed up and judged in the courts.

When I stood in the Brecon and Radnor by-election, I received some hate mail by postcard. At the time, I wondered whether it came from the dirty tricks department of a certain party that I shall not mention. but the point about this——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. What has this to do with the level of penalties, which is what we are considering?

Mr. Butler: I shall refer to that matter, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The fact that such communications were in the form of postcards magnified the degree of mens rea, as they were read by people other than myself. That fact should be taken into account by the courts when deciding fines. For those reasons, we should have a fine higher than £400.

10.45 am

Mrs. Audrey Wise (Preston): My hon. Friend the Member for Barking (Ms. Richardson) spoke realistically about the Bill and the proposal on the level of penalties. I do not think that the Bill is about wealthy people. I do not say that the wealthy will not commit such crimes. I do not know many wealthy people, so I am not acquainted with their foibles. In general, I am prepared to believe that wealthy people are as likely as, or even more likely than, my associates and constituents to commit any crime. But in practice, wealthy people will not face such charges. If they do, they are unlikely to have to pay a fine, whether it be £400 or £2,000, because they employ their wealth in ways that make it much less likely that they will be found guilty. I support the £400 penalty not because I wish to be soft on wealthy people but because wealthy people are not likely to be fined.

The Bill is good. It should be a crime to send hate mail. I agree entirely with my hon. Friend the Member for Barking. It can be extremely distressing to receive such communications, and people should be protected. The Bill should be a disincentive to sending such mail and should demonstrate society's disapproval of such action. A £400 fine is adequate to do that. We would not be well advised to make the fine higher, because we would find ourselves on rather tricky ground. Although sending hate mail should be an offence, it does not involve the same seriousness as some other crimes from which we seek to protect people.

We would open the door to some invidious comparisons if, for instance, there were a £2,000 penalty for an offence under this Bill and a lighter penalty for a crime that most people think merits more severe treatment. We already have such problems. I am sure that I am not alone in collecting cuttings about idiosyncratic sentences imposed by judges and magistrates. Many such sentences are imposed for crimes against people or property. There is a bias. There are heavier sentences for crimes against property than those against people. I disapprove of that. Comparisons can and will be made. In our genuine zeal to make it an offence to send hate mail, we do not want to give the impression that we underrate the seriousness of other offences.

The perfectly valid point has been made that the proposed fine is a maximum and that magistrates will not be compelled to impose a maximum fine. Anything that allows too much unevenness in sentencing for any offence tends to bring the law into some disrepute. We might think that magistrates employ perfect logic, look at a wealthy person, and say, "I am slamming the top penalty on you," and look at the poor, elderly person who, because of circumstances in his or her life, was driven to commit the offence, and say, "I shall impose a small fine." But magistrates do not work like that. There is much more randomness in sentencing. On occasions, there is a tendency for some judges or magistrates to impose exemplary sentences. They look at the circumstances of the case and decide not only whether someone should be punished or discouraged but whether a whole class of people are to be more strongly discouraged. That always worries me.

The punishment should fit the crime and not allow people to ride their hobby horses. The person who imposes the penalty might have been a victim of such a crime. He may not have reported it, but it might have rankled with him. That can add to idiosyncratic imposition of sentences.

In a sense, this legislation is an experiment to see whether the incidence of such offences can be reduced. The purpose should be prevention rather than punishment. A person receiving such communications is not greatly protected by the fact that the person responsible is brought to court and punished. In fact, the distress may be cumulative if court proceedings result, and further problems could arise in the neighbourhood bringing more trouble for both parties in the future. In a sense, if cases come to court the legislation will have failed. The preventive nature of the legislation must be stressed at all times.

I believe that at this stage a fine of £400 is sufficient to make it clear that society and Parliament disapprove of the offence. Magistrates would not have such a problem in fixing appropriate sentences.

Mr. Skinner: I have listened carefully to my hon. Friend and it is clear that she wants the lowest possible level of fine. Her comments suggest that she is leaning towards an even lower level than £400. She is really saying that she does not want a serious fine at all. As she has spoken in that vein, would it not have been better to put down an amendment specifying an even lower level? I think that that is what is really running through my hon. Friend's mind.

Mrs. Wise: My hon. Friend is wrong. Had my thoughts been in that direction, I should not have hesitated to put down an amendment. There should be some flexibility. A simple £50 fine, for example, would not be a sufficient mark of disapproval. We must fix a penalty which shows that we seriously disapprove of the offence. For most people, £400 is still a substantial sum. If it were generally known that such offences could draw penalties of that amount, most people would regard that as a mark of serious disapproval and discouragement. My hon. Friend is therefore wrong, although I am glad that he has been

[Mrs. Wise]

listening carefully to my remarks. I wondered why he was so silent. Clearly, he was thinking hard about what I was saying.

Mr. Skinner: I was listening hard because my hon. Friend seemed to have failed to appreciate the attitude of rich people—those with the brass, such as Tiny Rowland whose letters have been causing anxiety and distress to people at Harrods. Let us consider the matter from the other end. Those rich people can afford to employ the best lawyers in the land, or at least the most expensive ones —I do not know whether they are any better, as to me they are all pretty much in the same bag.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: There are good ones and bad ones.

Mr. Skinner: Rich offenders might impress the magistrates by employing a lawyer called Sir Humphrey Jackson-hyphen-Smith or, to get down to brass tacks, someone called Napley—who costs £400 per hour—and the chances are that they would get away with it. My hon. Friend seems not to appreciate that £400 is chickenfeed for such people. They can take it off the ribs of the next batch of employees at their factory or wherever in a couple of minutes.

Mrs. Wise: With all due respect, my hon. Friend makes my point for me. Whatever the fine is, those people will not pay it because they can afford to spend a lot of money on their defence and will thus not be found guilty. For such people, the level of fine is irrelevant because they will employ expensive defence lawyers to avoid having a conviction on their record or reported in the newspapers. Whether the fine was £400, £1,000 or £2,000, they would take all possible steps not to be found guilty, whether or not they were actually guilty. As they would not be called on to pay the fine, it would not matter to them if it was £2,000, but it would matter a great deal to the people mentioned by my hon. Friend the Member for Barking. If a magistrate fails to apply the logic that we expect, a fine of that magnitude could be a disaster.

People should be punished for such offences—I make no bones about that—and I strongly disapprove of such activities. That is why I support the original intention of the Bill. Nevertheless, we do not want offenders to be driven to desperation. For ordinary people who may already be a bit unhinged, as they probably would be to have sent such letters in the first place, a fine of £2,000 could make them suicidal or drive them to commit other offences to get the money to pay the fine. A ridiculous spiral would be created.

Therefore, if the opportunity arises I shall vote in favour of a maximum fine of £400. That will give ample discretion to magistrates. I do not believe that there is any minimum laid down, so the magistrate would have full discretion to impose a fine up to the maximum of £400. I believe that that level is ample. It shows Parliament's disapproval and I believe that it would be a genuine discouragement to people contemplating such offences, assuming that they are acting rationally. If they are not rational, they will not be dissuaded, whatever the level of fine.

Finally, as with all crime, the biggest disincentive is the knowledge that the person may be found out. That is the most important factor. I congratulate the hon. Member for Sherwood (Mr. Stewart) on bringing in the Bill. I should not like it to be spoilt or its emphasis unduly altered by the imposition of too heavy a penalty.

Mrs. Gorman: I support the good, common-sense points made by the hon. Member for Barking (Ms. Richardson). I, too, believe that in this instance justice should be tempered with mercy. The levels of fine originally laid down in the Bill probably make more sense than allowing magistrates to whack on very heavy fines on the ground that it is the rich we want to catch. It is unfortunate how often the nasty, envious side of human nature comes out when we discuss such matters, not least in some of the rather malicious remarks of the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner), who constantly pillories a gentleman in the City who cannot come to the House to defend himself but has to put up with such maliciousness and cannot take the hon. Gentleman to court for it.

There are many instances of malicious communications. Last week, I received quite a number of letters which most people would regard as offensive, mainly from people who could not get tickets for Wimbledon. I believe that the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) wrote such a letter to my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister. That communication, which travelled from this place by Her Majesty's letter post, asked my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister to carry out certain acts in relation to me and my status in the Conservative party which I considered to be a threat. Although I think that the right hon. Gentleman was wrong and that his action was ungentlemanly, I should not like to see him taken to court and fined at level 4 or 5. If he had gone over the top, I would be happy for him to be fined at level 3, which about fits in with the amount of money that a Member of Parliament can afford.

11 am

Mr. Corbett: I assure the hon. Member for Billericay (Mrs. Gorman) that my right hon. Friend meant no threat. I can think of no occasion on which he has behaved in other than a gentlemanly fashion. The fact of the matter is that he disagreed profoundly with the hon. Lady's comment.

Mrs. Gorman: In my understanding of what was said by the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook, from my reading of the *Hansard* report of last Friday's proceedings, he tore into me strongly and used what I consider to be false information in his allegations about me. However, we know that anything said in this Chamber is protected by privilege, and that is why the hon. Member for Bolsover gets away with saying so many unpleasant things about a certain gentleman in the City who cannot be here to defend himself.

Mr. Skinner: Whatever I say in the House, I am prepared to repeat outside it. Unlike some hon. Members, I do not make use of the privilege that is there for hon. Members to use. The letter I received from Tiny Rowland attacking Harrods has been printed in *The Observer*, because I believe that he just about owns that newspaper as well. The hon. Lady should not get upset about that. The letters that Tiny Rowland is sending out, causing anxiety and distress to Harrods, are being printed in newspapers week after week.

The hon. Lady should not assume that I am not prepared to repeat outside anything that I say in this Chamber. I do not know anything about the correspondence between my right hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) and the hon. Lady. I only know that recently she has been causing anxiety and distress to people trying to get into Wimbledon, but who cannot do so, because she supports the touts who sell tickets at 10 or 20 times over the odds. I am not sure whether that activity falls within the Bill's general ambit but it has caused distress to many people.

Mrs. Gorman: On a point of information, if the hon. Member for Bolsover wishes to enter into a debate about Wimbledon, perhaps we may have a private discussion about the level of the ticket mark-up. However, I shall not touch on that subject now, because Mr. Deputy Speaker would rule me out of order. He brings me to order, quite rightly, fairly often, when I ramble off the point. I hope that he will adopt the same attitude to the hon. Member for Bolsover, who frequently rambles off the point.

Mr. Greg Knight: Does my hon. Friend agree on reflection that she has destroyed her own case? She stated that a fine of £400 is sufficient, and she gave as an illustration a letter sent by the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley). However, because that right hon. Gentleman—to use the phrase of the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner)—moonlights by writing columns for glossy magazines, he is a very wealthy man and a fine of £400 would be nothing to him.

Mrs. Gorman: I take my hon. Friend's point but I do not wish to be malicious towards the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook; he has his point of view and I have mine.

There may be occasions when people write letters that are construed to be of a malicious nature, when they really are only expressing concern. The hon. Member for Barking pointed out that many humble people spend much of their lives peeping through their curtains at what the neighbours are getting up to, and that they might see comings and goings at a house causing them to wonder whether children were being neglected. In some cases, they could be right. They may not write a letter to the parent but to the NSPCC. Although we may laugh at such people and question whether they have nothing better to do with their time, they are in many ways the eyes and ears of our streets. There has been a breakdown of our traditional housing, when we lived in rows of houses and could watch the street. After we tore down all those nice neighbourhoods and replaced them with ghastly tower blocks of flats, people could not watch the streets and we began to see the breakdown——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I fail to see how that has anything to do with the amendment. The hon. Lady should return to the subject of penalty levels.

Mrs. Gorman: I thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for your remarks.

People may write letters with good motivation, although their action may be construed as being malicious. Such reporting is sometimes very helpful and we should not discourage people from taking that action. If they err, a modest fine would be more appropriate. I should not like magistrates to be given the power to go over the top. We all of us make mistakes some time, be it the police or people peeking through windows. I would not want people to be put off entirely from keeping an eye on things.

The hon. Member for Barking spoke also about disputes between neighbours and the fines they involve. I have had the experience of living next door to someone who was driving me crazy. She was a breeder of scottie dogs, which seemed to multiply in the garden like mushrooms. Sometimes there would be as many as 40 puppies barking and yapping in the garden. Because they were not well fed, they pushed their dinner dishes round and round the concrete, making awful scraping noises and barking. That used to drive me to distraction.

Eventually, my husband was driven to the point of sitting down and writing a letter to the woman, saying, "The next time I am out in my garden digging the flower beds, if your dogs are out there driving me crazy, I shall spike one of them on my garden fork." He did not mean any harm. In normal circumstances, and given one dog at a time, he loves animals—but he could have been driven beyond the point of self-control. Had he been, and gone before a magistrate who was a dog lover to destruction —as some magistrates may be—he could have been fined an inordinate sum of money. I believe that we should retain a sense of proportion by keeping fines down to a relatively modest level, and give them a try on those lines.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I can see how the question of those adjacent dogs could be a matter of grave concern, especially as my hon. Friend's husband might be thinking of writing again in similar terms. In the context of fine levels, I draw my hon. Friend's attention to the statutory defence existing in subsection (2), which I feel sure her husband will wish to adopt if he is subsequently prosecuted for writing the kind of letter that is apparently commonplace for him to write.

Mrs. Gorman: I thank my hon. Friend for his learned and wise intervention and good advice. I may say that all that happened some years ago and that we subsequently moved. Nevertheless, it is a good idea to put before the House concrete examples of the circumstances in which our laws are meant to operate, so that we do not legislate in a vacuum. I support absolutely the points made by the hon. Member for Barking, whose common sense and practical experience of life so often contribute useful points to our debates.

Mr. Corbett: First, I congratulate the hon. Member for Sherwood (Mr. Stewart) on the safe return of his Bill from the other place. I share his apprehension as the minutes tick by, and I do not intend to detain the House too long.

In considering the appropriate maximum fine for those convicted under the Bill, we should remember that the intent of the sender is at the heart of the legislation. The sender must want to cause distress and anxiety. Someone in Worcester wrote to me complaining that it was typical of the Tories to bring in a Bill to prevent those who oppose the Government's policies in robust terms from writing to Ministers and other Conservartive Members. Of course, I have already assured him—and no doubt the Bill's promoter will do the same—that such letters are outside the scope of the Bill. Let me say in passing, however, that I hope that supporters of the present Administration get lots of them.

In our last debate, the Minister explained why he felt that the Law Commission's recommendation about the

[Mr. Corbett]

level of fines should not be supported, and I very much agree with what he said then. It is important that, as well as attempting to set similar fines for similar offences, we should consider who are likely to be convicted, and there ability to pay. Diane Simpson, a leading graphologist who dealt with about 1,000 poison pen letters last year, says that writers of such letters come from all age groups and both sexes, which relates to what some of my hon. Friends have said. That does not help us much, although she adds that the famous are more likely to receive hate mail sent with malicious intent from strangers. That could apply to actresses, television presenters and so on. Other people, she says, receive such letters from so-called friends and colleagues.

All that Diane Simpson can tell us is that the profile of the typical poison pen writer has changed. She told *The Times* on 10 February this year:

> "Ten years ago, they were invariably women—often, I am sorry to say, some poor woman going through the menopause in a village somewhere."

Although she said that the writers came from all age groups and both sexes, like my hon. Friends I doubt that there is an equal spread over income groups. I suspect that the pressures and frustrations that lead some people to write those letters are felt much more strongly at the lower end of the income scale.

We have decided—rightly in my view—that prison is no answer for writers of poison pen letters, who are invaribly sad, often lonely and at odds with their world because of real or perceived hurt from others. But there is no point in pitching the fine at a level which, on conviction, is likely in many cases to ensure that the person ends up in gaol anyway through fine default. That is why I strongly oppose the suggestion that a £2,000 fine would be appropriate.

Mr. Greg Knight: May I put two points to the hon. Gentleman? First, should we not be careful not to place too much reliance on so-called statistical evidence? Because the law currently makes no provision for poison pen letters, any such evidence must relate only to reported cases. We do not know, for example, how many letters have been sent whose recipients have been caused anxiety and distress but have not reported the matter.

Secondly, as was pointed out earlier, the Bill does not require a minimum sentence from the courts. All that I have sought to do, and the other place has done, is to give the courts a wider range of discretion within which to pitch the penalty as they deem appropriate in individual cases.

Mr. Corbett: I understand exactly what the hon. Gentleman is saying. Because there has not been a specific offence before, the evidence that we have brought to our debates has had to be anecdotal and largely taken from our advice bureaux. I also take the point that the level at which the fine is set will be the maximum, and that there is no minimum. I shall come to that in a minute.

11.15 am

Like my hon. Friend the Member for Preston (Mrs. Wise), I am not a great believer in the theory of deterrence. I do not think that there is any real evidence that the length of sentence or level of fine deters, especially in cases of this kind. Evidence suggests that a person's judgment is more likely to be on the likelihood of being caught, which weighs more heavily on someone contemplating breaking the law. I doubt whether that would cross the minds of poison pen writers in any event.

Diane Simpson, the graphologist, offers some hope and support for the Bill. She said in an interview in *The Times* that it was often surprisingly easy to track down anonymous letter writers:

> "All anonymous letter writers have two things in common: the first being that they are all cowards; the second that they are would-be manipulators of other people's behaviour."

If, given an alarming reported rise in the incidence of poison pen letters, it is surprisingly easy to track many of them down, the level of fine on conviction is a matter of real interest. Too many people now go to gaol for non-payment of fines. We do not know, but I suspect that in many cases that is due not to unwillingness to pay but to inability to pay, whatever the court may do before the prison gates open to reduce, say, the rate at which a fine is paid off over a number of weeks.

Perversely, the fine will often bite hardest on the least well-off who are caught and convicted, almost irrespective of its level. Of course, a fine of £1,000 or £2,000 imposed on someone pushed into deception by poverty bites a good deal harder than a fine of 100 times that amount imposed on some city slicker who is caught with his hand in someone else's till. I am thinking especially of those convicted of fraud against the DHSS.

According to the prison statistics for England and Wales, fine defaulters accounted for some 22 per cent. of all receptions under sentence in 1986. The proportion of those aged between 17 and 20 who were sent to prison for non-payment of fines between 1976 and 1986 almost doubled, from 14 per cent. to 25 per cent., and over the same 10 years the proportion of those aged between 21 and 29 sent to prison rose from 37 per cent. to 45 per cent. In 1986, 1,100 females were sent to prison for non-payment of fines. It is fair to point out, however, that imprisonment for fine defaulters is not at the peak that it reached a few years ago.

Having turned our backs on imprisonment as an option for the magistrates, we should not, by setting the level of fine too high, make it more likely that people convicted under the Bill will find themselves in prison. I have said that I do not believe that a level 5 maximum fine of £2,000 would be appropriate. I am not sure that the level 4 maximum fine of £1,000 is appropriate. I acknowledge that part of the responsibility of magistrates is to inflict punishment, but by no means do I put a full stop after that word. Especially in these cases, punishing people by way of a fairly hefty fine in relation to their means and ability to pay, or by imprisonment, does not solve the underlying problems of people who feel that they have to write such letters. I hope that at the very least the House will not agree with the amendment.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The House in general welcomes the Bill. I wish to extend to my hon. Friend the Member for Sherwood (Mr. Stewart) the congratulations of the House on having introduced the Bill. I also congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Derby, North (Mr. Knight) for having provoked an unexpectedly spirited and interesting debate.

My general view is that the House should accept the Lords amendment, and should adopt a scale 4 penalty rather than a scale 5 penalty, and I commend that view to the House.

It may be of assistance to the House when determining the appropriate scale if I explain briefly the purpose of the Bill. The Bill is designed to deal with a serious problem which was identified and described in detail in the Law Commission report of 1985. I must remind the hon. Member for Barking (Ms. Richardson)—I shall refer to her speech later—that the Law Commission recommended a scale 5 penalty for the offence encompassed within the Bill. That is a mark of the seriousness which the Law Commission attached to the offences.

The offences deal with hate mail, but they also deal with another class of offence which has not been mentioned in the debate—that associated with racial persecution. The hon. Lady will be well aware that many members of the ethnic minorities have been the subject of campaigns. Those campaigns can take at least two forms: first, letters of a highly offensive kind through the letter box, and secondly such nasty things as dog shit through the letter box. That is a serious matter, especially if it is a concerted campaign. I must stress to those hon. Members who focused on the desirability of adhering to a scale 3 fine, that sometimes we are dealing with a particularly nasty offence with racial overtones, committed over a period, against which we should react fairly vigorously.

Ms. Richardson: The Minister is convincing me. He has made an excellent point in raising the question of racial violence via malicious letters. We could all point to examples of that. He also mentioned things other than letters going through the letter box. Would lighted objects coming through the letter box be covered by the offence of arson, or would they be considered malicious communication?

Mr. Hogg: The hon. Lady has in mind bits of paper, petrol, or rags which have been set alight and which cause fires. Those are covered by the ordinary laws which deal with arson or malicious damage. We are dealing exclusively with mail and other objects which are sent with the purposes set out in the Bill. For those purposes, the word "sent" is apt to include putting something through a letter box, and not necessarily posting it through the mail. The Bill deals exclusively with objects posted through the letter box with the intention set out in the Bill.

Mrs. Wise: I am in an odd position, because I, too, wish to thank the Minister for raising a matter which had not occurred to me—the possibility of such actions being part of a campaign, perhaps for racial reasons. I had not taken that into account. Clearly, with the broader knowledge to which the Minister has access, he is destroying part of the case that we made.

Mr. Hogg: That is unusually gracious of the hon. Lady. She has put me into some difficulty, as I was going to refer to her speech and I had it in mind to make some very unflattering comments about her. However, she has been so gracious that I will have to redesign my speech; otherwise, I shall be profoundly embarrassed.

Mr. Greg Knight: I wonder whether my hon. Friend can clarify a matter for the House. My hon. Friend the Member for Warrington, South (Mr. Butler) may have misled the House unwittingly when he said that he favoured a higher penalty, as he considered it an inflation-proofing measure. Will the Minister confirm that provisions already exist whereby the Government can increase fines by statutory instrument to take account of inflation?

Mr. Hogg: My hon. Friend the Member for Derby, North is entirely correct. I was going to deal with that when referring to the speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Warrington, South (Mr. Butler). The fine attached to any scale can be raised by statutory instrument. That is how the Government can deal with the serious problem that my hon. Friend the Member for Warrington, South identifed.

Mr. Graham Allen (Nottingham, North): Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Hogg: The hon. Gentleman has not participated in the debate; nonetheless, I am feeling charitable.

Mr. Allen: I have listened carefully to much of the debate; I do not know whether the Minister regards that as participating. Perhaps I should have made a lengthy intervention, and perhaps later this morning I shall take the opportunity to do so.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman would not have been allowed to make a lengthy intervention, and I hope that he will not do so now.

Mr. Allen: By pure chance, this morning I received a letter from a constituent who has received unsolicited through his letter box something called, "Just Truth", which is, "A nationalist review of policy affecting British People", price 10p. It was the winter 1987 edition, so clearly it did not sell very well as it was shoved unsolicited through the letter boxes in my constituency. It includes references to the holocaust of 6 million Jews being an error of fact, it refers to the ethnic composition of police recruitment and training, and contains various other disparaging remarks. Would such an item be caught under the provisions of the Malicious Communications Bill? If so, what action would arise from that?

Mr. Hogg: The hon. Gentleman has drawn attention to the fact that he has been in the Chamber for most of the debate. Although the hon. Gentleman is eminently forgettable, wearing what he does today, he is also eminently visible. In fact, he has not been in the Chamber for the greater part of the debate. The debate has been going on for nearly two hours and the hon. Gentleman's presence has been extremely limited. Were it otherwise, we should have spotted him because he is dressed in such an obvious way.

Mr. Allen: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. With the greatest respect to the Chair, and to the Minister —with great respect to one, and less to the other—I have been here for the majority of the debate so far. I should like to place that on record and graciously to accept the Minister's comments regarding my attire.

11.30 am

Mr. Hogg: The hon. Gentleman is making the point I have already made, which is that he is eminently forgettable. I do not think that we can carry the matter much further. It is for the House to judge whether he has been present; I am confident that he has not.

The hon. Gentleman asked for my advice, and that is flattering. He asked whether the document would fall

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within the scope of the Bill. I cannot tell him the answer until I look at the document, but if he wants my professional advice, he can show it to me afterwards and I shall give it to him.

We have identified the fact—it is common ground—that the Bill is designed to deal with a serious problem, which can be concerted and can have a broad base. It is not sufficiently addressed by statute at present. Therefore, we can proceed on the basis that this is an important Bill designed to address a serious social mischief.

The question that arises is the level of fine—whether we should proceed on the basis of a scale 3: scale 4, or scale 5 fine. Several hon. Members have said that penalties must bear a relationship one with the other and that it would be wrong for our disapproval of one particular offence, such as that with which we are dealing, to drive us to put it into a scale of fine that is disproportionate to the scales of fines attached to other offences.

The offences with which we are dealing are dealt with summarily. The hon. Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley) asked whether there should be a penalty over and above scale 5. Generally speaking, the maximum penalty that can be awarded by a justice is a scale 5 penalty. There are exceptional cases in which justices can impose a more substantial financial penalty, but that is unusual. We could provide for a higher level of financial penalty only if we were to provide that this class of offence should be dealt with on indictment. For reasons that I hope the hon. Member for Caernarfon will accept, it is undesirable that this class of offence should be dealt with by a jury. It is pre-eminently the type of offence that should be dealt with by justices and, accordingly, we could not attach to it a penalty in excess of scale 5.

Mr. Wigley: What I had in mind was repeated offences. Can the Minister tell whether repeated offences, if they are seriously malicious or with racial undertones, such as those mentioned, can be taken further, perhaps under other legislation, to ensure that they are duly dealt with?

Mr. Hogg: The hon. Gentleman has raised an important point and I can give him only an off-the-cuff reply. There are other statutes that touch on such conduct. Criminal libel could be invoked in some circumstances. Moreover, some statutes dealing with race relations might be appropriate and some of the communications might fall foul of the Public Order Act 1986. That is an off-the-cuff reply, and I do not guarantee that it is correct. However, I am certain that other legislation could in some circumstances be applied to such offences.

My judgment is that scale 4 is correct. Scale 5 is attached to those classes of offence involving violence or serious danger to public health. Scale 5 is the maximum that a justice can award, and it would be wrong to put this offence into that class. As a matter of general principle, measuring offence against offence, I strongly recommend that scale 4 is appropriate and not scale 5.

The hon. Member for Barking voiced a number of anxieties and I entirely understand her concern. However, we are dealing only with maxima, not with mandatory sentences. The hon. Lady is understandably concerned about the risk of people being sent to prison in default of payment. The point she raised was responded to fully by my hon. Friend the Member for Derby, North in an intervention. There are considerable statutory restrictions on the ability of a court to send someone to prison for non-payment of a fine. As a general rule, people will go to prison for non-payment of a fine only if the court has found as fact that they are able to pay and that the failure to pay is persistent and wilful. I have always taken the view that there is a need to have the penalty of imprisonment as a final sanction for those guilty of wilful or persistent non-payment of fines.

The hon. Member for Barking made a specific point about Holloway. I shall deal with that briefly, because you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, would pull me up short if I went on at any length. It is wrong to suppose that Holloway is overcrowded. The population is much the same as the certified normal accommodation. It is also wrong to suppose that Holloway is understaffed, because it is not. The hon. Lady is right to say that the courts must address a person's ability to pay when imposing a fine. I hope that the courts will make a careful inquiry into means when determining a persons's ability to pay a fine in the context of the Bill we are discussing, and in the context of other offences.

Ms. Richardson: I want to refer to my point about Holloway being understaffed. I appeal to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to let me make this point. Theoretically, Holloway is probably not understaffed, but my information from people at Holloway has always been that because Holloway contains so many remand prisoners, there are always many prison officers out of the prison taking people to hospital or court and that the staff remaining in the prison find themselves overstretched. Every governor I have ever seen at Holloway has said that more staff would be helpful for the atmosphere in the prison.

Mr. Hogg: I will be careful not to go too far down this road, because, Mr. Deputy Speaker, you would call me to order. The hon. Lady will appreciate that we are implementing Fresh Start throughout the country and it is in place in Holloway. In my opinion, Holloway is properly staffed and we are attempting to make the most efficient use of staffing. I am afraid that I do not agree with the hon. Lady's point on Holloway, but I am glad to say that I am able to agree that the ability to pay fines should be a factor of which the courts should take account when determining the level of fine to be imposed.

I am sorry that we do not currently have the pleasure of the presence of the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner). He has made a useful contribution to the debate, in that he has made many interventions, all of them entertaining, but has not made a speech. I regret that, because I would have liked to hear his considered view. I seem to recall that we had a hung jury. The hon. Member for Bolsover was not certain which way his mind should go, and I am still uncertain which way it has gone, except that he has gone.

The hon. Member for Bolsover was deeply concerned that the choice he might have to make might have resource implications, by which he meant that if we adopt a level 4 fine, it might mean more barristers being paid more money. That is a serious point for the House to address. If there is a higher scale of penalty, it is just possible that a defendant might be tempted to instruct counsel when otherwise he might not. Therefore, theoretically, there could be resource implications. Having given this matter extremely careful thought—I regret that the hon. Gentleman is not present to hear my response—my concluded view, for which in other circumstances I would charge a substantial fee, is that it is unlikely that increasing the scale from 3 to 4 would have significant resource implications for the Government or private individuals.

Government and Parliament can uprate penalties and fines to reflect changes in the value of money by statutory instrument, the primary legislation being the Criminal Justice Act 1982.

My hon. Friend the Member for Warrington, South made an important point about public figures receiving hate mail and said that that should be a factor in the scale of penalty imposed. It is inevitable that public figures will receive hate mail. I have known my father for 40 years or so—*[Interruption.]* I thought that I had better leave a little margin for error. During that time, my father has received much hate mail. I have received a modest amount myself, which will not be surprising to anyone who knows me. Public figures must put up with hate mail; that is life. We do not have to put up with offensive letters about ourselves being sent to other people. That is a different point and is largely covered by the libel laws, although in certain circumstances it could fall foul of the Bill. I say to public figures who are worried about hate mail that the wastepaper basket is a splendid solution to the problem.

My hon. Friend the Member for Billericay (Mrs. Gorman) made, as I would expect of her, several idiosyncratic points. I found myself thinking of the statutory defence provided in clause 1(2) of the Bill. I originally had it in mind to refer her to that statutory defence in the context of the remarks that she made about the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley). It occurred to me that in urging my hon. Friend's dismissal—a wicked and wrong thing for him to do, which we would greatly deplore if it happened—the right hon. Gentleman could rely on the statutory defence in clause 1(2) that he was making

> "a demand which he believed he had reasonable grounds for making; and that he believed that the use of the threat was a proper means of reinforcing the demand."

I expect that the right hon. Gentleman, who is a barrack-room lawyer if ever there were one, would invoke that provision.

To my surprise, I found that I might have to refer the statutory defence to my hon. Friend the Member for Billericay in the context of her husband. If he continues to write such letters to her neighbour, he may be in danger of prosecution.

Mrs. Gorman: I should not like my hon. Friend to think that my husband put that letter through next door's letterbox. He was driven to the point of sitting down one evening and composing the letter. I thought that it would be of interest to bring it to my hon. Friend's attention so that he could understand the provocation to which some people are subject.

Mr. Hogg: I understand that point, but if her husband had it in mind not to put it through next door's letterbox but to fold it into a dart and throw it over the wall it would still be "sending" according to the provisions of the Bill. My hon. Friend's husband had better be careful. If not, there are many hon. and learned Members who will look after his interests, should it prove necessary.

I have made some notes about the hon. Member for Preston (Mrs. Wise), but I have reservations about uttering them following her very gracious speech. I have noted, for example, "extraordinary display of class prejudice", "unhelpful contribution" and "suitability to be chosen as deputy leader of the Labour party". I gather that she was a candidate for the deputy leadership at one stage. Those were the sort of remarks that I intended to make, but she has been so gracious that it would be jolly unfair to make them. I do not make them in any spirit of criticism.

I should tell the hon. Member for Preston that we are talking about maximum, not mandatory, sentences. It is for the court to decide the fine according to the level of culpability. It is desirable that there should be a maximum that permits a severe fine in cases where there is a high degree of criminal culpability. The hon. Lady will agree that if a concerted racial attack were made on a group of Indians in her constituency, a substantial fine would be appropriate. For that reason, perhaps she will accept that scale 3 might be too modest.

This has been an important debate. I feel that I have trespassed on your patience, Mr. Deputy Speaker, although I do not think that I have been significantly out of order. For the reasons that I have given, I strongly commend the House to accept the Lords amendment but not the amendment to it urged eloquently by my hon. Friend the Member for Derby, North. If he were minded to withdraw his amendment, it might be a course of action acceptable to the House.

11.45 am

Mr. Greg Knight (Derby, North): The consensus that earlier settled on the House has been shaken, but I hope not shattered, by the lively debate that we have had.

I want to reply to some of the points that have been made. The hon. Member for Barking (Ms. Richardson) urged us to accept level 3. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister has put her mind at rest about many of the points that she made. As I said in an earlier intervention, the Bill provides not for minimum sentences but the level within which the courts operate. I hope, therefore, that the hon. Lady will accept the need to increase the level from £400.

I understand why the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) could not stay until the end of the debate. We are in the middle of the blood sports season and I assume that he has left to take part in the Socialist ritual of knife-throwing—usually in the back of their leader. Before he left he said that in some cases £400 would be chicken feed. I take that to be about as much support as I will receive from the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Forth (Mid-Worcestershire): It will be difficult for the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) to throw knives at his leader because he has departed for far-away parts and will be away for some time.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Member for Derby, North (Mr. Knight) said that he wanted to reply to some of the points that have been made. I hope that he will stick to that.

Mr. Knight: My hon. Friend makes an interesting point.

The hon. Member for Preston (Mrs. Wise) said that the Bill should be a disincentive to crime. The hon. Lady and I agree on our aims but disagree on our conclusions. Following the points made by my hon. Friend the Minister, I hope that she has revised her views.

Mrs. Wise: In view of the points that have been made about sustained campaigns, whether they be connected with racial matters or not, I have changed my mind. I had been considering the Bill only in the context of individuals. I should not like people to start invoking conspiracy laws, as I disapprove of them. It is better to provide for a heavier penalty than I had first thought suitable.

Mr. Knight: In case some hon. Members have doubts about the wisdom of increasing fines, I refer them to a case that took place in 1982 against a man called Penketh. He heard a widow broadcast for a pen pal. He wrote to the widow and out of kindness she replied to him. He began to bombard her with letters but she decided that she did not want to hear from him further. He wrote to that lady's son's headmaster saying that he was the natural father of her child, which caused her much distress. He was arrested and charged with criminal libel. He was placed on probation but continued to contact and pester her. When the matter was reviewed on appeal he was sentenced to nine months' imprisonment. The courts may need in certain cases, so that the sentence is a proper deterrent, to impose a fairly heavy fine or imprisonment. I am grateful to the hon. Member for Preston for acknowledging that there are cases in which a £400 fine would be inadequate.

When my hon. Friend the Member for Billericay (Mrs. Gorman) referred to dogs being spiked, I thought that she was waiting to speak in the later debate on the Protection of Animals (Amendment) Bill. I hope that her comments will not alienate the animal welfare voters in her constituency.

The hon. Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Corbett) said that he was worried about defendants having to go to gaol because they were fine defaulters. That is why he argued that the penalty should still be £400. The courts do not have an unfettered right to send fine defaulters to gaol. If payment of a fine is in arrears, the matter is normally reviewed. Only when the offender persistently and wilfully refuses to pay the fine is he or she sent to prison. On reflection, I hope that the hon. Gentleman will agree that that point should not be a real cause for concern.

The hon. Member for Nottingham, North (Mr. Allen) may by all means send to me the communication that his constituent has received. All I ask is that he does not put his jumper in the post because that would cause me distress and anxiety. My hon. Friend the Minister accepted that there could be cases in which a Member of Parliament would be able to plead the statutory defence. I am grateful to him for his acceptance of that point.

My hon. Friend the Member for Sherwood (Mr. Stewart) said that he has approached this matter with an open mind and that he is willing to give ground and accept that we should move up to level 4. I was in the Chamber a few weeks ago when my hon. Friend the Minister replied to another debate and said that if he could reach agreement he liked to do so. In the same spirit, on reflection I am prepared to accept the little ground that has been given. If we cannot have level 5, level 4 is perhaps the next best thing. On that basis, I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Lords amendment No. 1 agreed to.

Access to Medical Reports Bill

Lords amendments considered.

Clause 1

RIGHT OF ACCESS

Lords amendment: No. 1, in page 1, line 5, leave out "Subject to the provisions of this Act".

11.52 am

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): With this it will be convenient to discuss Lords amendments Nos. 2 to 22, 24, and 26 to 30.

Mr. Archy Kirkwood (Roxburgh and Berwickshire): I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

I had the privilege to sponsor this Bill and I am pleased that we have now arrived at the final stage of its passage through Parliament. At every stage it has grown a bit, like Topsy. As the parliamentary process continued, it seemed inexorably to grow larger and larger. The Bill had a formal Second Reading and a short Committee and Report stage. Then it went to the other place where it was considered briefly but nevertheless in detail. I take this opportunity to pay tribute to my noble Friend Lord Tordoff for his patience, application and procedural skill when piloting the Bill through the other place.

The purpose of the Bill is to allow individuals access to medical reports that are made about them by their general practitioners when they apply for insurance policies or jobs. The new statutory rights are not revolutionary but they are important and significant. The Bill will not increase the administrative or bureaucratic procedures that employers or insurance companies will have to face, but it will give important rights to individuals and will correct wrongs. The detailed work that I carried out when preparing for this measure suggested to me that serious inaccuracies find their way on to medical files, that they follow people from the cradle to the grave and that they can be prejudicial when they apply for insurance policies or jobs.

Before the Bill left the House for the other place the Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security, the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie) was kind enough, if that is the right way to put it, to say that she would arrange for parliamentary counsel to check that there were no technical deficiencies in the drafting of the Bill. Daunting as they may seem, the amendments are largely the result of that scrutiny.

I am pleased to say that the overwhelming majority of the amendments are designed to improve the language and structure of the Bill. Changes to the substance of the Bill are limited. Amendments Nos. 1 to 4 are to clause 1. In the original Bill, clause 1 provided for a new right of access. Amendments Nos. 1 to 4 are purely drafting amendments. The bar on retrospective access is removed from clause 1 and is relocated elsewhere.

There are some changes to clause 2, the interpretation clause. Amendment No. 5 provides for a new term, "the applicant". That is a legal generic term covering the person or company who seeks the medical report—the employer or the insurance company. It enables the drafting of subsequent parts of the Bill to be that much tidier.

Amendment No. 6 is purely technical. Amendment No. 7 makes it clear that only medical reports produced by the doctor who is or who has been responsible for the patient's medical treatment are covered by the Bill. There was doubt about whether the Bill, as originally drafted, embraced other medical reports. I wish to make it clear that it does not. A report by an insurance company doctor who has never treated the individual and who is merely examining somebody on behalf of the insurer would not be covered. When the Bill was discussed here I said that it had always been my intention to make that clear distinction.

Amendment No. 8 widens the definition of "employment purposes." It gives a right of access to the self-employed who are providing their services under contract. That was always the intention of the Bill, as originally drafted, it did not make that clear.

Amendments Nos. 9 to 13 are technical in nature and merit no further discussion. Amendment No. 14 deals with an interesting and slightly arcane point that was identified in the other place. If a general practitioner, when preparing a report for an employer, believes that it is necessary to consult another doctor for a second opinion —for example, a consultant who is responsible for the patient's hospital care—I do not expect the general practitioner to have to write again to the patient informing him of his right of access because a second doctor is being consulted. As the Bill was originally drafted, the general practitioner might have had to do that so that he could be said to be beyond reproach. The amendment makes it clear that that is not the Bill's intention.

Lords amendments Nos. 15 to 18, redraft clauses 3 to 5 and 7, which are the guts of the Bill. They improve the structure of that part of the Bill and tighten up the language without making any substantial changes to the meaning. The employer or insurer will still have to obtain written consent before seeking a medical report and to inform the individual of his or her rights on access and correction.

If the patient expresses a wish to see the report, the doctor will be informed and must allow up to 21 days for the patient to make arrangements for access. The patient can ask for errors to be corrected, and, if the doctor does not agree, the patient is entitled to attach a statement of his or her views. After the person has seen the doctor's proposed report, the doctor has to obtain the person's consent to send it. That is a second consent contained in the Bill. The doctor would have to keep a copy of the report for at least six months after sending it and allow the individual access to it during that period.

12 noon

Lords amendments Nos. 19 to 21 delete the redrafted clauses dealing with consent, notification of rights, access before the supply of a report and the giving of access. Clause 6 deals with important classes of exemption. Lords amendments Nos. 22 and 24 are purely technical and we shall discuss Nos. 23 and 25 later. Lords amendment No. 26 makes it clear that, even if a report is deemed to be exempt from access, the individual does not lose his or her right to withdraw consent for it to be sent.

Lords amendment No. 27 deletes clause 7 and the provisions on the retention of medical reports. It deletes a previously redrafted clause. Clause 8 deals with applications to a court to give people sanctions if the Bill is ignored. Lords amendment No. 28 rephrases clause 8. It improves it but only semantically and linguistically.

Lords amendment No. 29 makes it clear that notifications made under the Bill shall be made in writing and can be sent by post. There was originally some doubt about that. Lords amendment No. 30 reintroduces the power of retrospective access, which was taken out of the original clause 1.

I hope that I have satisfied the House that, although the amendments are quite lengthy and numerous, an enormous amount of careful examination has been given to the Bill by parliamentary counsel and officials, and I am grateful for their efforts. We are all tempted to throw brickbats at parliamentary counsel. In the past, I have taken them to task for doing violence to the English language and making ordinary language very complicated, but now, having been involved with two private Member's Bills, I am persuaded that there is no alternative. To make points absolutely legally clear, the language has to be superficially abstruse and arcane. I am indebted to the Under-Secretary of State for her assistance and for making available the services of parliamentary counsel and officials. I am also grateful for her extremely sympathetic attitude throughout our discussions.

I know that we are not supposed to recognise those who sit under the Gallery and work hard in high places forth of the House, but I would like also to pay a heartfelt tribute to the senior civil servant, Mr. Campion, for his advice and willingness to help, despite the many other pressures on his time. If the Civil Service has any sense of justice in terms of promotion I am sure that he will go far.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security (Mrs. Edwina Currie): I congratulate the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) on getting his Bill this far. I join him in recognising the efforts of Lord Tordoff in the other place.

It would be wise if I started by thanking the hon. Gentleman, on behalf of Mr. Campion, for his very kind remarks about him. Mr. Campion is the official who was very much involved in drafting this Bill and the Community Health Councils (Access to Information) Bill, which has now passed all its stages and awaits Royal Assent.

It has been an interesting experience for me during this parliamentary Session to find that, of the handful of private Members Bills that are likely to receive Royal Ass[illegible] my Department has been involved with two.

I am sure that Mr. Campion and his colleagues will take carefully the advice about going far. I understand that Mr. Campion is going to the Bahamas, where he will manage the Princess Margaret hospital. I am sure that we all wish him well and will look forward to seeing him in another incarnation at some future point. I join in the tribute to parliamentary counsel and other officials.

The House will realise that if we were to ask parliamentary counsel to go through every Bill that is laid on the Table, they would do nothing else. Therefore, the promise that I made when the Bill was debated on Report and Third Reading was that if it was the will of Parliament that the Bill should at some stage proceed to the statute book, I would request parliamentary counsel to ensure that the Bill achieved the hon. Gentleman's objectives and was in a form which would enable it to operate satisfactorily and not cause undue difficulty.

Ms. Jo Richardson (Barking): I have followed with great interest the hon. Lady's explanation about the

[Ms. Jo Richardson]

massive rewriting of the Bill in the other place. I read in *Hansard* that she said that she would be a little reluctant to commit a great deal of officials' time until she saw whether the Bill would make progress. I cannot believe that she or others could have thought that the Bill would not make progress. It clearly was not blocked by the Government.

I should like to hear from the hon. Lady whether it would have been less wasteful of time for everyone—including the promoter of the Bill—if the work and the help that was offered subsequently, and that had to be put into effect in the other place, had been offered to the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) right at the beginning. Removal of clauses and insertion of new clauses just confuses everyone.

Mrs. Currie: If it was possible to tell at the beginning, when there might be more than 100 private Member's Bills and, of course, Bills in the other place as well—which one was likely to be successful or to proceed further, that would be a sensible course of action. However, it is entirely a matter for the House, especially on Bills such as this, on which the Government are neutral, whether the Bill will make progress. In that sense, I think that it would be more appropriate for the hon. Lady to express appreciation, as I understand her party is not against the Bill, and as it fits in with everybody's efforts to improve the role of the consumer in the development and delivery of health.

This is a subject which, broadly, has all-party approval. I am also sure that parliamentary counsel did not spend an enormous amount of time on the Bill. Whatever the details of the drafting are, it was fairly clear from discussions in this House and in the other place exactly what the objectives are, which makes life easier for parliamentary counsel.

The difficulty of trying to legislate on issues such as this is revealed by the problems that we have had, but we remain convinced that people should have greater access to what is written about them in their records generally. The Bill as amended is consistent with the talks that are taking place with the medical profession to achieve that on a wider basis.

As I mentioned on Report and Third Reading, the discussions that we have had on the Bill and the all-party support for it have helped considerably. I believe that attitudes to access to medical records have shifted quite considerably during the past couple of years. That is in no small part due to the hon. Gentleman. We do not seek to oppose the Bill and we are content with the amendments.

The first batch contains 28 amendments. Although I do not want to disagree with the presentation made by the Bill's sponsors, it might help if I give some idea of what we are up to—*[Interruption.]* Rather, what we think that the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire is up to. We agree that what the amendments achieve does not affect the substance or objectives of the Bill. However, the amendments improve the Bill's overall structure so that the sponsors intentions may be presented in a more logical sequence. Some amendments have been made to the definitions section to deal with omissions and drafting infelicities.

The first batch of amendments amend clauses 1, 2, 6, 8 and 9. They omit clauses 3, 4, 5 and 7. For the sake of clarity, I am including amendments Nos. 23 and 25 which we will debate in more detail shortly. The amendments replace the omitted clauses so that the Bill is presented in a more structured and logical way. I must emphasise that the Government are completely neutral on the Bill. The Government would prefer not to legislate, especially as we prefer to do things on a voluntary basis whenever possible. The amendments demonstrate just how difficult it is to legislate properly. However, as the Bill is likely to reach the statute book, we have provided assistance and on that basis we feel that the amendments do exactly what they are proposed to do.

Amendments Nos. 1 to 4 affect clause 1. As originally drafted, the clause was considered by my Department to be defective in that it appeared to confer a widespread right of access to medical reports unless precluded by the subsequent provisions in the Bill. That may well have been the sponsors' original intention, but we felt that that was too wide for a Bill of this order to bear.

The amendments narrow the scope of clause 1 while preserving its effects. As we said earlier, the exclusion of reports prepared before the Bill is enacted will be transferred from clause 1 to clause 9. That is a normal parliamentary convention.

Amendments Nos. 5 to 13 affect clause 2. They are important as they help us to define the term "applicant"—the insurer or employer introduced in the new clauses. It will therefore make it much easier to interpret the legislaton in future. The amendments are also important because they will help to carry forward the sponsors' objectives to widen the definition of employment purposes and amend the definition of insurance purposes so that it focuses on the individual referred to in the various provisions in the Bill.

If the Bill is written in such a way that its exact wording carries out the sponsors' objectives, there are likely to be fewer objections to it in use. In other words, it is likely to be effective. I hope that improving the definitions will be non-controversial. However, the overall effect of amendments Nos. 5 to 13 is to focus the Bill more on the individual whose rights are the cornerstone of the Bill. The remainder of the group are minor consequential drafting amendments.

We believe that amendment No. 14 to clause 2 is quite important. It will overcome a possible ambiguity in the clause as drafted. The amendment makes clear that only reports prepared by a practitioner for employers or insurers are covered. Lord Prys-Davies made the point in Committee that the clause could apply to reports sought by a practitioner from another, which is not the intention of the Bill, as the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire explained. Therefore, it is wise to make it absolutely clear that transactions between doctors to enable a report to be prepared are not covered by this amendment. That is important and will help to reassure the medical profession.

Amendment No. 15 is also important. The new clause replaces a defective clause which will be removed later. It is at the heart of the Bill because it concerns

> "Consent to applications for medical reports for employment or insurance purposes."

The substitution of the new clause to replace clause 4 is primarily part of the need to draft the Bill in a more structured way. Clarification of the provisions has been made and the substance of the Bill remains unchanged. The new clause provides that in subsection (1) the applicant, whom we have now defined as the insurer or employer, must obtain the consent of the individual—whom we have defined as the person about whom the medical report is being prepared—to seek a medical report. As the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire said, the applicant must notify the individual that he has a right to withhold consent for the report to be obtained and that he has a right to access and to withhold consent and to amend and modify the report. Without the new clause drafted in the tight way recommended by parliamentary counsel, the Bill might have presented some difficulties. We feel that these are important technical drafting improvements. If the House is mindful to pass the Bill, we believe that they should be accepted.

12.15 pm

Amendment No. 16 substitutes clause 5 with a rewritten clause. It is, again, the result of improved drafting and does not affect the Bill's objectives. The details of the time scales within which the applicant, medical practitioner and the individual must act are strengthened in terms of seeking, supplying and having access to a medical report.

The hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire will remember that we had quite a long debate in Committee and on Report and discussions at the back of the Chair over this matter because there was some ambiguity about the time scales. We feel that amendment No. 16 is the appropriate way to proceed.

Under subsection (1) of the new clause an individual is entitled when giving consent for a medical report to state whether he wants access to it. If he does, the applicant —the insurer or employer—shall notify the doctor and the individual that he has done so. Under subsection (2) the practitioner shall not provide the report to the applicant unless the individual has had access to it or 21 days have elapsed since the application was made and the individual has not taken steps to gain access to it.

Subsection (3) of the new clause provides that the individual may give notice in writing to the practitioner that he wants access before the report is sent. In those circumstances,

> "the practitioner shall not supply the report unless . . . the individual has access or . . . 21 days . . . have elapsed"

and the individual has not taken steps to make the necessary arrangements. We may argue long and hard about what that time period should be. However, it needs to be fairly short so that the report still has currency. However, it must be long enough for people to have reasonable time in which to make approaches and decisions on whether they want access. We believe that the amendment is a technical improvement on principles that are already established in the Bill.

Amendment No. 17 is another new clause. It deals with

> "consent to supplying of report and correction of errors."

Again, this is a matter of drafting style and of a rather more structured approach. It provides in subsection (1) that an individual must give consent to a practitioner for a report to be sent to the applicant. Subsection (2) preserves the individual's right to amend the report or, if the practitioner is not prepared to make such amendments, to attach a statement to the report. Subsection (3) provides that such a request

> "shall be made in writing."

We had a long discussion at an earlier stage of the Bill about how the individual might show some dissent about what was being written. Having taken careful advice, we believe that the amendment would satisfy the sponsors' objectives. They are drafting improvements which we advise the House to accept.

Amendment No. 18 is another new clause, on retention of reports. It is intended to replace the provisions in clause 7 to make drafting improvements which spell out the obligations of medical practitioners in relation to the reports that they have supplied. Again, we are talking about time scales. They must retain the reports for six months and grant access with those rights to an individual by virtue of the Bill within that six-month period. They must make a copy available for inspection and supply a copy if the individual prefers that at a reasonable charge. Again, that seems very sensible. Amendments Nos. 19, 20 and 21 have the concomitant effect of leaving out clauses 3, 4 and 5, which we have replaced.

Amendments Nos. 22, 24 and 26 amend clause 6; we shall be discussing amendments Nos. 23 and 25 in a few moments. As the promoter of the Bill pointed out, they deal with exemptions. Their main purpose is to make minor drafting adjustments. Clause 6(5) has been rewritten to improve the drafting style and structure. In summary, it improves the drafting which provides that a practitioner may withhold information where serious harm may be caused to the individual or an identified third party. Even where such exemptions exist, the practitioner shall not forward a report without the individual's consent.

Amendment No. 27 would leave out clause 7 and amendment No. 28 deals with clause 8. My note simply says that they are intended to improve drafting style and will not change the substance of the clause, and I therefore cannot offer futher comment.

Amendment No. 29 would insert a new clause to clarify the notification provisions. It says that any notification

> "shall be given in writing; and . . . may be given by post."

I understand that provision that notification may be served by post was missing from the Bill. Whether it means that notifications will be missing if they are sent by post is probably a matter for another Minister and not for me, but it is important that the provision should be included.

Mr. Robin Corbett (Birmingham, Erdington): Malicious communications?

Mrs. Currie: I doubt whether it would be regarded as a malicious communication if it were written with the interests of the patient in mind. However, our earlier discussions may be relevant in some circumstances, which is why the Bill may be needed.

Amendment No. 30 moves from clause 1 to clause 9 the provision ensuring that the Bill does not apply retrospectively. It does not change the purpose of the Bill but simply reorders it.

Although we have a large number of amendments before us, many of them duplicate each other and many simply strengthen definitions and do not change the substance of the Bill. The overall result is a considerable improvement and all concerned are to be congratulated.

Mr. Dafydd Wigley (Caernarfon): I congratulate the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) on introducing the Bill. As one of the sponsors of the Bill, I am glad that it is making progress. It deals with one aspect of access to information—a large subject on which we need to make further progress. Much

[Mr. Dafydd Wigley]

information that affects individuals is unnecessarily unavailable to them. Therefore, I heartily congratulate the hon. Gentleman on his progress with the Bill.

Like other hon. Members, I suspect, I have some difficulty in following the layout of the Bill now that substantial changes have been proposed in another place. That reflects on the way in which we deal with legislation that comes to us from the Lords with a substantial number of amendments. Would it not be more sensible to have a Bill as amended by the House of Lords, just as we consider a Bill as amended in Committee? That would make the Bill with the proposed changes easier to read. It would be less complicated than having to interpose the amendments in the original Bill as we do at the moment.

Mrs. Audrey Wise (Preston): That might be going too far and it might still be hard to compare the original Bill with the Bill as amended in the Lords. Would not one solution be to have an explanatory briefing such as we have in the Bill itself? I share the hon. Gentleman's difficulties.

Mr. Wigley: We have an explanatory memorandum at the beginning of the Bill, but it is completely irrelevant by the time that it has been rehashed in the House of Lords. In Committee, we have notes on clauses which Departments kindly supply and that is of considerable assistance to us in our work. In this case, we are discussing what is virtually a new Bill without the help of an explanatory memorandum or notes on clauses.

I would have liked to ask the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire one or two questions arising from the changes in the Bill, but I see that he is no longer here. I suppose that I should put them to the Minister, who hinted, when she dropped her guard a few moments ago, that much of the Bill is accepted by the Government even if it is not inspired by the Government. Perhaps she can clarify the way in which the Bill may work in practice. Not having served on the Committee, I have not had the opportunity to raise these points. First, we are avoiding retrospection. What, then, will be the position of an employer who has not taken steps as rigorous as he might otherwise have taken when employing a person, on the assumption that ongoing medical scrutiny of that person is possible? I assume that the Bill will apply to anyone now in employment who needs to have a medical. I think that the Minister sees my point, and I should be grateful for clarification.

I entirely accept the intention of the Bill to make information available, but am I correct in thinking that, even with the amendments, the Bill still provides that a report cannot be supplied without the individual's written consent? If the individual withholds that written consent —the phrase used in the explanatory memorandum for clause 5—the report cannot be given. What will be the position of an employee who is currently working for an employer if that employer starts to have misgivings about his suitability to continue to do a specific job? I worked for a time in the food industry, in which ill health could affect one's suitability for involvement at certain stages of food production. An employer at a food factory may feel that he needs a report. If the individual says that he will not give written consent, will the employer not be able to obtain the report? I imagine that that cannot be the implication, although that is what the explanatory memorandum to the original Bill suggests. I am not sure whether the description is correct or whether there has been a change. I am sorry to be raising an involved point, but I imagine that there must be some safeguards for the employer, too. If a medical report is a material factor because of the nature of the work that the employee is undertaking, the employer must surely have some way of getting the information without there being any form of embargo. If he does not, he may be forced into moving the employee, and from that could arise issues of access to information and the involvement of industrial tribunals. I imagine that this matter could be complex and I should be glad of assurances as to how the system will work.

Amendment No. 16 refers to a time lag of 21 days. I understand that the intention is that "supplying" will include provision of a report by post. Does one need proof of posting for those purposes? Should there be registered or recorded delivery post, or is it enough for the medical practitioner to say, "I put the report in the post" and for the 21 days to start clocking away from then?

From time to time constituents see hon. Members about difficulties in getting a job. We ask the constituent whether he minds if we have a word with his doctor. I take it that the Bill, in applying to employers or those involved in insurance, will not cut across our ability to ask the doctor questions.

Mr. Kirkwood *indicated assent.*

12.30 pm

Mr. Wigley: The hon. Gentleman is saying that it definitely will not restrict that ability. The Bill as originally drafted provides for the making of inquiries, albeit not by the employer. The revised wording is tighter, and I think that my understanding of the measure is correct.

We need to be certain about these matters before the Bill reaches the statute book. In asking questions, I am in no way diminishing the Bill's importance or trying to be obstructive. As I said, I agree with the direction in which we are moving. We need to be certain about these specific points.

Ms. Jo Richardson: I congratulate the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) on introducing this worthy Bill. As I said in an intervention to the Minister, it is extraordinary that a Bill may start as a private Member's Bill but, when the Government get hold of it with their parliamentary draftspeople, it becomes entirely different. The Bill has been rewritten considerably.

The hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire said that the amendments and new clauses were debated at some length in the House of Lords, but that did not happen. Lord Tordoff introduced 25 amendments and five new clauses in a speech that lasted all of nine minutes. It is a bit much to explain in only nine minutes why a Bill has been re-written and why clauses have been withdrawn and new clauses added. That is treating the House cavalierly. After those nine minutes, the House passed all the amendments and new clauses within half an hour and then on 23 June had five minutes on Third Reading. That is a superficial way of assisting Parliament in drawing up new guidelines for an important extension of freedom of information.

Mrs. Wise: To be fair to the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood), who is not here at present, he said that the other place had considered this matter briefly. Exactly how briefly was not clear. The hon. Gentleman said that the Bill had been considered a great deal by officials and draftsmen and in that context he talked about the detail. Does my hon. Friend agree that it is dangerous to have the Bill considered in detail by officials and then briefly by those with parliamentary responsibility and that we should ensure that there is closer parliamentary scrutiny?

Ms. Richardson: I agree with my hon. Friend. Some Bills are only a few lines long and have a simple point to make, which one can immediately grasp. As I am a London hon. Member and am regularly in the House on Fridays, I catch up with many private Members' Bills. Some are easy and some are more difficult to absorb. I have read this Bill with great care and have tried to understand and slot in the amendments. This morning, the Minister did her best to justify why what appeared to be perfectly good drafting in the original Bill had been replaced by what she tells us is better drafting. That is beyond me.

Mrs. Currie: I am sure that the hon. Lady realises that I am not the promoter of the Bill. Indeed, if I were, there would not be a Bill.

Mr. Corbett: The Minister is neutral.

Mrs. Currie: I am entirely neutral.

The Government's view is that we should not legislate in such matters. Therefore, the hon. Lady's comments about the necessity for explanatory memoranda and all the rest should be directed to the distinguished, important and highly motivated hon. Member who is sitting in front of her, the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood).

Ms. Richardson: With great respect, I was directing my remarks to the promoter of the Bill, and I hope that he will have an opportunity to say something. From her tone, I gathered that the Minister welcomed the Bill. She said that she had waited to see what progress it made before she committed some of her parliamentary draftsmen staff to it. I thought that she took up the matter rather enthusiastically.

Mr. Wigley: Does the hon. Lady recall that the Minister said:

> "the proposals that we have brought forward"

and then corrected herself?

Ms. Richardson: Exactly. That leads me to conclude that we must be careful. I am not against the Government —whatever Government—giving the professional assistance that they have at their disposal. Back-Bench Members who bring forward Private Members' Bills do not have that professional assistance. The Government should face up to their responsibilities and say, "In effect, now that we have altered the Bill, it is a Government Bill." I advise its promoter that the Bill is virtually a Government Bill.

I shall make some comments about a few of the amendments, if I have them right, and there is no guarantee that I have understood them all. Amendments Nos. 1 and 2 seem to be a prime example of redrafting for no purpose at all. They simply substitute one set of words for another. For example, amendment No. 1 deletes the words

> "Subject to the provisions of this Act"

and Amendment No. 2 inserts the words

> "in accordance with the provisions of this Act".

I cannot see the difference between the two. The Minister said that the new form is tighter, and more understandable. I despair when the public see us substituting words such as

> "in accordance with the provisions of this Bill"

for

> "subject to the provisions of this Bill".

They may think that we are being pedantic. When asked why the words had been changed, Lord Tordoff did not know the answer.

Ms. Diane Abbott (Hackney, North and Stoke Newington): Does my hon. Friend agree that another example of that is Amendment No. 13? It states:

> "leave out 'an' and insert 'the'."

Members of the public find such amendments inexplicable.

Ms. Richardson: I agree with my hon. Friend. I probably have that point among the notes that I have scribbled.

I am not trying to be unfair or introduce matters that I should not, but amendment No. 3 contains the word "individual". As a matter of interest, can the individual be a resident only of Great Britain, or can he or she be a resident of any part of the United Kingdom? I am trying to find out whether Northern Ireland is covered. *[Interruption.]* The Minister and her advisers are clearly trying to make up their minds. Clause 7(3) of the original Bill provided that it would extend to Northern Ireland, but that was taken out and does not appear in the present version. The Earl of Arran said that

> "it is the intention to apply the Bill to Northern Ireland by Order in Council once it receives Royal Assent."—*Official Report, House of Lords*, 18 May 1988; c. 379.

If that is so, why could not the original provision remain in the Bill, where it would have the force of statute rather than the less binding force of a Government intention? What is the reason for the change? No explanation has been given. I see the Minister struggling and seeking advice, so I assume that she does not know either. In other contexts, the Government constantly remind us that Northern Ireland is as much a part of the United Kingdom as Nottinghamshire, so why at this stage in the game do they run away from legislating for Northern Ireland identically with other parts of the United Kingdom?

Amendment No. 8, which extends the provisions of the Bill to self-employed persons, is greatly to be welcomed. Can the promoter tell me whether people on restart and training programmes after previous unemployment will be regarded as trainees for the purposes of this legislation? An employer may wish to ask for a medical certificate in respect of a trainee. This may be covered elsewhere, but the position is not clear to me.

On amendment No. 15, the Minister gave no justification for the substitution of the new clause for the provisions in the original Bill. My comments on this show my great faith in the promoter, whose Bill I understood rather better than the version now before us. All that Lord Tordoff could say was that the drafting and structure had been improved, but he offered not a shred of evidence for that sweeping generalisation. Again, the House is being treated with a certain contempt, if that is not too harsh a word, in being expected to absorb legislation of this magnitude and gravity in this way. A thoroughly worthy and laudable Bill has been virtually rewritten in the House

[Ms. Richardson]

of Lords and very little time is available for the House of Commons to consider the new version and for the Minister to explain what is happening.

Amendment No. 22 relates to clause 6(1), which provides that a doctor may withhold some information in a medical report on certain grounds, one of which is that the information

> "would indicate the intentions of the practitioner in respect of the individual."

That phrase is incomprehensible and I cannot see its relevance. It is included not on its merits but as a piece of bureaucratic tidiness. Lord Tordoff also said:

> "The Government have asked for this exemption in order to keep in line with the Data Protection Act. That is another mystery which is slightly beyond me."—*[Official Report, House of Lords,* 7 June 1988; Vol. 497, c. 1310.]

One way or another, there are many mysteries in the Bill that Lord Tordoff did not clarify, because he did not understand them either. Certainly they have not been clarified in my mind.

Having said that, I do not wish in any way to alarm the Bill's promoter into thinking that I do not approve of it. It is very worthwhile legislation. Bit by bit, with this Bill and that of my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) which will also come before us with Lords amendments, we are making a little progress—considerably more than the present Government ever made or will ever make.

12.45 pm

Mr. Richard Holt (Langbaurgh): I only intended to look in for a few moments this morning, not meaning to get involved in any way in this legislation, which I have not followed. However, on reading the explanatory memorandum on clause 1, I wondered why we were discussing this legislation at all, as to my mind it will be almost meaningless. From my 25 years of experience in personnel, I know that the last thing an employer ever does is to call for a medical report from a would-be employee's general practitioner. He will go to somebody else. However, the explanatory memorandum states:

> "Only a medical report prepared by a medical practitioner who is or has been responsible for the individual's clinical care is subject to the Bill."

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): Order. I remind the hon. Gentleman that, much as his comments may have been welcomed in the Second Reading debate, I shall be obliged if he will now speak to the amendments.

Mr. Holt: I appreciate your comment, Madam Deputy Speaker, and, without wishing to stretch the patience of the Chair, I spoke with the Bill's promoter before intervening and I believe that amendment 14 covers the area to which my general remarks relate.

If parliamentary time is to be allotted to improving access to medical records, which I wholeheartedly support, the narrow way in which that is to be introduced will do very little to enhance progress. If anything, it points to ways of stopping progress. I do not seek to do anything that will halt the progress of the Bill, but I hope that anyone who is enthusiastic about it will realise that there is really very little to be enthusiastic about. I trust that the Bill's promoter will not feel that I am being critical of him or of his Bill. He has done a jolly good job in bringing it to the House, but the House itself should have amended the Bill, and the Government should have made it clear that the Bill will cover the report of any medical practitioner.

Mr. Corbett: The hon. Member for Langbaurgh (Mr. Holt) put his finger on an extremely important point. He may be looking for the Government's assistance with this Bill, but as the Minister herself confirmed, the Government are neutral to the point of not wanting to raise a finger. She said this morning that, had she had her way, the Bill would not be before us.

I had not appreciated that reports of the kind to which the hon. Member for Langbaurgh referred, from a medical practitioner other than the individual's own GP, will be excluded. The hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) made that clear, as did the Minister earlier. The concern expressed by the hon. Member for Langbaurgh is particularly important in view of his experience in personnel. I must say that it was not my point, but I hear and respect what he says. If that is so —and we have been told twice this morning that it is so —employers or insurance companies have a way around the provisions staring them in the face, and in my view it is an extremely unwelcome loophole.

I hope that the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire will accept that I am not trying to hold up the Bill, which is a step forward on a long and bumpy road. Nevertheless, an employer or prospective employer, or an insurance company, could be encouraged deliberately to avoid consulting the individual's own doctor, safe and sure in the knowledge that that individual could not then ask to see and comment on the report. We may speculate on how often that is likely to happen, and whether it is good personnel or industrial relations practice, but it could happen, and I do not think that that is right. In such circumstances, the independent doctor would not normally have access to the individual's medical records as a guide to his medical history and background, which surely is not helpful to an independent doctor asked to carry out an examination and then make a report.

Mr. Wigley: Is not the likely pattern that an employee will be required, particularly when joining a company in which his medical condition is a sensitive issue, to give an assurance that he will always be willing to submit to the scrutiny of the company's medical officer—as is often the case at present? In such circumstances, the employee will have no access to the information that the medical officer may have or may be providing to the management about him, and the medical officer will certainly not go to the employee's GP so as not to trigger the provisions of the Bill. Should we not be careful of such a development?

Mr. Corbett: That is perfectly possible. Let us view a brighter aspect of the matter and suppose that an employee is being considered for promotion to some fairly important management post. Those responsible for the appointment may want an up-to-date report on his medical condition, which would be wholly understandable. It would be sensible for an independent doctor not just to examine the individual, but to discuss with him the conclusions he has reached. Although the Bill provides that that shall not happen, there is nothing to stop it from happening.

I do not want to nit-pick, but there are other problems——

Mr. Holt: Could we expand the example that the hon. Gentleman has given, in the practical world? Let us say that a man is going into senior management, and that as part of his new emolument package he is put into a private medical insurance scheme. Will the two doctors have to communicate with each other in writing, and will that written communication be made available to the person who is to be promoted? If not, the whole thing is meaningless.

Mr. Corbett: I am afraid that I cannot answer that question: it is best directed to the promoter of the Bill.

Clause 2, which deals with interpretation, says:

"'care' includes examination, investigation and diagnosis".

Can it be any one or two of those, or must it be all three? If it can be any one, two or three, could it not be argued that, because the definition must embrace an examination, an examination by an independent doctor called in by the insurance company or employer may be covered by the Bill?

Mr. Wigley: Perhaps I can assist the hon. Gentleman. Lords amendment No. 6 seeks to leave out "and" and insert "or", so that the Bill would read

"'care' includes examination, investigation or diagnosis".

Presumably, "care" means a clinical examination which could be undertaken by more than one doctor.

Mr. Corbett: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his intervention, which both helps and hinders. We have established that any one of those criteria could apply. That being the case, clearly a clinical examination must be carried out by an independent doctor, and that at least would bring it partially within the Bill.

The other aspect which I find worrying echoes the point made by the hon. Member for Langbaurgh. It does not involve far-fetched circumstances. Let us suppose that the independent doctor who has been called in is uncertain on a point, after his examination of the individual, either because he does not believe what he has been told about the individual's previous medical history or because his questioning did not provide him with the information that he was seeking to confirm a conclusion that he was reaching.

As the Bill stands, it seems that the independent doctor would be unable to consult the medical practitioner responsible for the clinical care of the individual. If the independent doctor wanted to consult the individual's GP, what would be the status of the report produced by the independent doctor? One could argue that if the independent doctor consults the individual's GP, technically and practically the GP has had a hand in preparing the report of the independent doctor in the sense that his observations or revelations of previous medical history would feature in that report.

Even if the independent doctor had been denied information, opinion or assistance to confirm or clarify his or her opinion, or if the individual's regular GP had had some part, however small, in preparing the report, that would seem to bring the report into the scope of the Bill.

I am not seeking to complicate the matter. This is an important point, which worries me, because it does no service to the individual, the independent doctor, the employer or the insurance company if the independent doctor's report is flawed or incomplete in that it is unable to tell a full and accurate story.

If that is so, what is the value of such a report unless it is confined to establishing what is the general state of health of the individual, to which the answer is bad, not so bad, good, very good or excellent? I am not absolutely sure how much value that would have in terms of prospective senior management. I should have thought that there are people knocking about who could do that without any medical qualification.

What is the value of that report? Surely it is in everybody's interest that the report should be as accurate as possible. Surely it is beyond belief to make a distinction between a report drawn up by an individual's regular GP and that of a company doctor called in for that purpose. I suspect, because of the time, that we shall have to let this one go if we want to give the Bill a fair wind to the statute book, as I am sure the whole House would wish to do. We keep nibbling at the edges of this subject and it is perfectly obvious from the comments that have been made today that it is something to which we will have to return, probably in the context of a full-blooded freedom of information Act. That is the only way to clear up this and many other issues.

1 pm

Mr. Kirkwood: I am suitably chastened as I fully expected to be, bringing before the House this plethora of amendments. I understand the comments that have been made. There were constraints of time and I was not highly placed in the list of private Members' Bills. The pressure of time in the Department was also considerable. I accept that it is difficult for the House to cope with such a number of amendments which substantially change the wording of the Bill. However, the Under-Secretary of State and I, who are at one on this, have been trying to make the point that there is no major change of substance in the Bill. The issues in the Bill as we are suggesting it should be amended are not significantly different from those in the Bill during the earlier stages.

It is true that there was a formal Second Reading and that the Committee and Report stages were constrained. I fully accept that. However, that was the time when some of the issues should have been raised. The important points that have been made by hon. Members today were in the Bill then, although perhaps in different words.

We must bear in mind that the provenance of the Bill is simply to try to get round the fact that medical files kept by general practitioners are substantially inaccurate in many cases. That is what causes people to suffer the prejudice that the Bill seeks to redress. The Bill does not seek to be a freedom of information Act, which I would fully support, and it does not seek to address the question of independent medical reports. It simply attempts to give individuals an additional layer of protection against suffering prejudice because some mistake, subjective comment or other piece of information finds its way into medical files, which as I have said follow people from the cradle to the grave. Such information could cause people to suffer prejudice when applying for jobs or insurance policies.

The Bill has a limited objective and I accept that. Anybody who studies the information that has been made available to me by the freedom of information campaign and others about the extent to which individuals can suffer prejudice in such circumstances would be convinced of the need for this small change in the law. It simply seeks to

[Mr. Kirkwood]

ensure that any information made available specifically for the purpose of prospective employers or insurers will be accurate.

If that is the genesis of the idea behind the legislation, it is necessary only to focus on the information derived from the medical files. Therefore, independent examinations, for which prospective employers or insurers are entitled to ask, have a more limited function. In an independent report there is no danger that an error in the medical file will be translated into a report that will cause an individual to suffer prejudice. We have to keep the proposal in that context.

Mr. Wigley: The hon. Gentleman spoke of a "prospective" employer. I am sure that he will confirm that we are dealing with not just prospective employers but existing employers. That is my understanding of the wording in both the Bill and the amendment from the other place. Secondly, there is an amendment that changes the definition of "care" to specify, "examination, investigation or diagnosis." That is an important amendment which substitutes "or" for "and". In that context would not a doctor who is responsible for the clinical examination of an individual come within the scope of the Bill and would that not include a doctor working for a company? If it does, the Bill goes considerably wider—in many ways I would welcome that —but it will cause problems with the individual's ability to prevent the report being available to a company's management. It is an issue that we must address before passing it as law.

Mr. Kirkwood: Reports required during the course of someone's employment as well as when they apply for a job will be included in the Bill. That was certainly the Bill's original intention.

The change of the definition of the word "care" is specifically designed—I took advice on this matter—to exclude people conducting independent examinations. Reports should be made on the objective or clinical judgment of a general practitioner who has a patient in front of him, of whom he can ask questions, and examine and on whom he can carry out tests and do all the other things he needs to do to arrive at a conclusion. It is only necessary for the GP to state whether the person is suitable for the job in question. The general practitioner does not have to go into a deep psychological or mental history. He must certify only that the person is medically fit for the job.

I am trying to ensure that the patient does not suffer any prejudice because the medical file that the GP has been using is wrong. Medical files are transmitted from GP to GP.

Mr. Wigley: I am sorry to press the hon. Gentleman, but I am sure that hon. Members will agree that it is important to clarify this matter. In the Bill the definition of "a medical report" means a report.

"of an individual prepared by a medical practitioner who is or has been responsible for the clinical care of the individual"

and that means the clinical examination of the individual. Doctors who work for companies or are used by companies may have been responsible for the clinical examination of an employee. Such a doctor may not be the GP of the employee. In those circumstances, a report prepared by that doctor for the company would be subject to the procedures of the Bill. If the employee says, "No, that report cannot be used" it would be a veto on its use.

Mr. Kirkwood: I understand what the hon. Gentleman is saying, but that is not the advice that I have been given. Independent examinations are outwith the scope of the Bill. I do not believe that it is necessary to include them. If that definition is inadequate, I apologise. I hope that assistance will come from another direction that is completely outwith my control.

The hon. Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley) made a further important point and I do not want to duck it. He said that employers may suffer inconvenience by being denied access to information. The information about which I am talking is that supplied by a patient to a general practitioner in confidence. The medical file follows the patient from cradle to grave. I do not believe that, because inconvenience may be suffered by an employer, individuals should have to allow information to be passed on if it cannot be cast-iron guaranteed as accurate and correct.

Mr. Wigley: In general, I agree with the hon. Gentleman. That is why I am a sponsor of the Bill.

Mr. Kirkwood: Why, then, does the hon. Gentleman not leave me alone?

Mr. Wigley: I am determined that any Bill that I sponsor can be defended by me when it leaves this place. A person with a contagious disease might be working in a food factory. The implications for the general public go beyond the rights of the individual. I want to be sure that we have struck the right balance.

Mr. Kirkwood: Individuals will have the right to see the report, or they will have the right to make a written statement if they cannot persuade the doctor that the report is inaccurate. They will also have the right to say that the report must not be sent. That would be the best way to deal with the case that the hon. Member for Caernarfon described. If an applicant, suffering from a contagious disease, worked in a food factory and denied the doctor the right to send a report based on his medical record, the employer would be able to ask for an independent medical examination, and that would reveal the contagious infection.

I am trying to protect the individual in as many ways as I can from being prejudiced by incorrect information on his medical file. The hon. Member for Caernarfon and I agree that the best policy would be to allow patients to have access to all their medical files. The Department is moving fast, although not fast enough for some of us, in that direction. I detected an encouraging warmth of tone, if no more than that, in the Minister's voice when she said that some progress is being made. If sufficient progress had already been made, there would be no need for the Bill, but we are not there yet.

We were given advice about what happens in Northern Ireland. It is an important point. If parliamentary draftsmen have to find their way through arcane procedures, those governing Northern Ireland are even more arcane to a simple-minded Scottish Member of Parliament such as I. I am told that Orders in Council are the appropriate way to deal with Northern Ireland legislation and that it would be without precedent to legislate for new statutory rights without going through the Order in Council procedure. I pass on that information for what it is worth. That is what I was told when I asked the question.

We considered at some length how the self-employed would be affected by the Bill. I understand that if a contract is in prospect between an employee and an employer the provisions of the Bill would apply, but a complicating factor is whether the prospective employer is a Department of State. We may have to return to that point when we discuss later amendments.

I am sensitive to the criticism that the House is being asked to consider an unsatisfactory Bill, but I am not the master of my own destiny. It is self-evident that the Bill is not perfect, but if the amendments were accepted, the possibility of ambiguous construction by the courts would be much less likely. I throw myself on the mercy of the House and ask it to accept the Lords amendment.

Mrs. Currie: If I may respond to the point that the Bill is different now because the Government have taken an interest in it, I would point out that in our view the Bill is important. The alternative to corrections by parliamentary draftsmen would be to allow deficiencies to appear in legislation approved by the House. The Government have a responsibility to help everybody to avoid legislative nonsense. That does not by itself make it a Government Bill. I consider that responsibility important. In my previous incarnation, much of the work I did involved making some kind of sense of and headway with legislation passed by a Labour Government. If they had taken as much care with all their legislation as the promoter of the Bill and his sponsors are taking with this piece of legislation, no doubt we would have had a much easier time.

1.15 pm

I thought it might help if, for 10 seconds, I allowed a slight glimpse behind the dark curtain of Government processes and gave the House an idea of exactly why parliamentary counsel felt that some major redrafting was necessary. Parliamentary counsel were examining why we needed new clauses to replace clauses 3 to 5 and 7. They said:

> "I confess that we have found those clauses of the Bill somewhat unsatisfactory from a structural point of view: it does not strike us as being very easy to see how the story develops over the clauses. In particular, the opening words of clause 5(1) are somewhat divorced from what has gone on before. And clause 5(1)(a)(ii) is intimately connected with the provision tucked away in clause 7."

The hon. Gentleman did not spot that when he wrote his Bill, and neither did I when I discussed it with him on Report and Third Reading. I suppose we should both offer the House an explanation and an apology. It is, on my side, offered with a full heart and great contrition.

I must apologise if I confused the Opposition earlier —especially the hon. Member for Barking (Ms. Richardson), for whom I have the greatest respect and affection—when I said that, if we had our way, there would not be a Bill. What I meant was that in all our discussions about the efforts that have been made to improve patients' access to information written about them in medical records—access which we regard as increasingly important and valuable in improving their health and their compliance with the advice and assistance offered to them by their doctors—we prefer to proceed by negotiation. I am content that we are making progress in that, but we never rule out the possibility of legislation. I suppose it sits there as a dark threat of what might happen if we do not make any progress on these matters.

Our objective is to try to improve the relationship between doctors and their patients and to make sure that confidence, which should be a major part of the relationship between doctor and patient, is reinforced. That should be very much a part of the pattern of acceptance of treatment and care in future. It is not intended in any way to diminish that confidence or to interfere with that relationship, but if Parliament decides —as it may in about five or 10 minutes—that it wishes this piece of legislation to proceed, the Government are, of course, entirely helpless, but will do whatever they can to ensure that it goes on to the statute book in the appropriate way.

Question put and agreed to.

Lords amendments Nos. 2 to 22 agreed to.

Clause 6

EXEMPTIONS

Lords amendment: No. 23, in page 3, line 34, after "individual" insert "or others".

Mr. Kirkwood: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

I can deal with this amendment fairly briefly, but it is a matter of some substance that I thought right to single out for special attention.

Lords Amendment No. 23 slightly widens the exemptions in clause 6 of the original Bill. Under that clause, a doctor can withold part of a report from an individual if the doctor judges that disclosure would cause severe physical or mental harm to that individual. The amendment would allow access to be witheld in the very, I hope, exceptional circumstances where it was thought that harm to some other person, apart from the individual, could arise—for example, if it was thought that a seriously disturbed person might be provoked into making a violent attack on someone else.

It is a sensible provision and has sufficient substance to merit some discussion on its own. I hope that the House will agree to the amendment.

Mr. Eric Forth (Mid-Worcestershire): I had wanted to intervene in the speech made by the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood), but I will make my comments in a speech instead.

I would like clarification on some points. Who will make the decision about the invocation of the exemption? There might be some difficulties here over who decides whether a matter was an exemption under the terms that have been described to the House. We must be sure that we are satisfied that if, as I assume, the doctor takes the decision, the Bill includes provisions in connection with the freedom of access to information to reverse the matter and provide an exemption. It seems to me as a layman that this matter might range quite widely depending on the definition and interpretation of the phrases used. Although the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire gave only one example, we can all think of others. I wonder whether we are satisfied that the point is sufficiently well defined and that we are clear as to whose discretion would be effective to take the decision. I hope that that will be clarified.

Mrs. Currie: This clause is a little different from the other clauses. The Government's view is that the House might want to accept the amendment, but with one or two more genuine reservations than those expressed previously.

As drafted, clause 6 provides that information may be withheld from the individual by the practitioner where disclosure would be likely to cause serious harm to the individual. The amendment seeks to extend the exemption to cover all others. I understand that Lord Mottistone was strongly backed by the National Schizophrenia Fellowship.

The amendment is consistent with the subject access provisions in the Data Protection Act 1984 relating to social work but not consistent with the subject access provisions for health. To be included, such a provision would run counter to the European convention on the use of automated medical data banks. No such constraints are imposed in social work. However, that is not a reason to oppose the amendment.

We believe that the proposal is sensible, although such a provision is likely to be used only rarely. Our slight concern in accepting the amendment is that it might just set a precedent. However, we would expect it to be used rarely and I believe that that would be the view of Lord Mottistone. On that basis, I want to put it on record that we accept the amendment with reservations.

Mr. Corbett: The Opposition welcome the amendment. As the Minister has said, and as other hon. Members will be aware, the National Schizophrenia Fellowship for the welfare of sufferers and their relatives made this point and in a letter to myself and doubtless to other hon. Members said:

> "In our Fellowship's view it is not only the physical or mental health of the individual which may be at risk if he sees his medical report, but that of others. If there is a history of violence, it could be the last straw to see a medical report which . . . could easily lead to physical assault."

I agree with the Minister that this provision is likely to be used very rarely. It must be used with the utmost care and sensitivity, and no doubt it will be.

Mr. Kirkwood: I hope that I can persuade the hon. Member for Mid-Worcestershire (Mr. Forth) that the exemption provisions in clause 7 give the medical practitioner the discretion, as he rightly pointed out, to deny access. I do not think that the situation will arise all that often. Our discussions with the medical profession including the British Medical Association and others show that clear guidelines will be available to doctors through their own ethics committees adequately to cover this point. However, that is not on the face of the Bill. I was persuaded that it was not necessary to include anything on the face of the Bill to cover that because the exemption will be so infrequent and the guidance available from the Department and the BMA will cover the point adequately. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will be prepared to accept that.

Question put and agreed to.

Lords amendment No. 24 agreed to.

Lords amendment: No. 25, in page 3, line 45, leave out subsections (3) and (4).

Mr. Kirkwood: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

I moved a number of amendments in Committee, which the Government considered to be essential, as they brought the Bill into line with the access provisions of the Data Protection Act 1984. It is sensible for legislation to be brought in line. However, one of the amendments repeated the exemption provisions of the Data Protection Act 1984 for information that was harmful to national security. I remember the hon. Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Corbett) expressing mild puzzlement—to speak euphemistically—as to how the issue of national security could arise in a Bill that was concerned with general practitioner reports to employers and insurers. To be fair to the Government, the original scope of the Bill was not clear. Someone—not the Minister, I am sure—must have thought that the definition of medical reports might catch accidentally psychological profiles based on lie detector tests at GCHQ. That was not the intention. I am pleased that the Government have thought again about the national security issue and have agreed that that exemption is unnecessary. Amendment No. 25 removes references to that exemption.

It has only just become clear to me that for the provisions of the Bill to apply to Government Departments and the Civil Service, the long title would have had to specify that the Bill sought to remove Crown immunity and that Government Departments would come within the scope. The House should ponder that because I should not like to be accused of ignoring it. I have recently received advice that Government Departments will be left outside the scope of the Bill; that point was not discussed at earlier stages. If Crown immunity had been removed explicitly, it would have been necessary to state that in a clause at the beginning of the Bill.

Crown immunity leaves a substantial loophole. I hope that Government Departments will respond positively and that the spirit of the law will be embraced by them in a moral sense. I hope that they will seek to comply with the Bill both for new and for existing employees. I hope that I am not pushing my luck to far in saying to the Minister that as she has been so helpful so far, she could put a cap on that assistance by telling me that she will advise her Department, as an employer, to accept the spirit of the legislation.

Mr. Forth: The hon. Gentleman is pushing his luck.

Mr. Kirkwood: Nothing ventured, nothing gained.

I hope that the House will discuss the amendment against that background. It is important because it relates to Government Departments.

1.30 pm

Mrs. Currie: I hope that the House agrees that we have had an interesting morning. Apart from anything else, in a small and, I hope, tantalising way, I have drawn aside the veil of secrecy that surrounds the detailed advice that Ministers are given. The House is about to hear me say that I was wrong, and I do not often do that either. This is a great historic event. In view of the comments made on amendment No. 25, it is probably as well that anyone else who seeks to promote a private Member's Bill should take note of the fact that Bills do not bind the Crown unless they specifically say so. Since the change is usually major and requires extensive consultation and discussion, it is not normally acceptable to the Government, unless they say so at the beginning, and there is usually ample time —six months or more—in which discussions can be held.

On 29 April, when we were debating national security exemptions, I responded to points made by the Opposition. Referring to the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood), I said:

> "the hon. Gentleman may like to take some proper advice about it. It is for the promoter of the Bill to decide whether the amendment should stand or be withdrawn. It is our view that it improves the Bill. We would wish to take further advice if the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) wants to withdraw it."—[*Official Report*, 29 April 1988; Vol. 132, c. 685.]

There was considerable discussion on Report, and when the Bill left the House extensive consultations took place with the Home Office, the machinery of Government office—the Minister for the Civil Service—the Ministry of Defence, the Cabinet Office and my Department. No valid case could be made to support the view that a national security exemption was justified within the limitations of the Bill—taking into account the point about pre-existing Crown immunity—and officials advised the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire accordingly. Parliamentary counsel's advice on how the amendment might be removed was sought. On 29 April, I said that the clause improved the Bill. I was wrong—it does not improve the Bill. Therefore we are content that amendment No. 25 should be made.

The hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire asked about my Department's views. We have had discussions and I am happy to offer the House the assurance that the DHSS will follow the spirit of the Bill and that my officials have been so instructed. The Bill applies in England, Scotland and Wales, but not in Northern Ireland, until an Order in Council is made. The hon. Gentleman will have to make inquiries of other Departments elsewhere and outwith the Bill.

Mr. Corbett: It is a rare and historic moment when we hear the Minister at the Dispatch Box apologise for what was said in the House on 29 April, and I thank her—*[Interruption.]* Not at all. I am in favour of any hon. Member, whether an exalted Back Bencher or a lowly Front-Bench spokesperson saying that he or she made a mistake and got it wrong. There is no shame in that.

I am sure that the hon. Lady will forgive me, but she did not do herself justice by reminding us of what she said on 29 April. She could hardly get to her feet quickly enough to accuse me of firing Exocets and generally to chastise me in her best headmistressy, nay matronly, fashion for raising this matter and to tell me that I was not only wrong to raise it but was raising the wrong point on the wrong Bill.

Things move on, and all I want to do in thanking the Minister for seeing the ludicrousness of the proposition is to say that, on reflection, it was not my Exocet that put her in such a state but the boomerang that she had in her hand, because it has come back and taken her head off her shoulders. *[Inerruption.]* I am an old technology person as well.

Following my contribution, the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) said:

> "I assure the hon. Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Corbett) that it is the most acceptable agreement that could be reached in the time available."—[*Official Report*, 29 April 1988; Vol. 132, c. 685.]

That is why I saw the Minister's paws all over that part of the Bill. All's well that ends well, and I hope that the House accepts the amendment.

Mr. Kirkwood: This is the final stage of the Bill's progress. I am grateful for the response by the hon. Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Corbett). He ends up with all the Brownie points—certainly in respect of the last amendment. I am genuinely grateful for the Minister's statement about the response that her Department will make. I hope that the House will now consider that the Access to Medical Reports Bill finally recognises the possible harm that could be caused by incorrrect or misleading information recorded in medical files. The Bill introduces safeguards in employment and insurance matters, and certainly trades additional administrative procedures to be carried out by employers and insurance companies for enhanced protection for individuals. I hope that the House will consider that it is worth paying that price. I commend the Bill to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Lords amendments Nos. 26 to 30 agreed to.

Protection of Animals (Amendment) Bill

Lords amendments considered.

Clause 2

OFFENCES RELATING TO ANIMAL FIGHTS

Lords amendment: No. 1, in page 1, line 27, at end insert—

> "*Advertising of animal fights*
>
> 5B. If a person who publishes or causes to be published an advertisement for a fight between animals knows that it is such an advertisement he shall be liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding level 4 on the standard scale."

1.36 pm

Mr. John Browne (Winchester): I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): With this, it will be convenient to take Lords amendment No. 2.

Mr. Browne: Madam Deputy Speaker, you may remember that the Bill was introduced into this House on 28 October 1987, was given a Second Reading on 11 December, and spent some three days in Committee, finishing on 24 February of this year, and one day on Report, receiving its Third Reading on 27 April. In the other place, it was given a First Reading on 25 April, a Second Reading on 23 May, the Committee stage was on 8 June, Report was on 16 June, and the Bill was given a Third Reading on 27 June. It is now before us for consideration of Lords amendments.

I shall—I hope, helpfully—outline to the House the main points of the Bill.

Clause 1 enables a court to disqualify a person from having custody—not merely the ownership but the custody—of any animal upon first conviction under the Protection of Animals Act 1911 or the Protection of Animals (Scotland) Act 1912.

Clause 2(1) increases the penalties for unlawful attendance at animal fights in England and Wales from level 1, which, is £50, to level 4, which is £1,000. That is a 20 fold increase in fine.

Clause 2(2) extends to any individual or group such as the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals authority to prosecute those unlawfully attending animal fights. That clause is terribly important. It opens to the RSPCA and to any individual the ability to bring such prosecutions which, previously, were limited to the police under the three mid-19th century police Acts. It is a great opening up of the power of the individual citizen to start to hammer people engaged particularly in attending such events as animal baits and animal fights.

Clause 2(3) creates the offence of unlawful attendance at animal fights in Scotland.

The two Lords amendments, taken together, make it a specific offence knowingly to advertise an animal fight.

To be helpful, I shall retrace some of the background to the Lords amendments. Right hon. and hon. Members may remember that, in an amendment tabled during the Commons Committee stage, it was proposed that the advertising of animal fights should be made an offence. There was general sympathy for the intention behind the amendment, but it was thought that such advertising might already be covered by the provisions of the Protection of Animals Act 1911. My hon. Friend the Minister undertook to consider the matter further, and, on that basis, the amendment was withdrawn.

Subsequently, it became apparent that advertising, when the advertiser was also the organiser, was covered by the term "procure" in section 1(1)(c) of the 1911 Act, which makes it an offence to

> "cause, procure, or assist at the fighting or baiting, of any animal".

Advertising by a person otherwise unconnected with the fight, however, is too far removed from the fight to constitute procuring and may thus not be an offence under existing law.

The introduction of a new offence to cover such advertising was not a straightforward option. For instance, it would not be acceptable unless it included the defence that an advertisement was placed unknowingly. As the House knows, advertisements in newspaper are often couched in veiled terms. It was also necessary to consider whether there were likely to be many advertisers not directly involved in the organisation of fights who would nevertheless have sufficient knowledge of the nature of the advertisement, despite its being in veiled form, to be guilty of knowingly advertising a fight. Given also that such an amendment at that stage might have prejudiced the progress of the Bill, it was decided to proceed no further at that time.

On Report in this House, an amendment was again moved to include an offence of advertising. It became clear that the term "advertising" was intended to mean the relaying of information by any means, from word of mouth to advertisement in newspapers and journals, usually subtly disguised. Advertisements for books describing the illegal activities of animal fighting or baiting, and editorials describing such fights in detail were also mentioned as possible targets for a new offence, as was any material which might encourage animal fighting by publicising it. It was suggested that the amendment should aim to make it illegal to promote animal fights.

In the light of that debate, my hon. Friend the Minister agreed to reconsider whether a suitable form of words could be found for a new offence which would adequately reflect the essence of the concern of hon. Members. The matter was referred to parliamentary counsel, who advised that the general law of incitement should already be sufficient to deal with persons orally encouraging others to attend animal fights and to cover written advertisements. Nevertheless, it was decided that as there were already numerous specific statutory provisions dealing with unlawful written advertisements, it would be inappropriate for an offence of advertising to be included in the Protection of Animals Act 1911.

The Lords amendments' which were moved in Committee in another place, include the words:

> "knows that it is such an advertisement".

In the case of a coded advertisement, it would be for the prosecution to produce evidence to establish that the advertisement was related to animal fighting and would have been so understood by devotees of that activity. Those amendments were welcomed and agreed by the Committee in another place on 8 June.

One point should be brought to the attention of the House before a decision is reached. Such advertisements, even in coded or veiled form, are often used by the police and the RSPCA as a form of intelligence to discover where offences are likely to take place. Having reviewed the situation and reflected on the matter, I am persuaded on balance, that the Lords amendments should stand. I therefore support them and urge the House to accept them.

1.45 pm

I am greatly pleased by the reception given to the Bill from all quarters of both Houses of Parliament. I have received a large amount of mail in support of the Bill—not just from my constituency but from throughout the country. It all shows that there is enormous goodwill towards animals and a very great deal of concern for animal welfare in our country. That concern has been reflected in Government legislation, in the Scientific Procedures Act 1986; the Pet Animals (Amendment) Act 1983 and the Protection of Animals (Penalties) Act 1987. We have also seen the passing of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1980. Furthermore, we have seen the Government support a large number of private Members' Bills on animal protection and welfare. All that goes to show that what is felt generally in the country is in fact being reflected by legislation in the House, not only from private Members but from the Government.

Having said that, I regret the need to bring in such a Bill. Why does animal cruelty exist in our country, to the extent that such legislation is necessary? What is worse, cruelty is actually on the increase.

There are three types of animal cruelty. The first is brought about by ignorance, when people either feed or keep an animal or pet in conditions that are effectively cruel, but they just do not see it. Secondly, there is the cruelty brought about by negligence, such as when people leave a dearly loved pet dog in a car park, in the summer sunshine, in a motor car, with all the windows closed. It is cruel, but people are just neglectful. This is particularly important because more and more pets are now being kept and therefore cruelty, whether it be by ignorance or negligence, has to be watched.

Here, we are dealing with the third type of cruelty, which is quite deliberate and calculated. It stems from two main attitudes. One is an attitude of carelessness for the feelings and suffering of animals. The other, which is much more serious, is from a warped sense of enjoyment at the degradation and repulsive torture of animals. It is something quite outrageous when one considers that we think of ourselves as a nation of animal lovers, which in general we are. It might involve a relatively small proportion of the population, but it is so disgusting that legislation is necessary to stamp on it, and to stamp on it hard. I am thinking particularly of things such as animal fights involving cocks or dogs, and badger baiting.

It is true that many animals fight and even kill in the wild—usually over mates, over food and over hunting territories, but the loser of one of those contests is either pretty rapidly killed or can run away. In an animal fight or in a bait, the loser cannot run away—there is no question of retreat. The animals are put in a pit or in a ring, and it is this natural instinct of the one who is defeated to run away, often without any blood lost that is totally eliminated in a dog or cock fight, or in a badger bait.

Animals also fight and kill in the wild, in order to eat. Usually this event is quick. The predator is usually either much larger or much more efficient in terms of its killing ability than its prey, and the death is usually fast. Unfortunately, in animal fights—particularly with dogs and badgers—deaths are long and drawn out; usually about four hours. Often, the badger has not just one but two or three dogs put against it, and when one of the terriers gets wounded, a fresh terrier is put in, to keep the number up. It is the most galling sight that you will ever have seen, Madam Deputy Speaker. It is revolting. Worse still, it is on the increase. Indeed, the RSPCA experience shows that it is on the increase. Prosecutions brought under the 1911 Act have risen by 25 per cent. in the past six years, and 5 per cent. of those convictions were such bad cases that the individuals concerned were put into custody immediately. I fear that this is only the tip of the iceberg: for every person prosecuted and convicted, several more probably go unseen. The import of pit bull terriers from the United States, bred specifically for dog fighting, is also a very sinister sign of the need for the legislation.

During my researches, it was suggested to me that ready cash bets for as much as £100,000 are being put on dog fights, that a mature pit bull terrier sells for £10,000, and that there are indications that drug money is finding its way into these illegal fights. I have to say that I have seen no proof of that. However, given that money plays a significant part in dog fights in the form of heavy betting, given that those who take part in their organisation or attend them are the type of person likely to be involved in other crimes and given that illicit drug dealing is currently one of the more prevalent types of moneymaking crime, it is perhaps to be expected that a proportion of the money directed towards animal fights should derive from drug dealing. I should therefore appreciate it if my hon. Friend the Minister would agree to alert the police forces at least to keep a weather eye open for the phenomenon.

We all know that private Members' Bills are very delicate and are easily killed at any of their 11 stages. I have been very lucky not only to have drawn the 12th position in the ballot but to have been given four days of parliamentary time in this House alone, and to have had the support of hon. Members on both sides. I should like to close by thanking my sponsors, who came from all the major parties, and the members of the Committee, who gave up three days of their time without any Government whipping. I see that my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Worcestershire (Mr. Forth) is present. He made some valuable contributions in Committee in helping to get the fines increased, and I am grateful to him for that. I also thank Lord Houghton of Sowerby, who, as you know, Madam Deputy Speaker, is a very experienced parliamentarian. He took on and piloted the Bill in another place in a very professional, skilled and charming manner.

I thank right hon. and hon. Members and noble Lords in all quarters of both Houses for supporting the Bill, the civil servants from the Home Office and the Clerks Department for their help and advice, and, of course, my Whip, my hon. Friend the Member for Reading, West (Mr. Durant). Last but not least, I thank my hon. Friend the Minister, who has been not only constantly helpful but creatively flexible. As you know from your experience on the Back Benches, Madam Deputy Speaker, for a Minister really to listen to Back-Bench feeling, to accept amendments put forward when the Government have had a pretty solid line and to start to mould Government opinion on his feet from the Front Bench, is not altogether common in this place, and should be mentioned. Such creative flexibility should not be taken for granted: it reflects the confidence of an hon. Gentleman who is right on top of his job, and the House and the nation should be grateful for it. Finally, I thank you, Madam Deputy

[Mr. Browne]

Speaker, your fellow Deputy Speakers and the Chairman of the Committee for all the patience that you have exhibited.

The Bill has shown all quarters of both Houses at their best in Parliament. It has also shown Government at their best—in other words, willing to listen to Back-Bench opinion and to make adjustments to their planned course. The Bill has taken a considerable amount of parliamentary time, and has been steadily improved throughout its passage—as I think it will be today by the acceptance of these amendments.

I urge the House to accept the Lords amendments and to commend the Bill humbly to Her Majesty for Royal Assent.

Mr. Harry Cohen (Leyton): The House can say, "Well done" to the hon. Member for Winchester (Mr. Browne). After today, I very much hope that the Bill will reach the statute book. I have been working to improve it all along the way. It could be said that I have dogged the promoter all along the way. I do not know whether that is the right word. Perhaps, on this issue only, I have been a faithful friend in ensuring that the Bill reaches the statute book.

As we are discussing dogs and dog fighting, I am very pleased that my hon. Friend the member for Barking (Ms. Richardson) is in her place. I hope that the House will excuse my poor play on words at the beginning of the debate.

Ms. Jo Richardson (Barking): If my hon. Friend allows enough time, we will get on to donkeys and asses as well.

Mr. Cohen: I take my hon. Friend's intervention as a reprimand for being so asinine and I apologise for that.

I thank the sponsor, and I also thank the Minister for his commitment to review the amendment that I tabled at an earlier stage. He was most helpful and constructive in getting it incorporated into the Bill in another place. He gets my accolade and my support when he is helpful and constructive; I only wish that he was more helpful and constructive on other issues. He is not, not because of any personal defect, but because of his own narrow party political interests. However, in this case I congratulate him on getting into the Bill my amendment making knowingly to promote a fight between animals an offence. He was concerned as he thought that the Bill was a fragile vessel, but I am pleased to say that he got it in and the Bill is still afloat.

The amendments are an improvement to the Bill and close an important loophole. The amendments would make it an offence to know

"that it is such an advertisement".

There is still the excuse of not knowing. The publisher of such an advertisement could say that he did not know that it was such an advertisement. Clearly it would be for the courts to decide whether the publishers knew. In many such instances there would be a pretence by the publishers of such advertisements. They might claim that they did not know, when really they were not too bothered, and were more interested in taking the money for the advertisement. In most cases they will have known but it will be for the courts to decide the extent of their knowledge.

The amendments deal with

"a person . . . publishing or causing to be published an advertisement for a fight between animals".

If the person who actually published the advertisement did not know that it was such an advertisement, it will be the duty of the police to find the person who initiated the advertisement and caused it to be published, as, under the amendments, that person will be guilty of an offence. Even if the person publishing the advertisement was duped, under the amendments the person behind the advertisement should be taken to court.

The newspaper publishers and the freesheets which contain such advertisements should be more aware of them and not accept them.

2 pm

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): What about the level of fine?

Mr. Cohen: I am just coming to that. The Bill says that a person

"shall be liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding level 4 on the standard scale."

Mr. Skinner: That is £1,000.

Mr. Cohen: That is right. It is an appallingly low fine, especially since the RSPCA has reported that sometimes a bet of £50,000 can be put on an animal or dog fight. When one is talking about such large amounts of money, £1,000 does not seem an adequate fine. The inadequacy of the fine also applies to those who organise the fight. They should be hit really hard and sent to prison for a long time. However, at least it is the first step on the ladder. I hope that in future we will increase the fine for people who knowingly take part in advertising such fights.

Mr. John Browne: The hon. Gentleman said "take part". It should be emphasised that the participation and organisation of such fights is subject to a fine of £2,000 and/or six months' imprisonment.

Mr. Cohen: That is absolutely right. I was referring to those who take an active part in advertising such fights.

On 22 April in columns 1103 and 1104 of *Hansard* I referred to "formal advertisements" appearing in magazines such as *Shooting News and Weekly*. Since then I and other hon. Members have received a letter from that magazine, which is concerned about what I said at that time. I am considering the letter and will give a proper response. I acknowledge that the magazine has not contained "formal advertisements" recently. Perhaps I should have been a little more careful when choosing my language. Perhaps I should have said that the adverts were more informal, offering encouragement to those who take part in animal fights.

In column 1104 I quoted an advertisement that appeared in *Shooting News and Weekly* on 6 December 1985. The advertisement was for a book entitled, "Badger Digging with Terriers". It contained information on how to hunt badgers with dogs, an activity that is banned under the law of the land. The book clearly encourages that activity and that was a genuine point to make.

That advertisement was taken to the magistrates court, but the case was lost. The people who initiated the case ran out of money and could not take the matter further. According to the magistrates it was a book on a historical activity and dealt with badger baiting in the past. That was a feeble basis for the decision. If someone published a book on the history of child pornography and used it as an excuse to show child pornography or published the history of terrorism and showed how to make bombs or how to become a terrorist, the House and the courts would move in quickly and say that it was not appropriate. It was therefore wrong for that decision to be made about that advertisement. It will indirectly allow people to advertise animal fights.

The amendments close a gaping loophole. Mention was made in a previous debate of an Order in Council. I know that this legislation will not apply to Northern Ireland, but I hope that that will be corrected by an Order in Council. I do not know what can be done about verbal advertising in public houses of where dog fights will take place. I hope that the problem will be tackled by future legislation. If people are paid to advertise dog fights we must introduce legislation to tackle that problem.

I welcome the Bill, but we will need more Bills to tackle the extensive level of cruelty in this country. We also need Bills to abolish blood sports, the murderous season of which is in full cry. I hope that the House will consider badger baiting, hare coursing and fox and stag hunting in the future and introduce bans on those activities. I shall certainly try to introduce legislation to impose an unequivocal ban on all hunting with dogs.

There is a connection between fox hunting and dog fighting. We are all united against dog fighting, but too many Conservative Members support fox hunting. Those who take part in fox hunting are upper-class vicious thugs but those who take part in dog fighting are the rural-working class—but only a stratum of it that is trying to emulate the upper-class thugs. In many cases, the working-class thugs are linked to the hunt and get a bit of extra murderous pleasure from dog fighting. One problem cannot be tackled without tackling the other, which is why we must get rid of fox hunting.

Ms. Mildred Gordon (Bow and Poplar): Does my hon. Friend agree that reports of the royal family's children being blooded with the brush of the fox are offensive to everybody who cares about the welfare of animals?

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I should be obliged if the hon. Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) would refer to the amendments.

Mr. Cohen: My hon. Friend the Member for Bow and Poplar (Ms. Gordon) makes a good and genuine point, which I fully support. I do not intend to say any more on that point, unless my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) wants to question me about it.

Mr. Skinner: I do not know how far the Bill extends. I am occupying what used to be known as the Liberal Bench——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I should be obliged if I could see the hon. Gentleman's handsome face.

Mr. Skinner: You are a friend of mine, Madam Deputy Speaker, and you sat on the NEC. Who knows, you might be putting up for the top job. You might be doing a bit of canvassing, similar to the letters from the Whips that I have received recently.

I hope that my hon. Friend the Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) remembers that there used to be dog fights between the leader of the SDP and the leader of the Liberal party. Are they included in the Bill?

Mr. Cohen: Unfortunately they are not. They are not in alliance now, but those dog fights are still going on. I pay tribute to my hon. Friend for drawing the House's attention the other day to the fact that it is no longer an alliance party and that they are not now entitled to the Supply days that they previously enjoyed. The Supply days have gone to the Ulster Unionists.

The Bill does refer not to my hon. Friend's point, but to the most serious and heinous crime of dog fighting, which is substantially on the increase. It needs to be stamped out in the most consistent and effective way. The Bill is a step towards that aim. More steps will be needed. Nevertheless, I welcome the Bill.

Mr. Greg Knight (Derby, North): I warmly welcome the Lords amendments. I know that they will also be welcomed by the Derbyshire Wildlife trust and the Derby branch of the RSPCA. I part company from my hon. Friend the Member for Winchester (Mr. Browne) who said that the Bill had received support from all sides of the House. It is worth mentioning that not one SLD or SDP Member has bothered to attend this important debate. They are conspicuous by their absence.

Mr. David Alton (Liverpool, Mossley Hill): I think that the hon. Gentleman needs a pair of spectacles.

Mr. Knight: I apologise to the hon. Gentleman, who has just wandered into the Chamber and who——

Mr. Alton: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Knight: If the hon. Gentleman will allow me to finish this point I shall then give way. He was not present during our consideration of the Bill, but I am aware that he flitted in and out earlier, no doubt with an eye on his own Bill that is set down for debate later today.

Mr. Alton: The hon. Gentleman should not make remarks like that unless he can justify them. I have been in the Chamber for most of the morning and I listened to many of the contributions—most of them fascinating but many of them pretty irrelevant.

Mr. Knight: The hon. Gentleman is an expert in what is irrelevant. He has only just walked into the Chamber. He has taken no interest in the Bill, nor have any of his colleagues. I hope that he will decide to remain in the Chamber and listen to the rest of the debate.

Mr. Alton: The hon. Gentleman was not in the Chamber earlier when my hon. Friend the Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) introduced his very important Bill that provides for freedom for information and access to medical records. I am sorry that he was not present for that debate.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I must ask the hon. Member for Derby, North (Mr. Knight) to refer to amendments Nos. 1 and 2 that we are now debating.

Mr. Knight: The hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton) has confirmed my view that he is ignorant of many of the issues that have been discussed in this Chamber.

Mr. Skinner: Will the hon. Gentleman give way, just for a moment?

Mr. Knight: Yes, provided that it is to make a relevant point.

Mr. Skinner: Yes, it is. I have a sneaking suspicion that at the end of the debate the hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton) will trot out of the Chamber to speak to the BBC and LBC——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. That is not at all relevant to the amendments that we are debating. I must ask the hon. Gentleman to resume his seat.

Mr. Skinner: All I want to say is that the hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill has intervened three times. If any hon. Member is filibustering, it is he.

Mr. Knight: I am sure that you would not permit me, Madam Deputy Speaker, to respond to that point. But I have noted what the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) said, and there is something in it.

The amendments passed by another place correct a flaw in the Bill. They catch those who knowingly advertise such functions, but I want my hon. Friend the Member for Winchester or my hon. Friend the Minister to answer two points.

I listened attentively to the hon. Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) who said that he hoped that on some future occasion we would deal with legislation to catch the person who advertises dog fights by word of mouth. I have looked in the *Hansard* of another place, which I shall paraphrase as you, Madam Deputy Speaker, would rule me out of order if I quoted it. The peer who moved the amendment said that it would include the written word, the poster, the leaflet, the flyposter and the oral communication. I am somewhat confused by the comments of Opposition Members, and I now wonder whether the amendment covers oral communication. If it does, we shall need to take care.

2.15 pm

Mr. Cohen: As I read it, the amendment does not cover oral advertisement—the more is the pity in many respects. I referred to it because I think we need to come back to that at some future date, especially if someone is paid to advertise dog fighting by word of mouth.

Mr. Knight: When reading the Lords amendment, I believe that a layman would come to the conclusion that we are talking only about a written advertisement, because it refers to publishing. However, the "Shorter Oxford English Dictionary" defines publication as:

> "The action of making publicly known; public notification or announcement".

There is no mention of its having to be in writing.

In view of the comments made in another place, will my hon. Friend the Minister, or my hon. Friend the Member for Winchester say whether the amendment catches the oral advertisement? I am thinking of the example of someone in a public house, who, when discussing various matters occurring in the community, says to someone else, "There is a disgusting dog fight at Skinners farm on Saturday at 12 o'clock." Would that fall within the scope of the Bill? According to what was said in another place, it would; yet from the comments of the hon. Member for Leyton, perhaps it would not. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister can answer that point.

Mr. Eric Forth (Mid-Worcestershire): Has my hon. Friend considered the other possibility, which I do not think has been mentioned? Someone, either by post or verbally, might say, "Do not attend this disgraceful meeting where dog fighting will take place." Will that come under the scope of the amendment? The person would ostensibly be saying, "I am an animal lover, I urge you not to go to this event because it will harm animals." If such behaviour were included, it would cause some difficulty.

Mr. Knight: My hon. Friend has touched on the point that I am coming to. The amendment refers only to publishing or causing to be published an advertisement for a fight. It does not say that one has to exhort the public to attend. There is a severe danger that animal welfare groups telling people not to go to a dog fight, or people who oppose dog fighting having a discussion in a pub could be considered to be advertising that event. The House needs some reassurance that a person who opposes this vile practice, and is merely telling friends or colleagues not to attend, will not end up in court charged with an offence. Apart from these two areas of concern, I warmly welcome the amendment.

Mr. Robin Corbett (Birmingham, Erdington): I welcome the Bill back to this place, and congratulate the hon. Member for Winchester (Mr. Browne) and the all-party sponsors, who will be especially pleased and flattered by the presence of the illustrious and hon. Gentleman, the Member for Watford (Mr. Garel-Jones). He is known throughout the length and breadth of these islands as one of the strongest supporters of this Bill, given his well-known support for anything to do with animal welfare.

The amendments are important. They strengthen the armoury that the Bill seeks to provide to try to stamp out this vile and evil practice to get at those who advertise these events or cause them to be advertised and also those who take part in them. I want to echo a point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen). Although a person who causes an advertisement to be published—I take that to be someone who walks into a newspaper or magazine office and puts an advert in coded form across the counter—may be caught by the Bill, I hope that no publishers, editors or advertising managers of newspapers or magazines will use that as an excuse to be casual or careless about accepting advertisements.

I was a journalist for some years and I think that all those concerned with the preparation, publication and distribution of newspapers and magazines have a responsibility to ensure that if they are not absolutely clear about the purpose of an advertisement, they should not publish or accept it until its purpose has been clarified. If prosecutions are brought against publishers, editors or advertising managers under the Bill, I hope that no court will be impressed by the defence that those people did not understand what the advertisement was about or that it seemed like a bit of a joke at the time. That would be irresponsible in the extreme.

I have no reason to believe that that happens, but in this narrow area of publishing one is justified in holding the suspicion that there are people in publishing who know what is happening and do nothing about it. On the back of some money which a publication may receive, those people may accept advertisements which the Bill will rule out.

We are concerned with a vile, disgusting and degrading sport, not only for the dogs and other animals concerned, but more importantly for the adults who take part. God only knows what effect that must have on them and their families. I hope that the amendments are accepted.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Douglas Hogg): I entirely agree with the concluding remarks of the hon. Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Corbett). He is quite right to say that this is a violent and degrading sport, most particularly for those who participate. It is the kind of thing that is unworthy by any definition of that word.

Against that background, the House would want to congratulate and thank my hon. Friend the Member for Winchester (Mr. Browne) on several counts. The first is his perceptive and very generous remarks about me. That seemed to show him to be a very clear-sighted Member of the House of Commons. On behalf of the whole Government Front Bench, I thank him for his comments.

I suppose that one should also thank my hon. Friend the Member for Winchester for introducing the Bill. We must get our priorities right. Therefore, he is to be thanked first for his kind words and then for introducing his Bill. He is also to be thanked for his very clear explanation of the purpose behind the Bill and his explanation of the genesis of the amendments.

My hon. Friend raised the question of a connection between drug money and dog fighting. I am not aware that dog fighting has been used as a method for laundering drug money. I am not aware of any police report to that effect. However, if there is any evidence of such a connection, I would expect that to be brought to my attention and, because of the interest of my hon. Friend the Member for Watford (Mr. Garel-Jones) in this matter, I will bring it to his attention also.

On behalf of the House, I should say that we are indebted to my hon. Friend the Member for Winchester for introducing the Bill and we are also indebted to the hon. Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen). I frequently disagree with the hon. Gentleman, as he is aware. However, he has been a powerful exponent of the argument to extend the Bill to include the concept of knowingly to advertise. There is no doubt that he played a prominent part in Committee, when he was able to attend. I make that point because although the Committee met three times, he was unable to attend on one occasion because of an unhappy incident in the Chamber; he was unable to be present because of Mr. Speaker's ruling. However, the hon. Gentleman has been prominent in bringing a gap in the law to the attention of the House and it is right that we should acknowledge what he has done.

There is a range of existing statutory and common law offences which touch on the issue, such as the offences of procuring, inciting and conspiracy, but it is highly desirable that we should introduce a specific statutory offence to deal with advertising. That is why the Lords agreed to the amendments, which I commend to the House.

The position of a publisher has always been difficult in law. The question is whether the offence should be absolute or require proof of knowledge. The hon. Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Corbett) and I share the view that it is essential that the act of knowingly publishing should be rendered criminal. It should not be an absolute offence and that is why the Lords amendment was drafted in its present form. The proof of knowledge is an essential element in the commission of the offence and I hope that that will reassure the newspaper industry and others who will come within the scope of the Bill.

Mr. Corbett: I agree with the Minister, but I hope that he will take on board my point that none of that absolves the publisher, editor or advertising manager of publications from ensuring as far as possible that they understand the nature of the advertisement that they , re publishing.

Mr. Hogg: I entirely agree. I was going to make that point because, as a number of hon. Members have said, some advertisements are of a veiled kind. It is certainly the responsibility of an editor to scrutinise carefully advertisements that are capable of giving a message of the kind that we wish to strike at in the Bill. The Lords amendment will not only prohibit express advertisements, which are obvious, but will oblige editors and sub-editors to look more closely at the veiled advertisements, which might carry a similar message.

My hon. Friend the Member for Derby, North (Mr. Knight) asked two questions, in his perceptive and challenging way, one of which causes me some concern. I shall deal first with the one that causes me no concern. My hon. Friend asked what would happen if a person sought to advise others not to attend a dog fight and, in so doing, mentioned the existence or prospective existence of a dog fight. I have a number of answers to that. First, I doubt whether that would fall within the scope of the Bill. Secondly, there is always discretion about whether to prosecute, and, thirdly, if a court believed that a person was acting for the reason that my hon. Friend has described, an absolute discharge would be the appropriate penalty, even though an offence had been committed.

As for whether the publication needs to be in writing or can also be oral, my present feeling is that a publication must be in writing, but other forms of advertisement will be covered by the other kinds of offences that I have described.

We are dealing with an important amendment, which aims to meet a particular problem. For that reason, I commend it to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Lords amendment No. 2 agreed to.

Private Members' Bills

ENVIRONMENT AND SAFETY INFORMATION BILL

Lords amendments considered.

Lords amendments Nos. 1 to 6 agreed to.

HORSES, PONIES AND DONKEYS (No. 2) BILL

Lords amendments considered.

Lords amendments Nos. 1 to 6 agreed to.

LANDLORD AND TENANT BILL *[LORDS]*

Order for Third Reading read.

[Queen's Consent on behalf of the Queen and Prince of Wales's Consent signified.]

Bill read the Third time, and passed, without amendment.

SOLICITORS (SCOTLAND) BILL

Order for Third Reading read.

Bill read the Third time and passed, with amendments.

ABORTION (AMENDMENT) BILL

Order for consideration read.

Hon. Members: Object.

To be further considered upon Monday 11 July.

CREDIT (CONTROL) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Mr. Elliot Morley (Glanford and Scunthorpe): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. Was there an objection? I did not hear. On a credit issue, where the Government have announced a major change, is it in order for hon. Members to object?

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): Order. Let me help the hon. Member. The voices had not been collected at that time. An objection can be made at any time. There was an objection.

Second Reading deferred till Monday 11 July.

ROAD TRAFFIC (BLOOD ALCOHOL CONCENTRATION LIMIT) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Not printed.

TRANSPLANT NOTIFICATION BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Not printed.

RIGHT OF PRIVACY BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Not moved.

SMALL FIRMS (LIBERATION) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Not moved.

SALE OF WAR TOYS (PROHIBITION) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 28 October.

SUNDAY SPORTS BILL *[LORDS]*

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Second Reading what day? No day named.

Mr. Greg Knight (Derby, North): Friday 15 July.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. Does the hon. Member have the authority of the Member in charge of the Bill to name a day?

Mr. Greg Knight: I am content to leave it as no day named.

ARMED FORCES (HOUSING) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Not printed.

LEGAL PROFESSION (ABOLITION OF RESTRICTIVE PRACTICES) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Not printed.

CEMETERIES (CONTROL OF SALE ETC.) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Not moved.

EMPTY PROPERTY AND COMMUNITY AID BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Monday 11 July.

SMOKE DETECTORS IN HOUSES BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Not printed.

ELIMINATION OF POVERTY IN OLD AGE BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 28 October.

PALACE OF WESTMINSTER (REMOVAL OF CROWN IMMUNITY) BILL

Madam Deputy Speaker: The Queen's consent has not been obtained. Therefore, I cannot propose the Question.

Ms. Joan Walley (Stoke-on-Trent, North): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. I give notice that I shall take up this matter urgently with the Leader of the House. To the best of my knowledge, I have complied with the procedures. I have written to the relevant Departments. I have asked them to take up the matter to get the Queen's Consent. Today, I was most surprised to receive a letter from the Public Bill Office, stating that the last instruction that was received from me was to suspend application. That is not the case. I intend to seek application. I wonder whether there is even a conspiracy to stop the Bill coming forward. *[Interruption.]*

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Lady is taking a wise action.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): Further to that point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. I listened carefully to what my hon. Friend the Member for Stoke-on-Trent, North (Ms. Walley) said about the Bill. Are we to understand that the dilatory behaviour of the Palace is preventing the House from debating an important measure to protect the conditions of staff employed in this building and to give them the conditions that they would enjoy anywhere else?

Madam Deputy Speaker: Let me help the hon. Gentleman if I can. It is no reflection on the Palace, as the hon. Lady knows. An application is made to a Minister, and the hon. Lady is perfectly entitled and right to take the action that she now proposes to take.

Mr. Corbyn: Further to that point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. Are we to understand that the slothful behaviour of the relevant Ministers is preventing the Palace consenting to the Bill being debated?

Madam Deputy Speaker: It has nothing to do with the Palace. I think that I have explained the situation. The hon. Lady knows exactly the procedure that she is now to adopt.

Ms. Walley: Further to that point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. I have written to the Secretary of State for Employment. There seems to have been some mix-up between the Public Bill Office and the Secretary of State for Employment. As my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) quite rightly pointed out, the people who work in the House—those who work in the canteens and everyone else—deserve proper public protection. I intend to pursue the matter.

Madam Deputy Speaker: I shall answer the hon. Lady, because she is quite right in pursuing the matter in the way that she is.

Second Reading deferred till Monday 11 July.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Further to that point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. I heard my hon. Friend the Member for Stoke-on-Trent, North (Ms. Walley) say that there is a complication with regard to the matter being progressed. You, Madam Deputy Speaker, said that it was not the fault of anybody at Buckingham palace. We now find out that it is not the Minister's fault. I want to know whose fault it is. It is time that misleading replies were ended. If it is not the fault of the Palace or of the Minister, let us get on and pass the Bill so that people here on poverty-stricken wages can have a fair deal.

Madam Deputy Speaker: The hon. Lady is taking action to see that that is done and that her position is preserved.

Mr. Corbyn: Further to that point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. I understand that the Bill is coming back for a Second Reading on Monday. Could the Ministers who are present at the moment ensure that, by Monday, it is clear to the House that we are in a position to debate the Bill to allow a degree of protection of employment for staff in this building similar to that which they would enjoy anywhere else?

Madam Deputy Speaker: It is not a matter for the Chair. There are Ministers on the Treasury Bench. The hon. Lady is doing absolutely the right thing in preserving her position at this time.

TAKEOVER AND MERGERS (EMPLOYMENT PROTECTION) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Not printed.

MISUSE OF DRUGS BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Not moved.

CERVICAL CANCER (TESTING AND TREATMENT) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Monday 11 July.

SCHOOL BUS PASSES (REVISION OF REGULATIONS) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Not moved.

MYALGIC ENCEPHALOMYELITIS BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Member: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 28 October.

UNDERGROUND FIRES (RESEARCH AND CONTROL) AND LAND PROTECTION BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 28 October.

INDECENT DISPLAYS (NEWSPAPERS) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Monday 11 July.

SCOTTISH CONSTITUTION (REFERENDUM) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Monday 11 July.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing (Moray): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. Is it appropriate for Ministers continually to object to a Bill which is advisory, or is it merely in keeping with their tradition of insulting European nations as shown by the Secretary of State on Wednesday?

Madam Deputy Speaker: The hon. Lady is familiar with our procedure on private Members' Bills.

POLYURETHANE FOAM (MISCELLANEOUS PROVISIONS) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 15 July.

WORKING LIFE (REDUCTION IN HOURS) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 15 July.

STATUTORY MINIMUM WAGE BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Not moved.

COAL MINING SUBSIDENCE (DAMAGE AND ARBITRATION) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 15 July.

COAL MINING SUBSIDENCE (PREVENTION AND PUBLIC AWARENESS) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 15 July.

VACCINE DAMAGE (COMPENSATION ARRANGEMENTS) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Not printed.

LOCAL AUTHORITY SEARCHES AND ENQUIRIES ETC. BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Not printed.

RENEWABLE ENERGY DEVELOPMENT AGENCY (ESTABLISHMENT) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 15 July.

ALCOHOL (HEALTH WARNING) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Not printed.

PRIVATE SECURITY BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Not printed, but the hon. Member may claim another day.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 15 July.

FOOD AND ENVIRONMENT PROTECTION ACT (AMENDMENT) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 15 July.

ABORTION (TREATMENT OF NON-RESIDENT WOMEN) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Second Reading what day? No day named.

UNBORN CHILDREN (PROTECTION) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Not moved.

CITIZENS' COMPENSATION RIGHTS BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Not printed.

POLICE ACT 1964 (AMENDMENT) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Not printed.

TENANCIES OF BREWERY COMPANIES (REGULATION) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Monday 11 July.

Mr. Graham Allen (Nottingham, North): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. Is it in order for an individual who may have interests in the brewing industry to object to a Bill concerned with the protection of landlords?

Madam Deputy Speaker: It is up to any hon. Member to object. I refer the hon. Gentleman to the Select Committee on Procedure.

GAZUMPING (ABOLITION) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Not printed.

TAXI-CABS (CONTROL OF SMOKING) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 15 July.

Mr. Bahadur Singh

2.42 pm

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Garel-Jones.]*

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. Can you tell the House to how many Bills the hon. Member for Watford (Mr. Garel-Jones) has objected today and how many people will be adversely affected as a result?

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): It is not within my remit to notice who is actually objecting. I hear voices.

Mr. Eric Forth (Mid-Worcestershire): Further to that point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. Will you confirm that, quite correctly, objections have been made from both sides of the House? Will you further confirm that a Bill which had passed most of its stages in the House was objected to by Opposition Members? Will you make it clear that any Member in any part of the House is entitled to object on a Friday?

Madam Deputy Speaker: I am sure that when hon. Members read the *Official Report* on Monday they will see that that is the case. Meanwhile, this discussion is coming out of a private Member's time. I call Mr. Tom Clarke.

2.43 pm

Mr. Tom Clarke (Monklands, West): This debate concerns the treatment of the late Bahadur Singh in Barlinnie prison. Even as I speak these words, I find it difficult to contemplate that a man 26 years of age, who lived for a short time in Coatbridge in my constituency and for whom I had been making representations from mid-winter until spring this year, died on 12 May—the day after his release, following six months in Barlinnie prison. Time after time, as his solicitor took up the case, his friends the Banga family in Coatbridge came to see me. I can still hear them saying, as they frequently did, "They will kill him, they will kill him." Throughout, they had a lack of faith in the administration of British justice which many now think proved chillingly perceptive.

I consider the Under-Secretary of State for Scotland, the hon. Member for Edinburgh, West (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton), to be one of the most humane of hon. Members, with a fine record as a Back Bencher interested in penal reform issues. I have to say, however, that after a number of representations and warnings, I cannot regard Mr. Singh's death on a bus on the way home in the Punjab as a coincidence. There are far wider implications—of civil liberties, of basic human rights, of racism in Scottish prisons and, until recent times, a lack of Scottish Office concern about the problem—and I believe that these should be urgently addressed.

Bahadur Singh had been languishing in Barlinnie prison after his arrest for a breach of the immigration laws, for not having proper documentation. Last year, he went to stay in Scotland with his friends, restaurant owner Autar Banga and Mrs. Jasbir Banga. In November, he was reported to the immigration authorities and arrested. He appeared in Airdrie sheriff court on Monday 9 November, when he pleaded guilty to a contravention of the Immigration Act 1971. He was fined £120 but because he had no money on his person, he was sentenced to 28 days and sent to Barlinnie pending the outcome of an appeal.

I first took up his case with the Home Office on 18 November 1987, as Mr. Singh had sought political asylum. He was kept in prison while his application was processed. The inevitable questions arise: why did it take so long for the Home Office to make a decision and why, during the decision-making process, was he kept in prison? Those matters are diminished in importance by the most basic question of all: how was Bahadur Singh treated while he was in Barlinnie prison?

I first drew the Government's attention to allegations of violence against Bahadur Singh when I wrote to the Minister of State, Home Office, the hon. Member for Mid-Sussex (Mr. Renton), on 11 February and again on 26 February 1988. I understand that Mr. Singh changed his mind about appealing for political asylum from time to time, but as I said then in my letter to the Minister, Mr. Singh's

> "indecision over his appeal results from . . . bullying and abuse which has caused very great distress."

The Minister's written reply, received more than a month later, directed me to the Scottish Office, while the Minister proposed

> "to maintain his detention in view of his previous disregard for . . . immigration control."

Allegations of violence and racism continued, so on 28 March I wrote to the prison governor, Mr. Walker, that from the outset of Mr. Singh's

> "committal to Barlinnie, I have had reports from his visitors of physical and cruel verbal abuse."

After a brief acknowledgment, the governor replied on 21 April, nearly a month later, in the following words:

> "I have had the allegations investigated by a member of my senior management team. Mr. Singh speaks virtually no English and it was necessary to interview him through another inmate who was acting as an interpreter."

In that interview, according to the governor's letter, Mr. Singh apparently stated that he

> "had no particular problems at that time"

and no real fears for his own safety, although a few slogans had been daubed on his cell door. That account of the investigation is strongly disputed and I shall return to it later.

I would have expected that a matter as serious as this, raised by a Member of the House, would have been personally investigated by the governor and not delegated as a matter of little importance. Moreover, a letter from the governor to Strathclyde community relations council a few weeks later implied that there had been no problems with the treatment of ethnic minority prisoners. In the words of the council, his reply was "complacent" and "misleading"; it was not consistent with the facts.

I was still very unhappy as allegations continued to mount, so I wrote to the Secretary of State for Scotland on 3 May 1988. One of the most unacceptable aspects of the whole affair is that the Secretary of State's office did not reply to my letter until Thursday 2 June—the day when, by another remarkable coincidence, the Glasgow *Evening Times* broke the news to his office that Mr. Singh had died several weeks before. I believe that the House is entitled to an explanation for that insensitive delay from the Secretary of State. At the very least, his role seems to represent administrative incompetence which cannot be dismissed lightly in view of the tragic consequences.

I have now had the opportunity to speak at length to crucial witnesses of the alleged events. Mr. Mohammed

[Mr. Tom Clarke]

Sattar is a young Pakistani who at one point shared a cell with Bahadur Singh. It should be said in passing that Mr. Sattar had a fracas with his girl friend—now happily his wife—which led to a short stay in prison. There is a conflict of evidence between Mr. Sattar and Mr. Walker, the prison governor. Whereas Mr. Walker had said—I return to my earlier point—that Mr. Singh had made no complaint, Mohammed Sattar insists—and I can confirm that his English is very fluent—that he acted as an interpreter for Mr. Singh in the presence of the governor's representative, and that Mr. Singh did, indeed, complain about beatings and racist behaviour. In my conversation with Mr. Sattar he repeated the allegations that he had first made in the Glasgow *Evening Times* when he said:

> "They were just banging at them with steel bars and Bahadur and the other man were on their knees trying to protect themselves."

I can do no other than underline that conflict of evidence in the hope that the matter will be investigated.

I have also talked, with the help of an interpreter, to another key witness, Mr. Vijay Kumar. Mr. Kumar had also alleged that he had suffered racial harassment while an inmate in Barlinnie prison, again as a result of a breach of immigration rules. However, on 16 June 1988, when his case came before Lord Weir in the Court of Session, Mr. Kumar was set free. Lord Weir used the following words:

> "It was not in the tradition of the Scottish administration of justice for someone to be detained for months and months in such circumstances."

I cannot stress too strongly that it is of the utmost importance that no steps should be taken to deport Mr. Kumar from this country before he has the opportunity to give evidence to an inquiry into the scale of racial harassment in Scottish prisons and, in particular, the death of Bahadur Singh. My hon. Friends and I hope that the Under-Secretary can give us an assurance to that effect today. Let me add that it is a tragic pity that Lord Weir was never given the opportunity to reach the same conclusion in the case of Bahadur Singh.

Having spent four hours last Sunday listening to Mohammed Sattar and Vijay Kumar, I am convinced that they are telling the truth. I understand that the Minister has already taken some steps, and I thank him for that; but I insist that the problem warrants a full and open public inquiry. The Scottish Office must demonstrate that it takes the issue of racism seriously by responding to that call.

The allegations are serious ones. They are that Mr. Bahadur Singh was subjected to a series of harrowing racial attacks while in one of Her Majesty's prisons; that Mr. Singh, a timid man who spoke virtually no English, was beaten up in his cell by five white inmates carrying metal bars and kitchen knives; that he was attacked while he mixed with other prisoners; that he had hot tea and soup thrown at him and was struck by a metal tray in the dining room; that racial slogans and threats were daubed on his cell door; and that the wardens specifically responsible for that part of the prison pretended not to notice any of this. It could hardly have helped that there is the suggestion—and I can go no further than that—that Mr. Singh was kept for some of his stay in a cell for 23 hours per day with a light on permanently.

I have been told by the Under-Secretary that Mr. Singh was medically examined on 28 April. But even if that was so, it does not explain what happened between that date and 12 May when he was released.

There are other questions to be answered. Why did it take six months to deal with such a case? Are there other similar cases in Scottish prisons at the moment? Why, after such delays, was he rushed straight on to a plane and deported without being allowed to let friends and relations know what was happening? Is it true that he spent his last night in Scotland, not in Barlinnie, but in a police cell in Strathclyde police headquarters, and if so, why was he moved and why did his friends not have access? What precisely was the state of Mr. Singh's health at that time and, frankly, was he fit to undertake that long flight?

Why do we lock up illegal immigrants beside violent criminals in our toughest jails? Why do we run that risk of racist intimidation or, to put it another way, condemn people, whose only crime was to want to live here, to long periods of solitary confinement for their own protection? Why is there no purpose-built detention centre for immigration cases in Scotland, or at least a special arrangement with low security prisons? In a recent reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Pollok (Mr. Dunnachie), the Minister said that there are so few such cases in Scottish prisons that special arrangements are not neccessary. Surely the Minister accepts that if the numbers involved are so small, the establishment of a special detention centre would be so much simpler. It might be even less costly than present arrangements.

What special arrangements exist in our prisons for religious worship by minorities? What proportion of our prison officers come from ethnic minorities, and what steps are the Government taking to boost recruitment? What arrangements for special diets exist in Scottish prisons, and how sensitively are cultural questions tackled by prison administrators? Are there any members of ethnic minorities who are prison visitors in Barlinnie, and will the Under-Secretary tell us how he plans to increase their number around Scotland? I understand that the Home Office in England and Wales has recommended that each prison should have a race relations policy and senior management given proper training. Has any such policy even been talked about by the Scottish Office? Is racial harassment a problem in its own right or does the Scottish Office treat it as just another breach of prison rules?

For all those reasons, I have called for an official inquiry into Bahadur Singh's detention and subsequent death. I try not to underestimate the problems of administering Scottish prisons and I have no difficulty in accepting that the vast majority of prison staff are thoroughly decent people. But that cannot, on its own, be enough. If there is something wrong with the system we must try to put it right, and what is wrong is the absence of a clear, central anti-racist policy.

Bahadur Singh is dead. But there are, I hope, many lessons that we can learn from his short life—particularly the last six months of it. We must face facts and tackle racism in our prisons and in wider society as a matter of urgency. This is, I believe, the least we can do in tribute to a young man whose love for this land was greater than we could return.

2.58 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton): The hon. Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke) contributes a service by raising some extremely serious matters.

I share the concern of the hon. Member that the members of the ethnic community who find themselves for whatever reason detained in Scottish prisons, should have no fear of persecution and should be able to enjoy a satisfactory quality of life. In particular, I utterly condemn racism, wherever it occurs.

It would be fair to say that I have received no evidence that there is any widespread problem of abuse against inmates of ethnic origin in Scottish prisons. Prison staff are aware that they must be vigilant for evidence of abuse, and any breach of prison discipline by an inmate which is related to racial discrimination of any sort would be treated very seriously indeed.

If it became clear that measures were needed either to help members of ethnic communities or to stamp out racial discrimination, such measures would be taken swiftly by prison governors. Indeed, following the allegations of abuse against Mr. Singh, the governor of Barlinnie prison has held constructive discussions with representatives of the Asian community and has taken a number of immediate measures to help ease the problems which might be encountered by members of the ethnic community in prison. In particular, the governor has introduced a practice of locating inmates from ethnic communities together for mutual support and companionship; invited the community groups to undertake the translation of the prison's rule book into the four major Asian languages—an invitation that I understand has been accepted; discussed with the community groups visit arrangements for members of ethnic communities; discussed the special diet requirements of members of ethnic communities; and discussed with the community groups the provision of newspapers and reading materials in the major Asian languages.

All those steps should make a positive contribution towards improving the well-being and the quality of life of members of the ethnic communities located in Barlinnie prison. It is Barlinnie prison which holds the majority of persons detained under the Immigration Acts in Scotland. The numbers held at any one time are small and I understand that 11 are currently being held.

Nevertheless, my Department will be writing to governors of all other Scottish prisons, outlining the steps taken at Barlinnie, and inviting them to consider how far it may be appropriate to introduce similar procedures in their own establishments.

In addition, I have asked Her Majesty's chief inspector of prisons to consider whether there are any further improvements which the prison service ought to be making to the general arrangements for accommodating members of ethnic groups in Scottish prisons. I am anxious that the study should be concluded as soon as is practicable and I expect to have the chief inspector's report well before the end of the year.

The decision that Mr. Singh should be detained under the Immigration Act 1971, on completion of his prison sentence on 4 December, as the subject of deportation proceedings for overstaying, is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary. He tells me that a deportation order was signed on 3 February 1988. Enforcement of the order was delayed by the need to take full account of the representations made on Mr. Singh's behalf and by the need to consider his application for asylum, as well as the statutory requirements which prevent an order from being made and enforced before the expiry of the time limit set for appeal against deportation.

These are, as I have said, matters for my right hon. Friend. But the hon. Gentleman has also raised a number of matters concerning Mr. Singh's treatment while he was held in Barlinnie prison, and for these I accept full responsibility.

Mr. William McKelvey (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) *rose*——

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I am reluctant to give way because I have so much ground to cover.

Let me assure the hon. Member for Monklands, West that I take all such allegations very seriously. The hon. Gentleman has questioned the time—five weeks—which it took me to reply after he raised the allegations with me on 3 May. By that time Mr. Singh had been moved to accommodation where he could be kept under close observation. I first saw a photocopy of the hon. Gentleman's letter on 9 May. In his letter, the hon. Gentleman expressed dissatisfaction with the replies he had received from the governor of Barlinnie prison and asked for a more thorough investigation into the alleged assaults. Such an investigation was instigated immediately. It took three weeks to complete and the report was received by my Department on 26 May. I do not think that the period is unreasonable, given that the hon. Gentleman had expressed dissatisfaction with the earlier replies and asked for a more thorough and careful investigation.

I understand that the hon. Gentleman first raised the question of Mr. Singh's treatment in Barlinnie with the Home Office on 26 February and was immediately advised that complaints about Mr. Singh's treatment in Barlinnie were a matter for the Scottish Office. It was not until 3 May—some three months later—that the hon. Gentleman wrote to my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State and myself about the allegations.

Mr. Tom Clarke: If the Minister reads my speech he will see that I took the matter up immediately with the governor of Barlinnie prison. I went to the Scottish Office when I regarded the reply from the governor as being unsatisfactory.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Yes. However, the hon. Gentleman will appreciate that the letter that he sent to me included a letter from the lawyers which said:

> "perhaps you would pursue this matter with the Secretary of State and urge that either Mr. Singh be given full protection or alternatively the deportation procedure be speeded up as quickly as possible."

In fact, he was deported three days later.

I wrote to the hon. Member on 9 June, setting out the results of my Department's investigations into the complaints of assaults on and prior to 23 April. I should make it clear that neither the prison authorities nor the prisons department have received any complaint, from any source, of alleged assaults on Mr. Singh after that date. The hon. Member will know that the procurator fiscal is conducting his own investigation into the allegations that Mr. Singh and another Asian inmate, Mr. Kumar, were assaulted by other inmates at Barlinnie. I am not able to comment upon the alleged assaults in any detail today.

[Lord James Douglas-Hamilton]

However, I have passed papers on this case to the Crown Office in the hope that they will be of assistance to the procurator fiscal.

Although I cannot comment on the alleged assaults in detail, I would like to make clear to the House that, at the governor's request, a medical examination of Mr. Singh was carried out at Barlinnie prison on 28 April following complaints of assaults. The medical officer noted minor bruising to Mr. Singh's left upper arm. Mr. Singh also complained of discomfort in the left loin. In the medical officer's opinion, Mr. Singh's injuries were of a minor nature and no treatment was required. Mr. Singh made no further complaints to the medical officer at that time. In particular, he did not complain, when examined, of any pain or discomfort in his head. Consequently, neither the prison authorities nor the Home Office had any reason to think that Mr. Singh was not in a fit state to travel to India. No evidence is available to my Department to link Mr. Singh's reported death in India with his stay at Barlinnie prison. Were evidence to become available to the Department, it would be passed to the procurator fiscal.

Mr. Tom Clarke: Will the Minister confirm that between 28 April—the Minister referred to the medical examination—and 12 May, when Mr. Singh was released from Barlinnie, no medical assessment was made?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: If I am unable to complete my speech, I shall write to the hon. Gentleman about any matters that I have omitted. I want to set out the Home Office procedures, but I may not have time.

As to accommodation for persons detained under the Immigration Act, the decision on whether a person should be held in custody is, as I have explained, one for my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary, who may exercise administrative powers in certain circumstances, and the courts. Where, in the considered opinion of the courts or my right hon. Friend, custody is necessary to prevent absconding, or for any other reason, the Scottish prison service takes all necessary measures to ensure that inmates are held under the proper conditions. In particular—contrary to what has been alleged in certain press reports—persons detained under the Immigration Act are not usually put in beside convicted inmates. The normal practice is for them to be held at local prisons beside other untried inmates. They receive all the same privileges as untried inmates, including the right to visits every day except Sunday.

It is open to any inmate to discuss with prison staff any difficulties which he or she may be experiencing. They will always take steps to ensure his safety. This may include transfer to another location, or special supervision, on occasion. This is what happened at Barlinnie after the alleged assaults were brought to the attention of the governor.

The hon. Member has suggested that there is a need for special accommodation for persons detained under the Immigration Act. It has been suggested that the arrangements in Scotland are inadequate compared with those in England and Wales. This is not so.

I am told that there is a detention unit at Harmondsworth, adjacent to Heathrow airport, which is managed by the immigration service and which may be used for any person liable to detention under the Immigration Act. It can be used for potential deportees but its capacity is limited to about 90 and it is primarily used for passengers who have been refused leave to enter or who have been detained pending further inquiries. It is a statutory requirement in both jurisdictions that any such persons detained for more than five days must be held in the detention unit at Harmondsworth, in prison or in a remand centre. I should clarify my statement of Tuesday last by making it clear that detention in legalised police cells is used for up to five days.

It is certainly true that the greater number of such detainees held at any one time in England and Wales means that they may be located together. There is, for example, a remand centre in the London area which can hold a number of potential deportees at any one time. In Scotland, we have no adult remand centres, but remand prisoners are kept separate from convicted prisoners. In this, there is no difference in the way potential deportees are treated on this side of the border. On individual cases, the Scottish Office and the Home Office do and will keep in close contact about the most appropriate location for the individual concerned. We are always ready to listen to representations from community groups or representatives of those waiting to be deported.

I should mention that only a very small number of persons are held in Scottish prisons at any one time under the Immigration Act. This week, for example, there were just 11 cases. Three of those persons also face drug charges and, if convicted, may well be given prison sentences. Another is due to be deported next week. I should imagine that such a very small number from a prison population of more than 5,000 would make it difficult to justify the cost of providing special accommodation, but that is an aspect that I would expect Her Majesty's chief inspector of prisons to cover in the report that I have requested from him. We shall of course approach his recommendation with a completely open mind.

I hope that I have made it clear to the House that the Scottish prison service takes seriously its responsibilities towards members of the ethnic community who are detained in custody. Racial discrimination in our prisons will not be condoned and swift measures will be taken if it occurs. I have already said that the procurator fiscal is investigating the specific allegation of assault against Mr. Singh and Mr. Kumar, the inmates whose cases the hon. Member for Monklands, West raised with me. The governor of Barlinnie has had constructive discussions with——

Mr. Tom Clarke: Will the Minister give way?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Perhaps the hon. Gentleman will allow me to answer the point about Mr. Kumar. That allegation is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary. I shall make certain that he receives the representations and that he is kept informed. The hon. Gentleman also referred to lights in the prison cells. It appears from inquiries that I made this morning that Mr. Singh was not at any time kept in a cell with a light on during the night. Mr. Kumar was briefly kept under close observation on the medical officer's advice after he reacted badly to the news of the death of his friend in India. That involved observations at regular intervals during the night, so a light was kept on in the cell. That is standard procedure when an inmate is distressed, and it is followed on the medical officer's advice.

My right hon. Friend the Home Secretary told me that Mr. Singh, a native of India, was given leave on 18 May 1986 to enter the United Kingdom to attend a family wedding in Derby. A condition of his entry was that he would not take up any employment while he was here. He was subsequently given an extension to remain in the country until 28 January 1987.

I understand that Mr. Singh then disappeared from view. He did not leave the country on the agreed date. Nothing further was heard from him until 6 November 1987 when he was discovered by the immigration service working without authority at a restaurant in Coatbridge. He was arrested and charged with knowingly overstaying his leave in the United Kingdom. On 17 November 1987 he was sentenced to 28 days in prison, instead of a fine, for this offence.

My right hon. Friend the Home Secretary then decided that, following completion of that sentence, Mr. Singh should be deported from the United Kingdom. He was served with notice of the intention to deport him and given the appropriate forms to enable him to appeal, should he wish to do so. Taking into account Mr. Singh's conduct since his entry to this country, my right hon. Friend took the view that Mr. Singh would abscond on completion of his sentence. He therefore concluded that Mr. Singh should be kept in detention, pending his deportation.

I am told that Mr. Singh chose not to appeal formally against his deportation. However, on 18 November 1987 the hon. Member for Monklands, West wrote to my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary enclosing a letter from Mr. Singh's solicitors——

The motion having been made after half-past Two o'clock and the debate having continued for half an hour, MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER *adjourned the House without Question put, pursuant to the Standing Order.*

Adjourned at twelve minutes past Three o'clock.

Written Answers to Questions

Monday 27 June 1988

PRIME MINISTER

COMARE Report

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Prime Minister which Government Department or Departments have responsibility for implementing each of the recommendations of the second report of the Committee on Medical Aspects of Radiation in the Environment (COMARE).

The Prime Minister: Several Government Departments are considering how best to implement these recommendations. Government Departments with an interest in specific recommendations include the following: Scottish Office, recommendations 1, 2 and 4*(d)*; health Departments, recommendation 3; Departments responsible for authorising discharges, recommendations 4*(a)*, *(b)* and *(c)*; Health and Safety Executive and Departments with appropriate environmental responsibilities, recommendation 5; health Departments and authorising Departments, recommendations 6 and 7; health Departments and Department of Education and Science jointly, recommendation 8. The Departments and agencies to which the recommendations relate will consult one another as appropriate. Co-ordination of action on a United Kingdom basis rests with the Department of Health and Social Security.

Sharpeville Six

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Prime Minister if she intends to make an appeal herself to the State President of South Africa to reprieve the Sharpeville Six; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: It would be premature to consider intervening again with the South African Government before the legal processes are exhausted.

However, as was made clear in the chairman's summary of discussions on South Africa at the Toronto summit on 20 June, we continue to urge that all legal options available in South Africa should be used to secure clemency for the Six.

EC Agricultural Production

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Prime Minister what assessment she has made as to whether the proposals agreed at the Council meeting in February on penalising over-production and maintaining agricultural guidelines will be achieved in light of the provisional agreement of 11 member states at the recent Council meeting of Agriculture Ministers.

The Prime Minister: The Commission has provided assurances that the costs of the package now agreed can be contained within the guideline.

The stabilisers agreed at the European Council in Brussels are not affected by the price-fixing agreement. They will operate generally to reduce levels of support if predetermined production thresholds are exceeded. The extent of any reductions in support can only be determined once production levels for 1988-89 are known.

Member's Question

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Prime Minister, pursuant to her answer of 23 June, if she will give the precise references in the *Official Report* of previous replies in which the specific supplementary question from the hon. Member for Linlithgow was answered; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply I gave him on 17 July 1987 at column 660.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Equal Opportunities

Mr. Janner: To ask the Attorney-General how the Government's policies on race relations and equal opportunities for women in accordance with the appropriate code of practice include race and sex monitoring exercises in *(a)* his Department and *(b)* the Lord Chancellor's Department; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: The Treasury Solicitor's Department is responsible for the provision of all staff to the Law Officers' Department. Within the Treasury Solicitor's Department, the application of the policies is monitored by the personnel division. Within the Lord Chancellor's Department, the application of the policies is monitored by appropriate committees of the departmental Whitley council, and the equal opportunities officers chairs a joint working party. Within both Departments ethnic monitoring is being carried out by a phased programme of surveys of staff and, in addition surveys of applicants in recruitment schemes. Monitoring by sex can be done from staff records.

Mr. Janner: To ask the Attornery-General whether he has taken steps to identify disparities in recruitment and promotion by reason of the ethnic origins and sex of staff *(a)* in his Department and *(b)* in the Lord Chancellor's Department; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: Figures of individual local recruitment schemes and promotion boards are collected within the Lord Chancellor's Department by the equal opportunities officer; and within the Treasury Solicitor's Department by the personnel division. Benchmark data on the ethnic composition of recruitment areas are not yet available in either Department, nor are the full results of the surveys of the ethnic origins of serving staff. Disparities cannot be identified until this information is to hand. In the year ending 31 May 1988 nearly 66 per cent. of new entrants to the Lord Chancellor's Department were women. Within the Treasury Solicitor's Department, the figure was over 49 per cent.

Mr. Janner: To ask the Attorney-General whether the Lord Chancellor has taken any steps other than issuing policy statements and leaflets to staff and giving guidance and training on equal opportunities, so as to promote greater equality within his Department; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: Yes. In addition to the other examples of action taken specified in the reply to the hon. Member on 7 June, at column *449*, a joint working party of the departmental Whitley council has been set up to monitor and review the application of the equal opportunity policies and the effect of the personnel procedures to ensure equality of opportunity.

Mr. Janner: To ask the Attorney-General whether he has identified any inequalities in employment practices in his Department, arising from the sex or ethnic origins of staff; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: No.

Mr. Janner: To ask the Attorney-General what was the result of the survey of ethnic origin of all staff carried out by the Lord Chancellor's Department; which areas that survey identified as areas where positive action was required; and what positive action has been taken other than that specified in his reply to the hon. and learned Member for Leicester, West on 25 May, *Official Report*, column *44*.

The Attorney-General: The full result of the survey of ethnic origin of staff in post is not yet available. With the limited data available at present there is insufficient information to identify any areas where an imbalance of ethnic origin of staff calls for positive action.

Mr. Janner: To ask the Attorney-General whether *(a)*he and *(b)* the Lord Chancellor have appointed an equal opportunities officer; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: Yes. Both Departments have an equal opportunities officer.

Mr. Janner: To ask the Attorney-General how many and what percentage of officers in each grade and overall in his Department are *(a)* women and *(b)* from ethnic minorities, respectively.

The Attorney-General: There are at present no black or Asian members of staff in the Law Officers' Department.

The figures in relation to women members of staff are as follows:

Grade	*Men (%)*	*Women (%)*	*Total*
2	1 (100)	—	1
5	3 (75)	1 (25)	4
6	5 (100)	—	5
SPS	—	4 (100)	4
EO	—	1 (100)	1
PS	—	1 (100)	1
AO	—	2 (100)	2
AA	1 (100)	—	1

Mr. Janner: To ask the Attorney-General what steps *(a)* he and *(b)* the Lord Chancellor have taken to ensure that there is equality of opportunity for women and for people fom ethnic minorities in all grades of their Departments, in connection with employment, training and promotion, respectively.

The Attorney-General: The position is the same in both Departments. Recruitment procedures and promotion selection procedures are formal and standard and designed to avoid both direct and indirect discrimination. They are based on merit. Training is available to all staff in accordance with their identified needs. The training given to interviewing panels includes guidance on the dangers of assumptions and stereotyping.

Members (Writs)

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Attorney-General what action he is taking about the writs recently served on right hon. and hon. Members of Parliament.

The Attorney-General: The proceedings to which my hon. Friend refers are brought by one Anthony Hill who styles himself "The Christ". An application has been made to the High Court by the Treasury Solicitor acting on behalf of my right hon. and noble Friend the Lord Chancellor as one of the Defendants named on the writ, seeking to have the proceedings struck out as against all the defendants. I understand that the application will be heard in the Sheffield district registry on Thursday 30 June. In these circumstances, I do not consider any action on my part to be presently necessary.

ENERGY

Departmental Staff

Ms. Quin: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will give for each standard planning region of England *(a)* the number of employees of his Depatment, *(b)* the amount spent on wages and salaries and *(c)* the proportion of total expenditure in each region by his Department which is represented by personnel costs.

Mr. Parkinson: The table gives the numbers of employees in each region in England and their salary cost based on average salary in the Department. A breakdown by region of total departmental expenditure is not available.

Region	*Number of Staff in post*	*Salary and Wages* £
North	2·0	32,730
South East	809·0	13,239,285
South West	5·5	90,007
Yorks & Humber	5·0	81,825
North West	21·0	343,665
West Midlands	4·0	65,460
East Midlands	43·0	703,695
East Anglia	2·0	32,730
Total	891·5	14,589,397

British Coal (Investment)

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what information he has on the level of investment proposed for the north-east area of British Coal in the year 1988-89.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Investment levels for individual areas are a management matter for British Coal. I have asked the chairman to write to the hon. Member.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Eritrea

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will make more food aid available directly to the Eritrean Relief Association.

Mr. Chris Patten: We will continue to seek to provide humanitarian relief to the hungry in Ethiopia wherever they may be. In selecting the most appropriate channels for our assistance we take particular account of the need to ensure that it reaches those for whom it is intended as quickly as possible. We believe this can best be achieved by operating through international organisations, or through British based non-governmental organisations.

Nepal

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the current level of aid to Nepal; and what is the planned total for the coming year.

Mr. Chris Patten: In the current year Her Majesty's Government expect to provide about £12 millon of aid to Nepal. Most of this is designed to help protect the environment and reduce poverty in one of the world's poorest countries and to support the Government of Nepal's efforts to reform its economy. When I visited Nepal in March this year I announced a new grant of £20 million.

British Citizens (Torture)

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make it his policy to cease to give aid to any country which tortures British citizens; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chris Patten: Her Majesty's Government deplore the use of torture wherever and to whomsoever it occurs. Respect for human rights is one factor taken into account in deciding the level and nature of our bilateral aid to a particular country.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Information Services

Mr. Michael Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list information services, receiving Government funding, which supply biological data, including sequence and molecular structure data, plant and animal cell lines, regulatory affairs and patent registrations, to research institutions and companies with biotechnological interests; what is the current level of financial support for such services; and what future developments in biological information services are proposed.

Mr. Jackson: The following information services are funded by the research councils from their grant-in-aid from the Department's science budget.

1. Protein structure sequence database. Science and Engineering Council with University of Leeds and Birkbeck College. SERC support £823,000 over four years.
2. DNA sequence data bank at the European Molecular Biology Laboratory in conjunction with, and to complement, Genbank in the USA. The operating costs are not known, but the Medical Research Council's contribution to the EMBL total budget will be £2·6 million in the 1988-89 financial year. Major users of the data have direct access and the MRC funds one scientist to provide a centralised UK facility for accessing the databank at a cost of £10,000 per annum.
3. Systematics of microfungi. Science and Engineering Research Council with Commonwealth Agricultural Bureau, International Mycological Institute, Kew. SERC support £187,000 over four years.
4. Information on the following collections is available on request, but it is not possible to identify expenditure directly relating to provision of information:
   - (a) The National Environment Research Council's culture centre for algae and protozoa;
   - (b) The Agricultural and Food Research Council's national collections of food bacteria and yeast cultures;
   - (c) The Medical Research Council (MRC) radiobiology unit's mouse mutant stock facility;
   - (d) The national collection of animal cells, part funded by the MRC and SERC.

In addition, a number of research council institutes maintain small data bases primarily for their own use.

The research councils expect to create new data bases in the future and several proposals are under consideration.

Tertiary Colleges

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list the tertiary colleges, by local education authorities, showing the political make-up of the appropriate local councils.

Mr. Dunn: Those colleges generally classified as tertiary colleges which are currently in existence in England and Wales are listed in the following table. The table also shows which political party, if any, held a majority in each authority following the last elections.

College	*Authority*	*Political make up*
England		
Exeter	Devon	No overall majority
North Devon	Devon	No overall majority
Nelson and Colne	Lancashire	No overall majority
Strode	Somerset	No overall majority
South East Derbyshire	Derbyshire	Labour
W. R. Tuson	Lancashire	No overall majority
Cricklade	Hampshire	No overall majority
Yeovil	Somerset	No overall majority
Leigh	Wigan	Labour
Accrington and Rossendale	Lancashire	No overall majority
Richmond	Richmond	Liberal
Wigan	Wigan	Labour
Oswestry	Shropshire	Conservative/Independent
Wakefield	Wakefield	Labour

College	Authority	Political make up
South Cheshire	Cheshire	No overall majority
Halesowen	Dudley	Labour
Alton	Hampshire	No overall majority
Runshaw	Lancashire	No overall majority
Peterlee	Durham	Labour
Harlow	Essex	No overall majority
Fareham	Hampshire	No overall majority
Brockenhurst	Hampshire	No overall majority
Knowsley Central	Knowsley	Labour
Blackburn	Lancashire	No overall majority
Skelmersdale	Lancashire	No overall majority
Selby	North Yorkshire	No overall majority
Bilston	Wolverhampton	Labour
Weymouth	Dorset	Conservative
Forest of Dean	Gloucestershire	No overall majority
Derwentside	Durham	Labour
Newcastle Under Lyme	Staffordshire	Labour
North Manchester	Manchester	Labour
South Manchester	Manchester	Labour
Isle College	Cambridgeshire	No overall majority
Elm Park	Harrow	Conservative
Green Hill	Harrow	Conservative
Weald	Harrow	Conservative
Bury Metropolitan College	Bury	Labour
Dewsbury	Kirklees	No overall majority
Henley	Oxfordshire	No overall majority
Wales		
Crosskeys	Gwent	Labour
Pontypool	Gwent	Labour
Neath	West Glamorgan	Labour
Afan	West Glamorgan	Labour
Gorseinon	West Glamorgan	Labour
Swansea	West Glamorgan	Labour

Working Groups

Mr. Ashdown: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) if he will describe the procedures used in appointing members of the national curriculum working group on science, stating what proportion of members were interviewed by a Minister before appointment; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will describe the procedures used in appointing members of the national curriculum working group on mathematics, stating what proportion of members were interviewed by a Minister before appointment; and if he will make a statement;

(3) if he will describe the procedures used in appointing members of the national curriculum working group on English, stating what proportion of members were interviewed by a Minister before appointment; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: In appointing members to the various national curriculum subject working groups, the Government looked for a range of professional expertise and experience. We also ensured that each group had at least one member from the business world. My right hon. Friend and I met the chairman of the mathematics and science working groups before they were appointed; in the case of the English group my right hon. Friend and I held discussions with all those offered appointment.

Departmental Staff

Ms. Quin: To ask the Secretary of State of Education and Science if he will give for each standard planning region of England *(a)* the number of employees of his Department, *(b)* the amount spent in wages and salaries and *(c)* the proportion of total expenditure in each region by his Department which is represented by personnel costs.

Mrs. Rumbold: The Department currently has 1,379 employees in London and 627 in Darlington. In addition, there are 584 members of Her Majesty's Inspectorate and their support services who are based outside London around the country.

The wage and salary costs (including national insurance) in each case in 1987-88 were of the order of £19 million, £5 million and £12·5 million. Information about total expenditure is not readily available in the form requested.

Parent-Students

Mr. Clay: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what are the latest figures for the number of students on mandatory or discretionary grants with children.

Mr. Jackson: In 1986-87, 7,405 mandatory award holders received allowances in respect of dependants. Most of these dependants are likely to have been children. Information on the number of students with children who did not receive dependants allowances (usually because of the level of the family's income) is not available. Nor is information available about discretionary award holders with children.

New Teachers

Mr. Ashdown: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information is available regarding the number and proportion, for each subject, of newly trained secondary teachers *(a)* taking up a first appointment in the maintained sector; and *(b)* working in the maintained sector after the satisfactory completion of probation; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold *[holding answer 13 June 1988]:* The numbers and percentages of newly trained secondary teachers who in 1986 both completed training and took up a teaching appointment in a maintained secondary school are shown in the table. Others enter teaching at a later date, and a small number become teachers in the primary, special or further education sectors. For those who trained in university departments of education, data are readily available only for the three subjects shown.

The Department has no direct information on the numbers of teachers remaining in service after satisfactory completion of probation. However 10 per cent. of secondary teachers in service two terms after qualifying were no longer in service a year later.

First destination of newly trained secondary school teachers

	Number in maintained secondary schools in England and Wales[1]	*As percentage of all of known destination*
Trained in public sector institutions in England and Wales:		
Subject of training:		
Mathematics	115	74
Chemistry	29	83
Physics	20	95
Biological Science	67	84
Other Science	72	79
English	170	86
English as a foreign language	6	67
French	68	74
Other languages	71	84
Drama	47	69
History	29	83
Geography	28	80
RE	90	76
CDT	170	84
Commercial and Business Studies	50	69
Economics	22	76
Social Studies	19	68
Art/Light Craft	44	80
Home Economics	187	80
Music	125	80
PE	381	74
Combinations	194	83
Other	137	77
Total	2,141	78
Trained in universities in the United Kingdom of which, by selected subjects of training:	[2]3,186	[2]74
Mathematics	[3]427	[3][4]82
Chemistry	[3]238	[3][4]78
Physics	[3]170	[3][4]75

Notes:

[1] Excludes newly trained teachers whose destinations was unknown.

[2] Includes destinations to all maintained schools in the United Kingdom.

[3] Includes destinations to teaching appointments in any institution in the United Kingdom.

[4] Based on PGCEs only (over 90 per cent. of university sector), and as a percentage of all successful completers, including those of unknown destination.

Mathematics and Science

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Blackburn of 26 May, *Official Report,* column *236,* if he will state the numbers separately of primary school teachers who *(a)* have a post A-level qualification in which science was a main subject and *(b)* have attended an in-service course in science of at least one term's full-time equivalent duration.

Mr. Kenneth Baker *[holding answer 14 June]:* I regret that my answers to the first two of the hon. Member's questions of 26 May, at columns 236, 237, contained small errors. Some teachers whose training took the form of short courses only were included.

The corrected figures and further detail requested are as follows:

Maintained nursery and primary school teachers qualified in science March 1987

Teachers with science as:	*Full-time*	*Part-time*
1. Main subject of post-A-level qualification		
(i) with long INSET course[1]	[2]400	—
(ii) without long INSET course	12,700	2,300
2. Second subject of post-A-level qualification		
(i) with long INSET course[1]	100	—
(ii) without long INSET course	8,200	1,200
3. Subject of long INSET course[1] only	700	—
Total of the above	22,000	3,400

[1] Long INSET courses are courses in science of at least one term's full-time duration or equivalent, attended in the years 1982 to 1986.

[2] Including some who obtained the qualification through the long INSET course.

Notes:

Thus in all an estimated 13,100 full-time and 2,300 part-time teachers had a post-A-level qualification in which science was a main subject, and 1,100 full-time teachers had attended an in-service course in science of at least one-term's full-time duration or equivalent in the years 1982 to 1986.

The revised estimate of the number of schools is 13,600 nursery and primary schools in England—68 per cent.—having at least one teacher with a post-A-level qualification that had science as the main or second subject or who had attended, in the previous five years, an in-service course in science of at least one term's full-time duration or equivalent.

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Blackburn of 26 May, *Official Report,* column *236,* if he will state the numbers separately of primary school teachers who *(a)* have a post A-level qualification in which mathematics was a main or second subject and *(b)* have attended an in-service course in mathematics of at least one term's full-time equivalent duration.

Mr. Kenneth Baker *[holding answer 14 June 1988]:* I regret that my answers to the first two of the hon. Member's questions of 26 May, at columns *236, 237,* contained small errors. Some teachers whose training took the form of short courses only were included.

The corrected figures and further detail requested is as follows:

Maintained nursery and primary school teachers qualified in mathematics
March 1987

Teachers with mathematics as:	*Full-time*	*Part-time*
1. Main subject of post-A-level qualification		
(i) with long INSET course[1]	[2]1,100	—
(ii) without long INSET course	8,300	1,000
2. Second subject of post-A-level qualification		
(i) with long INSET course[1]	100	—
(ii) without long INSET course	5,500	1,000
3. Subject of long INSET course[1] only	1,400	100
Total of the above	16,400	2,200

[1] Long INSET courses are courses in mathematics of at least one term's full-time duration or equivalent, attended in the years 1982 to 1986.

[2] Including some who obtained the qualification through the long INSET course.

Notes:

Thus in all an estimated 15,000 full-time and 2,100 part-time teachers had a post-A-level qualification in which mathematics was a main or second subject, and 2,600 full-time and 100 part-time teachers had attended an in-service course in mathematics of at least one-term's full-time duration or equivalent in the years 1982 to 1986.

The revised estimate of the number of schools is 10,900 nursery and primary schools in England—55 per cent.—having at least one teacher with a post-A-level qualification that had mathematics as the main or second subject or who had attended, in the previous five years, an in-service course in mathematics of at least one term's full-time duration or equivalent.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Departmental Staff

Ms. Quin: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will give for each standard planning region of England *(a)* the number of employees of his Department, *(b)* the amount spent in wages and salaries and *(c)* the proportion of total expenditure in each region by his Department which is represented by personnel costs.

Mr. Butcher: The following gives, by standard planning region:

(a) staff in post as at 1 April 1988;
(b) the estimated amount spent on salaries and wages in 1987-88, and;
(c) the proportion of total running cost expenditure represented by personnel costs.

Region	*(a) Staff in post 1 April 1988*	*(b) Salaries and wages 1987-88 (£'000)*	*(c) Per cent. of total running costs*
North	241	2,763	79
North West	386	4,566	82
Yorkshire and Humberside	236	2,609	80
East Midlands	171	2,000	80
West Midlands	287	2,728	75
South West	172	1,836	81
East Anglia	55	740	73
South East	8,609	120,286	57
Total	10,157	137,528	59

Handsworth Task Force

Ms. Short: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will list the projects helped by the Handsworth task force and the contribution made to each project by *(a)* the task force, *(b)* Birmingham city council, *(c)* the Manpower Services Commission, and *(d)* other sources.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The list is as follows:

Approved projects	*Task force*	*Birmingham City Council*	*MSC*	*Other sources*
Handsworth				
Black Star Car Company—motor vehicle repair project run as a community business	28,535	—	66,000	—
Broughton Road housing refurbishment local labour initiative	575,000	250,000	—	775,000
CANDEL Potohari Hinko: provision of a community base to develop employment and training opportunities, and provide a drugs and AIDS awareness programme	68,000	65,000	172,000	—
Copthorne Hotel customised pre-recruitment training programme	6,500	6,500	30,000	—
CP Management Training for ethnic minorities, and follow-up	85,800	67,800	41,000	—
Grove Lane Baths—Community and Youth Enterprise Centre	272,000	143,750	563,000	463,250
Handsworth Employment Scheme Catering Training Unit	53,000	—	51,000	—
Handsworth Opportunities Programme for Employment (HOPE): Sikh managed CP scheme to refurbish the group's training base	36,500	1,040	177,000	3,119
Handsworth Churches Forum YTS Training Centre and Neighbourhood Care Project	115,075	—	151,851	965
Handsworth Single Homeless Housing Association Development Worker	15,000	—	—	—
Hotel and Catering pre-recruitment training Compact with 12 major Birmingham hotels	92,500	31,000	—	50,000
Inner City Contracts—non profit making building company, providing jobs for local people	58,325	—	—	—
Inner City Glass Decorating: a craft workshop for predominantly disabled Task Force area residents which will develop into a community business	14,318	2,571	39,800	7,714
Local recruitment in the finance sector—feasibility study	3,967	—	25,000	—
United Youth Association: construction skills training	105,025	—	43,164	—
Villa Cross Employment Centre (formerly Villa Cross pub)	302,875	17,500	60,000	152,500
Asian Business Institute	17,000	—	—	125,000
Birmingham Interpretation and Translation Service (BITS): grant to turn existing voluntary organisation into a self financing business	32,269	16,250	—	48,750

Approved projects	*Task force*	*Birmingham City Council*	*MSC*	*Other sources*
Black Business in Birmingham: venture capital fund to assist development of local small black business	88,800	—	—	—
Business Action Team offering free business consultancy to small local business and developing an executive recruitment service	113,605	—	—	—
Federation of Black Housing Associations seminar on construction contracts	4,670	—	—	—
Establishment of Handsworth Builders' Association, to advise and train local small builders	105,000	—	—	—
Handsworth Task Force Development Fund: grants and loans in co-operation with National Westminster Bank and the City Council	250,000	—	—	280,000
Redevelopment of the Lozells Road Shops (including feasibility work)	494,198	84,000	—	1,271,000
Micro Business Support Service to those receiving Task Force Development Fund assistance	34,907	—	—	1,000
Rastafarian Enterprise Initiative, expansion of existing community business	23,500	—	—	—
Winson Green/Rotton Park Employment Project	25,000	27,500	—	107,500
Attock Welfare Employment and Training—CP pilot initiative	10,000	—	15,000	—
Birmingham Young Volunteers: support and advice to young people at risk	8,000	—	—	23,000
Broadway Lower School Technology Laboratory—computer hardware and refurbishment costs	20,000	—	—	39,000
City of Handsworth Alternative Scheme (CHAS): employment and training advice for ex-offenders	38,604	3,750	—	11,250
Effective leadership in inner city schools: management development training for local teachers	780	—	—	—
Fire service pre-recruitment training programme	7,500	1,500	8,700	—
Guru Ravidass Cultural Association: skills workshop conversion	18,000	—	54,000	7,000
Handsworth Employment Scheme feasibility work and subsequent capital equipment funding for bakery and YTS workshop on the Camp lane site	150,610	—	43,954	—
Handsworth Under Fives Forum (HUFF) Training for nursery staff	27,800	—	15,696	—
Industrial Society providing employment-enterprise awareness training in schools	16,000	—	—	—
Information Technology Network—data link between Holte School, Handsworth Technical College and Austin Rover IT centre	49,956	—	—	—
Inner City Community Sports Leadership training-pilot	5,400	—	—	2,500
Lozells Electronic Workshop: training and low cost purchasing-servicing facility	21,864	17,318	67,108	51,954
MACRO Films video-film YTS training workshop	69,045	41,250	20,465	153,750
Opportunities Industrialization Centre (OIC): training and employment advice to alienated local people	97,005	—	57,000	20,000
Outward bound self-development scheme	5,300	—	—	5,000
Positive Action for training in Housing Mangement (PATH) scheme for people from ethnic minorities	72,000	—	—	61,300
Handsworth Technical College personal services workshop (hairdressing, care of the elderly, etc)	58,900	—	—	31,500
Positive Image—childcare training centre	76,038	5,000	—	60,503
Holte School/Industry Centre in conjunction with business and the Local Education Authority	69,760	—	—	—

Approved projects	*Task force*	*Birmingham City Council*	*MSC*	*Other sources*
Schools Outreach pilot preventive care project	32,000	—	—	—
YTS project placement officer, to develop high quality employer led placements for local voluntary sector YTS providers	18,672,	—	16,463	—
Villa Cross Self Build—assistance with construction skills training for a group of Bangladeshis wishing to build their own houses	59,200	—	—	459,300
Afro-Caribbean Resource Centre—day care for elderly and creche facility	29,000	9,000	65,300	49,000
Handsworth Youth Crime Prevention Scheme—property marketing using CP	1,648	—	54,473	—
Handsworth Day Care Centre Latchkey Scheme	5,000	—	24,611	—
Ladworth Community Safety project—small grants scheme for local groups	15,000	—	—	—
Lozells Shops security measures	28,500	—	—	1,500
Police Foundation—mobile crime prevention workshop	25,000	—	12,000	15,000
Progress 2000—CP refurbishment scheme to improve nursery provision	44,000	29,300	31,392	—
Think Green—training in horticultural skills for local people and development of a garden centre as a co-operative	54,700	20,000	32,130	60,000
Homework Centres—bridge funding to assist under-achieving pupils in the Task Force area	25,500	—	—	—
Birmingham Area Improvement Team—security and environmental work to a residential area, involving 64 properties, to improve community safety	149,570	—	—	50,000
Handsworth Wood Boys School—equipment for the craft and design technology department	2,500	—	—	—
Handsworth Skills Partnerships—feasibility work	7,500	—	—	—
Prince of Wales Community Venture—capital (training) equipment	8,400	—	—	—
Villa Cross Bingo Hall—conversion into managed workspace for local businesses	300,000	112,000	—	435,000
Handsworth Employment Scheme—second capital equipment phase, also developing security services and contract cleaning businesses	185,931	—	—	—
Marcus Garvey Supplementary School—audio-visual and other equipment	9,000	—	—	5,500

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, pursuant to the answer to the hon. Member for The Wrekin of 20 June, how many civil servants in his Department are employed at grade 3 and above; and what is the estimated cost of discovering whether they were educated at state or private schools.

Mr. Butcher: Sixty-seven. The cost was seen to be disproportionate.

Balance of Trade

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will give the deficit in manufactured trade for the first quarter of 1988 at an annualised rate.

Mr. Alan Clark: Information for the first quarter of 1988 is available in the June 1988 issue of the "Monthly Review of External Trade Statistics" (table A8).

Beer Barrels and Casks

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he has any plans to introduce legislation on tare weights for barrels and casks used in the sale of bulk beer.

Mr. Butcher: The Brewers' Society and the National Licensed Victuallers Association are themselves seeking to regulate the filling of beer barrels by the introduction of a code of practice. Accordingly, I have no plans to legislate on this matter at present.

Welsh Language

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will take steps to ensure that the Post Office maintains Welsh/bilingual versions of all Government forms and leaflets.

Mr. Butcher: No. The Post Office maintains Government forms and leaflets in the versions provided to it by the Departments concerned. It is a matter for those

Departments to decide whether to issue the material in Welsh, taking into account the cost and demand and whether a Welsh version seems appropriate.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will list those forms and leaflets which are available in post offices in Wales *(a)* both in Welsh and English, *(b)* in a bilingual format and *(c)* in English only.

Mr. Butcher: My Department does not keep this information, but I have asked the chairman of the Post Office to write to the hon. Member with the relevant details.

Infants' Walking Aids

Mr. Janner: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when he expects the British Standards Institute to complete its updating of standards for baby-walkers or other infants' walking devices; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Butcher: I understand that the British Standards Institution hopes to publish the revised standard on babywalkers, BS 4648, by the end of the year.

Southeach Ltd.

Mr. Radice: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster whether he has received a report from the liquidator in connection with the bankruptcy of Southeach Ltd., formerly of Epworth Chapel, Tanfield Lea, Stanley.

Mr. Maude: It is not the Department's practice to disclose information about reports under the Company Directors Disqualification Act 1986 in relation to individual companies.

Patent Office

Mr. Blair: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will place in the Library a copy of the report commissioned from management consultants on the hiving off of the Patent Office, as referred to in the 1986 annual report of the Comptroller General of Patents, Designs and Trade Marks, House of Commons 323, 1986-87, paragraph 1.

Mr. Butcher: No. This report was submitted to my Department on a confidential basis as part of the run-up to the proposed hiving-off of the Patent Office. That proposal has since been abandoned for the reasons given by my right hon. and noble Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry on 29 October 1987, *Official Report, House of Lords,* at columns 775-76.

Mr. Blair: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will publish in the *Official Report* a reconciliation of the expenditure and receipts table for calendar year 1986 of the Patent Office, House of Commons Paper 323, 1986-87, paragraph 14, with the financial year figures provided in the 1986-87 Appropriation Accounts, class V, vote 2, House of Commons 107-IV, 1987-88; and if he will indicate whether the Comptroller and Auditor General audits the calendar year figures as well as the appropriation accounts.

Mr. Butcher: The reconciliation cannot be provided other than at disproportionate cost.

As part of routine audit activity the Comptroller and Auditor General has from time to time examined the material used to produce the calendar year figures.

Mr. Blair: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will list in the *Official Report* the facilities and offices operated by the Patent Office, indicating the standard economic region in which they are located and stating both approved establishments and actual employment in 1987.

Mr. Butcher: The information requested is as follows:

Office	*Economic region*	*Approved posts 1 April 1987*	*Staff in post 1 April 1987*
State House, 66-71 High Holborn, London WC1R 4TP	South East	992	960½
Station Square House, St. Mary Cray, Orpington, Kent BR5 3RD	South East	171	157 (including 8 casuals)
Trade Mark, Manchester Office, Sunley Tower, Piccadilly Plaza, Manchester M1 4BA	North West	2	2

Woodhill Developments Ltd.

Mr. Tim Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what information he has as to the ownership of Woodhill Developments Ltd., formerly Bushart Ltd.

Mr. Maude: The Registrar of Companies tells me that an annual return giving details of this company's shareholdings is not yet due to be filed. The current holders of the two subscriber shares should however be shown in the company's register of members, available for inspection at the registered office, 1 Harley Street, London W1A 4DG.

Copies of documents delivered to the Registrar of Companies are available for public inspection at Companies House, Cardiff and London.

Mr. Tim Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what information he has about the application by Woodhill Developments Ltd. to become a member of the Investment Management Regulatory Organisation.

Mr. Maude: I understand that Woodhill Developments Ltd. held interim authorisation under the Financial Services Act as a consequence of its application to join the Investment Management Regulatory Organisation, but has now withdrawn its application. Interim authorisation has therefore lapsed. Applications for membership of a self-regulatory organisation recognised under the Financial Services Act are matters for the organisation concerned.

Brookwood Asset Management

Mr. Tim Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what representations he has received about the financial and personal links between Brookwood Asset Management and Barlow Clowes.

Mr. Maude: None.

Mr. Tim Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will obtain a report from the Gibraltar authorities on the activities of Brookwood Asset Management.

Mr. Maude: It is not my policy to comment on discussions which may or may not take place with the authorities in other jurisdictions concerning individual cases.

Newspaper Distribution

Mr. George Howarth: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will refer to the Director General of Fair Trading the current practice of certain newspaper publishers in deliberately narrowing the options of newsagents in terms of wholesale distribution; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maude: I understand that the Director General of Fair Trading has the distribution of newspapers under review, including recent developments in distribution introduced by certain newspaper publishers.

Mr. George Howarth: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what representations he has received from newsagents about the trend towards a virtual monopoly of distribution on the part of certain newspapers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maude: My Department has received a number of representations from newsagents about recent developments in newspaper distribution. They have been referred to the Director General of Fair Trading, who is monitoring such developments.

Pirate Radio

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how much was spent on monitoring, identifying and prosecuting pirate radio operators in each of the last five years.

Mr. Butcher: The Radio Investigation Service became part of the Department only in August 1984. As a consequence, it is possible to provide detailed information only for the last three financial years. The following table lists the RIS's overall costs, and the estimated amount spent on enforcement activity against unlicensed broadcasters where figures are available.

Year	*Overall costs £ million*	*Costs of Broadcasting Enforcement £ million est*
1983-84	9·3	n/a
1984-85	8·6	n/a
1985-86	6·8	0·6
1986-87	6·6	0·6
1987-88	6·5	0·8

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many pirate radio operators have been prosecuted in each of the last five years.

Mr. Butcher: The answer is as follows:

	Prosecutions	*Convictions*
1983	40	40
1984	48	47
1985	136	135
1986	79	74
1987	77	75

Investors (Protection)

Sir William Clark: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster whether, in the light of the recent ruling by the Advertisement Standards Authority that certain advertisements issued by the Campaign for Independent Financial Advice are misleading, he will now take steps, pursuant to the answer of Friday 6 May, *Official Report*, column *645*, to ensure that the public are not misled as to the standards required of advisers regulated under the Financial Services Act 1986.

Mr. Maude: I understand that the advertisements referred to by my hon. Friend relate to the period prior to 29 April, the date on which the main provisions of the Financial Services Act came into force. With the commencement of the provisions of the Financial Services Act relating to advertisements and the Control of Misleading Advertisements Regulations I am confident that adequate machinery is being established in this area.

Single European Market

Mr. Blair: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if the completion of the single European market by 1992 will affect the restrictions on the number of shares that can be owned by foreign shareholders in the privatised companies.

Mr. Maude: The completion of the single European market in 1992 will not in itself directly affect any restrictions on foreign shareholdings in British companies. Article 7 of the EEC treaty already generally prohibits discrimination on the grounds of nationality and article 221 requires that member states accord nationals of other member states the same treatment as their own nationals as regards participation in the capital of companies or firms, without prejudice to application of other provisions of the treaty. One of the latter, article 223, enables any member state to take such measures as it considers necessary for the protection of the essential interests of its security which are connected with the production of or trade in arms, munitions or war material.

Govan Shipyard

Mr. Cran: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a further statement on arrangements for the sale of the Govan shipyard by British Shipbuilders.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I have today approved, on behalf of the Government, the terms of the sale of the Govan shipyard by British Shipbuilders to a subsidiary of the Norwegian Group Kvaerner Industrier. Kvaerner has secured an order for two gas ships with the option for its clients to confirm orders for two further ships later this year. I have agreed to offer intervention fund support within the limits permitted by the European Community sixth directive for all these orders. Once secured these orders would provide work for Govan well into 1992.

Agreement with Kvaerner brings the promise of a secure future for the yard for which BS has not been able to win further orders beyond the two ships for China announced early last year. Kvaerner has confirmed its intention to transfer its ship technology to this country and to develop Govan as its centre for gas ship technology in support of activities worldwide. There is the possibility of further investment in future by this major engineering group.

Subject to the approval of the Euopean Commission and agreement on certain outstanding matters of detail, my right hon. and noble Friend therefore intends to give his consent for the disposal of British Shipbuilders Govan yard to Moss Rosenberg Verft, the shipbuilding subsidiary of the Norwegian group Kvaerner Industrier. I have received formal application for consent from the chairman of British Shipbuilders. The board of Kvaerner Industrier approved the broad terms earlier today.

Completion is planned for the beginning of August to allow Govan to start under new ownership after the annual summer holiday. Kvaerner will then pay £6 million for the yard, while BS will meet certain agreed costs. These include costs arising from the completion of the present work load, which BS will subcontract to Kvaerner, costs of redundancies, and a contribution to a programme of capital investment Kvaerner plans to undertake to restructure the yard. Certain payments will be made on completion, others over time as expenditure is incurred, giving a net cost of disposal to British Shipbuilders of up to £25 million valued at completion.

The liabilities of Govan Shipbuilders Ltd. will remain with the company and therefore with BS. Nothing is being written off. The assets and work force will shortly be transferred into a new subsidiary of British Shipbuilders, which will become Govan Kvaerner Ltd. on completion.

The trades unions representing the work force have already agreed to proposals from Kvaerner for a reduction of up to 500 in the number of employees and to certain changes in the yard.

I welcome the achievement of this agreement, as I am sure will the people of Scotland in particular. I look forward to welcoming Kvaerner to these shores once the final hurdles have been cleared.

Mr. Peter Luff

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (1) if he will outline the job description of Mr. Peter Luff as special adviser to his Department;

(2) what expenses are payable to Mr. Peter Luff as special adviser to his Department; and how many hours he is expected to work.

Mr. Butcher *[holding answer 23 June 1988]:* Mr. Luff's appointment is full-time. He is entitled to claim travel and subsistence expenses incurred in connection with his departmental duties as special adviser. His duties are to act as special adviser to the Secretary of State, on such tasks as the Secretary of State allocates to him.

Radio Licence Fee (Clwyd)

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will meet members of Clwyd public protection committee to discuss proposed increases in radio licence fees; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Butcher *[holding answer 23 June 1988]:* Arrangements will be made for a senior official from the Department of Trade and Industry's radiocommunications division to meet members of Clwyd public protection committee to discuss increases in radio licence fees.

Civil Research and Development

Mr. Boateng: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will give the latest available figures for Government-backed civil research and development for each year since 1983.

Mr. Butcher *[holding answer 23 June 1988]:* The available information is given in the table:

Government funding of research and development for civil objectives

	£ million
1983-84	2,011
1984-85	2,093
1985-86	2,185
1986-87	2,330

Cozy Glaze Ltd.

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (1) if he will request the Director General of Fair Trading to use his powers under the Fair Trading Act 1973 to obtain written assurances of future good conduct from Cozy Glaze Ltd. of Unit 3B, Sneckyeat industrial estate, Whitehaven;

(2) if he has received any complaints regarding shoddy and defective work, and failure to remedy such work, on the part of Cozy Glaze Ltd. of Unit 3B, Sneckyeat industrial estate, Whitehaven.

Mr. Butcher *[holding answer 24 June 1988]:* I have received representations from the hon. Member about a company trading as Cozy Glaze, to which I replied on 12 May.

The exercise of the powers in part III of the Fair Trading Act 1973 in a particular case is a matter for the Director General of Fair Trading. I shall ask him to write to the hon. Member.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Police Premises (Pin-ups)

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether guidance is issued to police authorities to ensure that no offensive pin-ups are displayed in police premises.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: No. This is a matter for individual chief officers of police.

Prison Disturbances

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will list the dates of prison disturbances that have taken place in 1988; and if he will list the prisons involved;

(2) what has been the estimated cost of damage to prison property caused in prison disturbances that have taken place in 1988.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Incidents causing significant damage occurred at Bedford prison on 1 and 2 March, Rollestone prison on 24 May, Haverigg prison on 5-6 June, and Hindley youth custody centre and remand centre on 8 June. The estimated cost of damage was approximately £11,000 at Bedford, £750 at Rollestone, £750,000 at Haverigg and £750 at Hindley.

Football Matches (Offences)

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what has been the number of people charged with offences at football matches in each of the last three years and the number convicted of such offences.

Mr. John Patten: The information requested on charges and convictions is not available from the records held centrally.

Haverigg Prison

Mr. Leigh: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will set up a full public enquiry into the recent events at Her Majesty's prison, Haverigg.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: As I informed the House on 7 June, at column 709, my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary has asked the deputy director general of the Prison Service, Mr. G. H. Lakes, CB, MC, to conduct an urgent investigation into the recent incident at Haverigg prison. The inquiry will be comprehensive and wide-ranging and will consider all relevant factors which may have contributed to the incident. My right hon. Friend will report Mr. Lakes' conclusions to the House.

Police (Establishment)

Mr. Rathbone: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list, for the present year and each of the last nine fiscal years, the increase in establishment requested by the Metropolitan police force and each of the provincial police authorities, together with the increase approved for each of those authorities for each of those years.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The information requested is as follows:

	1979-80		*1980-81*		*1981-82*		*1982-83*		*1983-84*	
	Increase applied for	*Increase approved*	*Increased applied for*	*Increase approved*	*Increase applied for*	*Increased approved*	*Increase applied for*	*Increased approved*	*Increase applied for*	*Increased approved*
Avon and Somerset	146	100	100	67	30	—	30	—	—	—
Bedfordshire	13	—	2	13	33	15	37	5	20	20
Cambridgeshire	50	50	—	—	2	—	—	—	—	—
Cheshire	100	—	40	40	10	—	10	—	—	—
Cleveland	—	7	50	52	—	3	—	—	—	—
Cumbria	130	25	100	15	85	—	85	—	7	—
Derbyshire	3	3	152	55	75	—	75	—	7	17
Devon and Cornwall	62	34	—	27	10	—	10	—	—	—
Dorset	—	—	20	—	12	12	50	7	11	—
Durham	—	—	—	—	—	6	2	2	—	—
Dyfed Powys	—	18	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Essex	179	78	101	30	45	—	45	10	35	10
Gloucestershire	—	—	36	15	9	9	—	—	24	24
Greater Manchester	365	31	300	175	125	—	125	2	—	—
Gwent	—	—	—	—	—	—	3	3	—	—
Hampshire	81	80	50	50	—	—	—	—	—	—
Hertfordshire	—	—	—	35	—	—	40	—	—	—
Humberside	—	—	48	33	—	—	—	—	—	—
Kent	100	22	—	—	—	4	—	—	44	—
Lancashire	70	20	20	20	—	—	—	—	20	—
Leicestershire	31	21	3	—	3	—	3	6	—	—
Lincolnshire	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	1	1
Merseyside	—	—	238	155	—	—	—	—	—	—
Norfolk	—	—	59	—	—	—	8	8	—	—
Northamptonshire	56	28	28	28	—	—	—	—	14	12
Northumbria	150	—	30	30	—	2	—	—	25	—
North Wales	60	33	3	3	1	1	—	—	3	3
North Yorkshire	85	40	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Nottinghamshire	124	115	—	−1	—	—	—	—	—	—
South Wales	—	—	102	30	—	6	—	—	4	4
South Yorkshire	—	—	120	120	—	—	—	—	—	—
Staffordshire	—	—	30	33	—	—	—	—	50	—
Suffolk	49	35	—	—	—	1	—	—	14	12
Surrey	3	3	250	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Sussex	6	10	—	—	—	—	—	−1	20	8
Thames Valley	99	8	100	98	18	4	18	17	308	143
Warwickshire	50	—	50	43	68	—	68	5	—	—
West Mercia	—	—	90	—	90	—	90	2	—	—
West Midlands	—	—	100	175	—	—	—	—	—	—
West Yorkshire	—	—	100	50	—	—	—	—	—	—
Wiltshire	29	10	—	2	—	—	12	7	—	—
City of London	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	−224
Metropolitan	—	—	—	−12	—	38	—	—	—	300

[1] The increase of seven posts for Derbyshire was approved on a supernumerary basis while the force carried out a review.

	1984-85		1985-86		1986-87		1987-88		1988-89	
	Increase applied for	Increase approved	Increase applied for	Increase approved	Increase applied for	Increase approved	Increase applied for	Increase approved	Increase applied for	Increase approved
Avon and Somerset	—	—	—	—	—	—	20	10	45	20
Bedfordshire	—	—	—	—	—	—	34	20	31	10
Cambridgeshire	—	—	—	—	—	—	40	20	60	20
Cheshire	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	25	15
Cleveland	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Cumbria	4	—	14	2 [2]8	2	6	— 40	8 —	40	—
Derbyshire	—	—	—	—	26	26	—	—	—	—
Devon and Cornwall	4	—	5	5	18 17	18 17	53	28	96	25
Dorset	1	—	20	20	8 15	8 15	14	9	40	—
Durham	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	16	—
Dyfed Powys	—	—	—	—	1	1	—	—	—	—
Essex	10	10	10	10	50	49 [2]1	50 25	20	80 [3]65	20 —
Gloucestershire	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Greater Manchester	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	140	—
Gwent	—	—	—	—	—	—	17	8	42	9
Hampshire	3	—	—	—	21	21	23	—	23	23
Hertfordshire	—	10	—	—	33	18	41	35	35	—
Humberside	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	41	—
Kent	—	—	—	—	36	36	36	—	59	30
Lancashire	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Leicestershire	—	—	—	—	53	—	—	—	45	—
Lincolnshire	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Merseyside	—	—	—	—	107	72	—	—	35	—
Norfolk	5	5	—	—	40	40	—	—	50	20
Northamptonshire	16	7	6	6	23	23	46	32	38	20
Northumbria	21	21	—	—	75	35	40	40	80	30
North Wales	—	—	12	—	—	—	—	—	41	10
North Yorkshire	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	25	—
Nottinghamshire	—	—	—	—	—	—	63	—	63	35
South Wales	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	66	—
South Yorkshire	—	—	—	—	213	9	204	50	50	20
Staffordshire	—	5	52	—	52	27	25	25	50	10
Suffolk	—	—	—	—	50	50	—	—	1	—
Surrey	14	14	22	10	13	13	6	—	6	—
Sussex	—	—	—	—	—	103	93 [2]3	7	—	—
Thames Valley	[1]174	20	—	30	200	100 [2]14	200	50 19	200	90
Warwickshire	—	—	29	12	17 39	17 13	14	14	14	—
West Mercia	—	—	30	30	—	—	10	10	—	—
West Midlands	14	[2]14	—	—	—	—	—	—	350	70
West Yorkshire	—	—	—	—	37	—	114 101	50	260	23
Wiltshire	3	3	11	4	—	[2]7	39	25	20	—
City of London	—	—	6	[2]6	6	—	—	—	—	—
Metropolitan	—	200	—	50	—	350	—	300	—	300

[1] Thames Valley applied in November 1984 for 174 additional posts without specifying when they would be needed. The later application for 200 posts supersedes this application.

[2] These additional posts were authorised on a supernumerary basis. Current authorisation expires on various dates in 1988. (nb. Cumbria's eight posts were made substantive in 1987-88.)

[3] Denotes application for duties at Stansted airport.

Forensic Services

Sir Michael McNair-Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department by how much the budget for the forensic services in the Home Office has changed in the past 10 years, allowing for inflation; and if he will list expenditure on an annual basis.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Expenditure on the forensic science service rose from £6,306,000 in 1978-79 to £13,754,000 in 1987-88. Allowing for inflation, this represented an increase of 6·3 per cent. in real terms. The figures for annual expenditure (including capital expenditure) in this period are as follows:

Year	Amount £
1978-79	6,306,000
1979-80	7,999,000
1980-81	10,224,000
1981-82	11,673,000
1982-83	12,149,000
1983-84	10,311,000
1984-85	11,303,000
1985-86	10,828,000
1986-87	11,523,000
1987-88	[1]13,754,000

[1] provisional.

Licensing Laws

Mr. Fry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will establish a review of the licensing laws with regard to restricting retail sales to establishments easily accountable for sales to those under the legal minimum age for purchase and to consider whether the total number of retail outlets should be reduced.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We are not persuaded that a further review of the licensing laws is required for these particular purposes. It is the responsibility of individual licensees to ensure that the law on the sale of alcohol to those under 18 is observed. To meet the widespread concern about the extent of under-age drinking, the Licensing Act 1988 strengthens the law on sales to young people, and will require sales in off-licensed premises by staff under the age of 18 to be effectively supervised. Licensing justices can already take into account local circumstances in reaching decisions on the grant or renewal of licences in their area.

Mr. Fry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will investigate the effect of increasing the minimum age for purchasing alcohol to 21 years.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We have at present no plans to do so.

Identity Cards

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information he has on the scheme in Taunton organised by the local licensed victuallers' association for the carrying of identity cards by customers of public houses; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I understand that the police are to monitor and evaluate a voluntary identity card scheme in Chard before proceeding with a proposal by the local licensed victuallers' association for a similar scheme in Taunton. I am pleased to see licensees and the police working together on schemes of this kind and welcome the introduction of voluntary schemes which take full account of local circumstances.

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has any plans to seek to introduce a system of identity cards; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I would refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave to a question from the hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) on 24 June.

Prison Officers (Housing)

Mr. Leigh: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will list the average movement in house prices within (i) a 1-mile and (ii) a 5-mile radius of former military camps converted into category C. prisons in the last *(a)* 12, *(b)* 24 and *(c)* 36 months;

(2) how many newly appointed prison warders or warders taking up new duties in the last 12 months have chosen to buy houses within 500 yards of the prison wire wall; and if he will list such purchases for each prison.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I regret that the information requested is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Leigh: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the number of married quarters in former military camps now used as category C prisons which have *(a)* remained empty, *(b)* been demolished and *(c)* sold to the private sector, with the date on which his Department first acquired the houses.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The information is given in the table.

Former military camps now used as category C prisons: Married quarters

Establishment	*Number of married quarters on acquisition*	*Date of acquisition*	*Number remained empty*	*Number demolished*	*Number sold to private sector*
Acklington	253	1973	41	147	—
Aldington	—	—	—	—	—
Ashwell	—	—	—	—	—
Channings Wood	—	—	—	—	—
Erlestoke	6	1961	—	—	2
Haverigg	—	—	—	—	—
Highpoint	88	1973	—	—	11
Lindholme	166	1986	114	8	—
Northeye	54	1968	—	—	31
Norwich (Brittania Annexe)	8	1970	—	8	—
Ranby	16	1972	—	—	—
Wayland	—	—	—	—	—

Some of these quarters, particularly at Lindholme, were in a very poor state of repair.

Mr. Leigh: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if, for each former military camp used as a category C prison, he will list the average price of houses sold on the open market, together with the average price for a similar-sized house in that locality.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Married quarters, acquired with former military camps now used as category C prisons, have been sold on the open market at Erlestoke, Highpoint and Northeye. Average prices shown below relate to the year in which properties were last sold: Erlestoke—£33,500 (1983); Highpoint—£35,500 (1987) and Northeye —£45,000 (1987). The average price for similar-sized houses in these localities would have been about the same.

Prisons (Duty Officers)

Mr. Leigh: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list for each prison the number of police officers on duty *(a)* during daylight hours and *(b)* during the night, within a 5-mile radius.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The information requested is not recorded centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Category C Prisons

Mr. Leigh: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what contingency plans his Department has formulated to protect members of the public living near category C prisons in the event of *(a)* disturbances and *(b)* escapes.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: All prison establishments are required to maintain contingency plans for dealing with inmate disturbances and escapes, in accordance with instructions issued by the Prison Department. These plans include arrangements for calling for assistance from the police whenever it is needed, and governors are required to maintain close liaison with their local chief officers of police to ensure that these arrangements will work effectively in the event of any emergency. Plans to deal with disturbances are directed towards containing and suppressing disorder with minimum force and restoring order within establishments as quickly as possible. In the event of an escape the police are called immediately and assume responsibility for the conduct of any follow-up action outside the establishment.

Mr. Leigh: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the number of category C prisons that are within 5 miles of a regular bus and rail service; and how many prisoners are more than 5 miles from a regular bus and rail service.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Of the 25 currently operational category C training prisons in England and Wales, 16 are located within 5 miles of both a regular bus service and a rail station served by a regular train service and five are within 5 miles of a regular bus but not a regular train service. Four prisons, accommodating 1,345 prisoners on 17 June, are more than 5 miles distant from both a regular bus and a regular rail service.

Mr. Leigh: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many category B prisoners have been down graded to category C in the last *(a)* 12, *(b)* 24, *(c)* 36, *(d)* 48 and *(e)* 60 months.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The information requested is not available.

Mr. Leigh: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the number of escapes from category C prisons by prisoners over the last *(a)* 12, *(b)* 24, *(c)* 36, *(d)* 48 and *(e)* 60 months.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I refer my hon. Friend to my reply to a question from the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) on 20 June, at column 384.

Mr. Leigh: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the number of crimes committed by those escaping from category C prisons over the last *(a)* 12, *(b)* 24, *(c)* 36, *(d)* 48 and *(e)* 60 months.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Escaping from prison is itself an offence at common law. Information relating to crimes committed by prisoners during their escape or while at large is not collected centrally.

Mr. Leigh: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the instance of drug and alcohol *(a)* abuses and *(b)* discoveries in category C prisons over the last (i) 12, (ii) 24, (iii) 36, (iv) 48 and (v) 60 months.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: New instructions for the reporting by prison establishments of finds of illicit drugs and related implements took effect on 1 July 1984. Since then, the following numbers of such reports have been received from category C prisons:

	Number
1984[1]	190
1985	255
1986	264
1987	312
1988[2]	223

[1] From 1 July.

[2] Up to 31 May.

Other information is not available centrally in the form requested.

Mr. Leigh: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the number of internal disturbances in category C prisons over the last *(a)* 12, *(b)* 24, *(c)* 36, *(d)* 48 and *(e)* 60 months.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: On the night of 30 April-1 May 1986, at the time of the national industrial action called by the Prison Officers' Association, incidents occurred at a number of prison establishments. The most serious including those at two category C prisons—Northeye and Wymott. Since then, there have been disturbances at Wymott on 4 October 1986, at Rollestone on 24 May 1988 and at Haverigg on 5-6 June 1988.

Mr. Leigh: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list for each category C prison the number of prisoners serving sentences for each category of crime.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The readily available information is given in the table.

Population[1] of category C prisons in England and Wales on 31 March 1988; by offence group and prison[2]

Prison	*Violence against the person*	*Sexual offence*	*Burglary*	*Robbery*	*Theft handling fraud forgery*	*Drugs offences*	*Other offences*	*Not recorded*	*Total*
Acklington	115	21	141	54	45	30	29	10	445
Aldington	16	–	14	2	27	10	21	16	106
Ashwell	105	–	67	28	78	31	50	30	389
Blantyre House	13	2	4	11	2	10	3	–	45
Camp Hill	91	7	120	54	61	60	50	44	487
Channings Wood	96	73	91	32	41	147	38	4	522
Erlestoke	10	2	27	1	18	3	23	7	91

Prison	*Violence against the person*	*Sexual offence*	*Burglary*	*Robbery*	*Theft handling fraud forgery*	*Drugs offences*	*Other offences*	*Not recorded*	*Total*
Featherstone	135	47	78	92	41	60	54	24	531
Haverigg	111	7	200	29	71	32	45	23	518
Highpoint	85	1	145	60	162	188	61	44	746
Lancaster	69	8	68	48	19	23	17	2	254
Lindholme	139	9	268	65	109	66	66	36	758
Littlehey	94	11	70	33	48	34	27	11	328
Northeye	19	2	38	12	57	35	13	46	222
Norwich	23	2	55	4	49	18	32	8	191
Preston	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Ranby	121	12	86	10	56	33	62	23	403
Send	14	–	19	12	17	18	5	15	100
Shepton Mallet	52	6	78	11	18	41	29	14	249
Stafford	177	95	208	86	114	44	74	33	831
Stocken	94	24	53	56	17	20	29	8	301
Thorp Arch	38	9	23	26	17	31	7	1	152
The Verne	117	21	72	43	33	181	48	6	521
Wayland	138	16	72	65	38	93	32	23	477
Wymott	116	9	206	9	143	35	88	47	653

Mr. Leigh: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list all category C prisons with their addresses.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The information requested is as follows.

Category C prison service establishments in England and Wales

Her Majesty's Prison
ACKLINGTON
Morpeth
Northumberland
NE65 9XF

Her Majesty's Prison
ALDINGTON
Ashford
Kent
TN25 7BQ

Her Majesty's Prison[1]
ALMA DETTINGEN
Deepcut
Camberley
Surrey
GU16 6SF

Her Majesty's Prison
ASHWELL
Oakham
Leicestershire LE15 7LS

Her Majesty's Prison
BLANTYRE HOUSE
Goudhurst
Cranbrook
Kent
TN17 2NA

Her Majesty's Prison
CAMP HILL
Newport
Isle of Wight
PO30 5PB

Her Majesty's Prison
CHANNINGS WOOD
Denbury
Newton Abbot
Devon
TQ12 6DW

Her Majesty's Prison
ERLESTOKE HOUSE
Devises
Wiltshire
SN10 5TU

Her Majesty's Prison
FEATHERSTONE
Wolverhampton
WV10 7PU

Her Majesty's Prison
HAVERIGG CAMP
Millom
Cumbria
LA18 4NA

Her Majesty's Prison
HIGHPOINT
Stradishall
Newmarket
Suffolk
CB8 9YG

Her Majesty's Prison
The Castle
LANCASTER
LA1 1YL

Her Majesty's Prison
LINDHOLME
Bawtry Road
Hatfield Woodhouse
Doncaster
South Yorkshire
DN7 6DG

Her Majesty's Prison
LITTLEHEY
Great Staughton
St. Neots
Huntingdon
Cambs
PE19 4DL

Her Majesty's Prison[2]
MEDOMSLEY
Consett
Co Durham
DH8 6QX

Her Majesty's Prison
NORTHEYE

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[1] The figures are those recorded centrally and are approximate: detailed checking of individual cases would involve disproportionate cost.

[2] Allocation of prisoners to individual establishments is designed to reflect the suitability of each prisoner for the type of accommodation provided.

Barnhorn Road
Bexhill on Sea
East Sussex
TN39 4QW

Her Majesty's Prison
(Britannia Annex)
NORWICH
NR1 4LU

Her Majesty's Prison
PRESTON
2 Ribbleton Lane
Preston
Preston
RP1 5AB

Her Majesty's Prison
RANBY
Retford
Notts
DN22 8EU

Her Majesty's Prison[1]
ROLLESTONE
Shrewton
Salisbury
Wilts
SP3 4DS

Her Majesty's Prison
Ripley Road
SEND
Woking
Surrey
GU23 7LJ

Her Majesty's Prison
Cornhill
SHEPTON MALLET
Somerset
BA4 5LU

Her Majesty's Prison
54 Goal Road
STAFFORD
ST16 3AW

Her Majesty's Prison
STOCKEN
Stocken Hall Road
Stretton
Nr. Oakham
Leicestershire
LE15 7RD

Her Majesty's Prison
THORP ARCH
Wetherby
West Yorkshire
LS23 7AY

Her Majesty's Prison
THE VERNE
Portland
Dorset
DT5 1EQ

Her Majesty's Prison
WAYLAND
Griston
Thetford
Norfolk
IP25 6RL

Her Majesty's Prison
WYMOTT
Moss Lane
Ulness Walton
Leyland
Preston
PR5 2LW

[1] Service camp in temporary use as category C prison
[2] Temporarily closed

Mr. Leigh: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the number of category C prisoners in category C prisons; and how this relates to the recommended establishment for prisoner numbers in each prison.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The readily available information is given in the table.

Population(1) and certified normal accommodation of category C prisons in England and Wales on 31 March 1988: by security category and prison.

Prison	*Security Category*		*Not recorded*	*Total population*	*Certified normal accommodation*
	C	*D*			
Acklington	395	7	43	445	448
Aldington	74	14	18	106	100
Ashwell	314	43	32	389	404
Blantyre House	44	—	1	45	48
Camp Hill	375	35	77	487	449
Channings Wood	453	40	29	522	538
Erlestoke	67	8	16	91	96
Featherstone	457	44	30	531	541
Haverigg	465	10	43	518	497
Highpoint	402	75	269	746	754
Lancaster	215	11	28	254	186
Lindholme(2)	389	182	187	758	1001
Littlehey(3)	279	17	32	328	484
Northeye	112	28	82	222	233
Norwich	119	24	48	191	200
Preston	320	11	30	361	276
Ranby	398	—	5	403	425
Send	77	3	20	100	104
Shepton Mallet	229	1	19	249	173
Stafford	715	49	67	831	563
Stocken	271	9	21	301	300
Thorp Arch	134	6	12	152	156
The Verne	476	20	25	521	520
Wayland	367	30	80	477	484
Wymott	572	23	58	653	816

(¹) The figures are those recorded centrally and are approximate: detailed checking of individual cases would involve disproportionate cost.
(²) New living block (CNA 250) recently opened.
(³) New prison, with population increasing up to capacity.

Mr. Leigh: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the number of uniformed and non-uniformed staff in each category C prison; and how this relates to the recommended establishment.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The number of uniformed and non-uniformed staff in post and the recommended complement at the beginning of June at each category C establishment was as follows:

Establishment[1]	*Uniformed staff*	*Non-uniformed staff*
Acklington	176	94½
Aldington	41	25
Alma Dettingen	[2]0	17
Ashwell	105	60¾
Blantyre House	39	16
Camp Hill	178	63½
Channings Wood	146	75½
Erlestoke	91	35½
Featherstone	133	114½
Haverigg	116	79½
Highpoint	206	90
Lancaster	92	40
Lindholme	246	91
Littlehey	129	62
Northeye	80	57
Preston[3]	166	65
Ranby	116	77
Rollestone	[2]0	23
Send	44	17½
Shepton Mallet	80	45
Stafford	216	86
Stocken	116	54½
Thorp Arch	74	22½
The Verne	138	86
Wayland	139	64
Wymott	224	116½

[1] Excluding Medomsley which is closed and Norwich which has a predominantly local and remand function.
[2] Staffed by the armed services.
[3] Includes the remand function.

It is not possible to relate staff in post to the recommended establishment because some complements are under review either in connection with Fresh Start implementation or, following implementation, as a consequence, this year, of the efficiency targets, framework agreement and optancy rates. In general establishments' staffing levels meet requirements, although there are some shortages particularly of specialists.

Mr. Leigh: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many category B prisoners there are in category C prisons.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: None.

Prisons (Infectious Diseases)

Mr. Leigh: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list for each prison the incidence of infectious disease, by disease, for the last *(a)* 12, *(b)* 24, *(c)* 36, *(d)* 48 and *(e)* 60 months.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The information available relates to four infective conditions; tuberculosis, hepatitis A, hepatitis B (including carriers) and HIV. The information may not be complete as it deals only with the cases which were identified and reported, and it may include some double counting owing to movements of prisoners during the year. The available information for 1983 relates to tuberculosis only.

	Tuberculosis	*Hepatitis A*	*Hepatitis B (including carriers)*	*HIV Positive*
1983				
Acklington	—	—	—	—
Albany	—	—	—	—
Aldington	—	—	—	—
Ashford	3	—	—	—
Ashwell	—	—	—	—
Askham Grange	—	—	—	—
Aylesbury	—	—	—	—
Bedford	—	—	—	—
Birmingham	3	—	—	—
Blantyre House	—	—	—	—
Blundeston	—	—	—	—
Bristol	—	—	—	—
Brixton	2	—	—	—
Brockhill	2	—	—	—
Buckley Hall	—	—	—	—
Bullwood Hall	—	—	—	—
Camp Hill	—	—	—	—
Campsfield House	—	—	—	—
Canterbury	1	—	—	—
Cardiff Prision	1	—	—	—
Channings Wood	—	—	—	—
Castington	—	—	—	—
Chelmsford Prison	1	—	—	—
Coldingley	2	—	—	—
Cookham Wood	—	—	—	—
Dartmoor	—	—	—	—
Deerbolt	—	—	—	—
Dorchester	—	—	—	—
Dover	—	—	—	—
Drake Hall	3	—	—	—
Durham	2	—	—	—

	Tuberculosis	*Hepatitis A*	*Hepatitis B (including carriers)*	*HIV Positive*
East Sutton Park	—	—	—	—
Eastwood Park	1	—	—	—
Erlestoke	—	—	—	—
Everthorpe	—	—	—	—
Exeter Prison	—	—	—	—
Featherstone	—	—	—	—
Feltham	—	—	—	—
Finnamore	—	—	—	—
Ford	—	—	—	—
Foston Hall	—	—	—	—
Frankland	—	—	—	—
Gartree	—	—	—	—
Glen Parva Prison	1	—	—	—
Gloucester	1	—	—	—
Grendon Prison	—	—	—	—
Gringley	—	—	—	—
Guys Marsh	—	—	—	—
Haslar	—	—	—	—
Hatfield	—	—	—	—
Haverigg	—	—	—	—
Hewell Grange	—	—	—	—
Highpoint	—	—	—	—
Hindley	—	—	—	—
Hollesley Bay DC	—	—	—	—
Holloway	1	—	—	—
Hull	—	—	—	—
Huntercombe	1	—	—	—
Kirkham	—	—	—	—
Kirklevington	—	—	—	—
Lancaster	—	—	—	—
Latchmere House	—	—	—	—
Leeds	6	—	—	—
Leicester	—	—	—	—
Lewes	—	—	—	—
Leyhill	—	—	—	—
Lincoln	2	—	—	—
Liverpool	2	—	—	—
Long Lartin	—	—	—	—
Lowdham Grange	—	—	—	—
Low Newton	—	—	—	—
Maidstone	—	—	—	—
Manchester Prison	4	—	—	—
Medomsley	—	—	—	—
New Hall	—	—	—	—
Northallerton	—	—	—	—
Northeye	—	—	—	—
North Sea Camp	—	—	—	—
Norwich Prison	—	—	—	—
Nottingham	—	—	—	—
Onley	—	—	—	—
Oxford	—	—	—	—
Parkhurst	—	—	—	—
Pentonville	10	—	—	—
Portland	-	—	—	—
Portsmouth (Kingston)	—	—	—	—
Preston	—	—	—	—
Pucklechurch	—	—	—	—
Ranby	1	—	—	—
Reading	—	—	—	—
Risley	4	—	—	—
Rochester Prison	—	—	—	—
Rudgate	—	—	—	—
Send	—	—	—	—
Shepton Mallet	—	—	—	—
Shrewsbury	—	—	—	—
Spring Hill	—	—	—	—
Strafford	—	—	—	—
Standford Hill Open	—	—	—	—
Stoke Heath	—	—	—	—
Styal Prison	—	—	—	—
Sudbury	—	—	—	—
Swansea	2	—	—	—
Swinfen Hall	—	—	—	—
Thorp Arch	1	—	—	—
Usk DC	—	—	—	—
Verne	—	—	—	—
Wakefield	—	—	—	—

	Tuberculosis	*Hepatitis A*	*Hepatitis B (including carriers)*	*HIV Positive*
Wandsworth	5	—	—	—
Wellingborough	—	—	—	—
Werrington	—	—	—	—
Wetherby	—	—	—	—
Whatton	—	—	—	—
Winchester Prison	—	—	—	—
Wormwood Scrubs	8	—	—	—
Wymott	—	—	—	—

	Tuberculosis	*Hepatitis A*	*Hepatitis B (including carriers)*	*HIV positive*
1984-85[1]				
Acklington	—	—	—	—
Albany	—	—	4	—
Aldington	—	2	—	—
Ashford	2	—	3	—
Ashwell	—	—	4	—
Askham Grange	—	—	—	—
Aylesbury	—	—	—	—
Bedford	—	—	—	—
Birmingham	—	—	4	—
Blantyre House	—	—	—	—
Blundeston	1	—	6	—
Bristol	—	—	2	—
Brixton	2	4	1	—
Brockhill	—	—	1	—
Buckley Hall	—	—	—	—
Bullwood Hall	—	—	—	—
Camp Hill	1	—	9	—
Campsfield House	—	—	—	—
Canterbury	—	—	—	—
Cardiff Prison	—	—	2	—
Channings Wood	1	—	1	—
Castington	—	—	—	—
Chelmsford Prison	—	1	2	—
Coldingley	—	—	1	—
Cookham Wood	—	—	1	—
Dartmoor	—	—	—	—
Deerbolt	—	—	—	—
Dorchester	—	—	—	—
Dover	—	—	3	—
Drake Hall	—	—	1	—
Durham	—	—	8	—
East Sutton Park	—	—	—	—
Eastwood Park	—	—	—	—
Erlestoke	—	1	2	—
Everthorpe	—	1	—	1
Exeter Prison	2	1	7	—
Featherstone	—	—	3	—
Feltham	—	—	6	—
Finnamore	—	—	—	—
Ford	—	—	2	—
Foston Hall	—	—	—	—
Frankland	—	—	—	—
Gartree	—	—	—	—
Glen Parva Prison	—	—	5	—
Glen Parva Borstal	—	—	—	—
Gloucester	—	—	1	—
Grendon Prison	—	—	—	—
Gringley	—	—	1	—
Guys Marsh	—	—	1	—
Haslar	—	—	—	—
Hatfield	—	—	—	—
Haverigg	—	—	4	—
Hewell Grange	—	—	4	—
Highpoint	—	—	—	—
Hindley	—	—	1	—
Hollesley Bay DC	—	—	—	—
Holloway	—	3	5	—
Hull	—	—	—	—
Huntercombe	—	—	—	—
Kirkham	—	—	—	—
Kirklevington	—	—	—	—
Lancaster	—	—	—	—
Latchmere House	—	—	—	—

	Tuberculosis	*Hepatitis A*	*Hepatitis B (including carriers)*	*HIV positive*
Leeds	—	1	11	—
Leicester	—	—	9	—
Lewes	—	—	5	—
Leyhill	—	—	—	—
Lincoln	—	—	9	—
Liverpool	3	—	20	—
Long Lartin	—	—	4	—
Lowdham Grange	—	—	—	—
Low Newton	—	—	—	1
Maidstone	—	—	—	—
Manchester Prison	2	8	32	—
Medomsley	—	—	—	—
New Hall	—	1	1	—
Northallerton	—	—	—	—
Northeye	—	—	25	—
North Sea Camp	—	—	1	—
Norwich Prison	1	6	74	—
Nottingham	—	—	1	—
Onley	—	—	—	—
Oxford	—	—	2	—
Parkhurst	—	—	4	—
Pentonville	—	—	1	1
Portland	1	—	3	—
Portsmouth (Kingston)	—	—	—	—
Preston	—	—	2	—
Pucklechurch	1	—	4	—
Ranby	—	—	—	—
Reading	—	—	5	—
Risley	—	1	27	—
Rochester Prison	—	—	1	—
Rudgate	—	—	1	—
Send	—	1	—	—
Shepton Mallet	—	—	1	—
Shrewsbury	—	—	4	—
Spring Hill	—	—	—	—
Stafford	1	—	2	—
Standford Hill Open	—	—	—	—
Stoke Heath	—	—	1	—
Styal Prison	1	—	2	—
Sudbury	—	2	2	—
Swansea	—	—	—	—
Swinfen Hall	—	—	—	—
Thorp Arch	—	—	2	—
Usk DC	—	—	—	—
Verne	—	—	—	—
Wakefield	1	—	4	1
Wandsworth	4	3	26	—
Wellingborough	—	—	—	—
Werrington	—	—	—	—
Wetherby	—	—	—	—
Whatton	—	—	—	—
Winchester Prison	2	—	1	—
Wormwood Scrubs	—	—	—	—
Wymott	—	—	7	—

[1] 15 month period.

1985-86	*Tuberculosis*	*Hepatitis A*	*Hepatitis B (including carriers)*	*HIV Positive*
Acklington	—	1	1	—
Albany	—	—	5	—
Aldington	—	—	—	—
Ashford	—	—	—	—
Ashwell	—	—	7	—
Askham Grange	—	—	—	—
Aylesbury	—	—	—	—
Bedford	3	—	—	—
Birmingham	2	2	10	—
Blantyre House	—	—	—	—
Blundeston	—	—	6	1
Bristol	—	—	4	—
Brixton	2	1	2	—
Brockhill	—	—	2	—
Buckley Hall	—	—	—	—
Bullwood Hall	—	—	—	—
Camp Hill	—	1	12	—

1985-86	*Tuberculosis*	*Hepatitis A*	*Hepatitis B (including carriers)*	*HIV Positive*
Campsfield House	—	—	—	—
Canterbury	—	—	1	1
Cardiff	—	—	6	1
Channings Wood	—	—	—	—
Castington	—	—	—	—
Chelmsford	—	—	—	—
Coldingley	—	—	—	—
Cookham Wood	—	—	4	—
Dartmoor	—	7	1	—
Daerbolt	—	—	—	—
Dorchester	—	—	—	—
Dover	—	—	—	—
Drake Hall	—	—	—	—
Durham	—	—	16	—
East Sutton Park	—	—	—	—
Eastwood Park	—	—	—	—
Erlestoke	—	1	1	—
Everthope	—	1	5	—
Exeter	—	—	14	3
Featherstone	—	—	—	—
Feltham	—	—	10	1
Finnamore	—	—	—	—
Ford	—	—	—	—
Foston Hall	—	—	—	—
Frankland	—	—	—	—
Gartree	—	—	—	—
Glen Parva	—	—	5	—
Gloucester	—	—	3	2
Grendon	—	—	1	1
Gringley	—	—	1	—
Guys Marsh	—	—	1	—
Haslar	—	—	—	—
Hatfield	—	—	—	—
Haverigg	—	—	2	—
Hewell Grange	—	—	—	—
Highpoint	—	—	—	—
Hindley	—	1	2	—
Hollesley Bay	—	1	1	—
Holloway	—	3	4	3
Hull	—	—	6	—
Huntercombe	—	—	2	—
Kirkham	—	—	—	—
Kirklevington	—	—	—	—
Lancaster	—	—	—	—
Latchmere House	—	—	1	1
Leeds	1	2	62	—
Leicester	—	—	10	2
Lewes	1	—	17	—
Leyhill	—	—	—	—
Lincoln	1	—	8	1
Liverpool	—	—	11	—
Long Lartin	—	—	6	—
Lowdham Grange	—	—	1	—
Low Newton	—	—	3	—
Lindholme	—	—	—	—
Maidstone	—	—	1	—
Manchester	1	—	36	1
Morton Hall	—	—	—	—
Medomsley	—	—	2	—
New Hall	—	—	2	—
Northallerton	—	—	—	—
Northeye	—	—	—	—
North Sea Camp	—	1	1	1
Norwich	—	—	26	—
Nottingham	—	—	1	—
Onley	—	—	1	—
Oxford	—	1	8	6
Parkhurst	—	—	3	—
Pentonville	—	1	7	9
Portland	—	—	2	—
Portsmouth (Kingston)	—	—	—	—
Preston	—	—	1	—
Pucklechurch	—	—	7	—
Ranby	—	—	1	—
Reading	—	—	4	—
Risley	—	1	8	—
Rochester	—	—	—	—

1985-86	*Tuberculosis*	*Hepatitis A*	*Hepatitis B (including carriers)*	*HIV Positive*
Rudgate	—	—	—	—
Send	—	—	—	—
Shepton Mallet	—	—	2	—
Shrewsbury	—	—	—	—
Spring Hill	—	—	—	—
Stafford	—	—	10	—
Stanford Hill Open	—	—	—	—
Stocken	—	—	—	—
Stoke Heath	—	1	—	—
Styal	—	—	2	—
Sudbury	—	—	—	—
Swansea	—	3	2	—
Swinfen Hall	—	—	—	—
Thorp Arch	—	—	6	—
Thorn Cross	—	—	—	—
Usk	—	—	—	—
Verne	1	—	1	—
Wakefield	—	—	3	1
Wandworth	3	5	31	1
Wellingborough	—	—	1	—
Werrington	—	—	—	—
Wetherby	—	—	1	—
Whatton	—	—	1	—
Wayland	—	—	—	—
Winchester	1	—	3	—
Wormwood Scrubs	—	—	17	3
Wymott	—	—	13	—

	Tuberculosis	*Hepatitis A*	*Hepatitis B (including carriers)*	*HIV positive*
1986-87				
Acklington	—	—	4	—
Albany	—	1	4	—
Aldington	—	—	—	—
Ashford	—	—	3	—
Ashwell	—	—	4	—
Askham Grange	—	—	1	—
Aylesbury	—	—	—	—
Bedford	—	6	2	—
Birmingham	1	—	4	—
Blantyre House	—	—	—	—
Blundeston	—	—	2	—
Bristol	—	—	10	—
Brixton	—	1	8	16
Brockhill	—	—	2	1
Buckley Hall	—	—	—	—
Bullwood Hall	2	—	22	1
Camp Hill	—	—	24	3
Campsfield House	—	—	—	—
Canterbury	1	—	15	—
Cardiff	—	—	13	—
Channings Wood	—	—	9	5
Castington	—	—	—	—
Chelmsford	—	—	4	11
Coldingley	—	—	—	—
Cookham Wood	—	—	—	—
Dartmoor	—	—	1	—
Deerbolt	—	—	—	—
Dorchester	—	—	2	—
Dover	—	—	2	2
Drake Hall	—	—	1	—
Durham	2	—	2	—
East Sutton Park	—	—	—	—
Eastwood Park	—	—	—	—
Etlestoke	—	—	—	—
Everthorpe	—	—	10	—
Exeter	—	—	3	2
Featherstone	—	—	2	—
Feltham	—	—	1	—
Finnamore	—	—	—	—
Ford	—	1	—	—
Foston Hall	—	—	—	—
Frankland	—	—	—	—
Gartree	—	—	—	—
Glen Parva	—	—	—	—

	Tuberculosis	*Hepatitis A*	*Hepatitis B (including carriers)*	*HIV positive*
Gloucester	—	—	—	—
Grendon	—	—	2	1
Gringley	—	—	—	—
Guys Marsh	—	—	—	—
Haslar	—	—	—	—
Hatfield	—	—	—	—
Haverigg	—	—	1	—
Hewell Grange	—	—	—	—
Highpoint	—	—	2	—
Hindley	—	—	4	—
Hollesley Bay	—	—	—	—
Holloway	1	—	6	6
Hull	—	—	7	1
Huntercombe	—	—	—	—
Kirkham	—	2	—	—
Kirklevington	—	—	—	—
Lancaster	1	—	—	—
Latchmere House	—	—	—	—
Leeds	—	1	18	—
Leicester	—	—	3	—
Lewes	—	1	10	1
Leyhill	—	—	—	—
Lincoln	—	—	9	1
Liverpool	—	—	21	1
Long Lartin	1	—	2	—
Lowdham Grange	—	—	1	—
Lindholme	—	—	4	1
Low Newton	—	—	2	—
Maidstone	—	—	1	—
Manchester	—	—	24	9
Medomsley	—	—	—	—
Morton Hall	—	—	—	—
New Hall	—	—	1	—
Northallerton	—	—	—	—
Northeye	1	—	1	—
North Sea Camp	—	—	1	—
Norwich	—	6	33	1
Nottingham	—	—	4	—
Onley	—	—	—	—
Oxford	—	1	5	2
Parkhurst	1	—	4	2
Pentonville	2	—	2	10
Portland	—	1	—	—
Portsmouth (Kingston)	—	—	—	—
Preston	—	—	3	—
Pucklechurch	—	—	1	—
Ranby	—	—	1	—
Reading	—	—	3	3
Risley	1	1	22	6
Rochester	—	—	2	—
Rudgate	—	—	—	—
Send	—	—	—	—
Shepton Mallet	—	1	5	—
Shrewsbury	—	1	7	—
Spring Hill	—	—	2	—
Stafford	—	—	11	—
Standford Hill Open	—	—	—	—
Stocken	—	—	3	—
Stoke Heath	—	—	—	—
Styal	1	1	2	2
Sudbury	—	—	1	—
Swansea	—	—	1	—
Swinfen Hall	—	—	—	—
Thorp Arch	—	—	—	—
Thorn Cross	—	—	—	—
Usk	—	—	—	—
Verne	—	—	—	—
Wakefield	—	—	1	1
Wandsworth	—	3	36	—
Wellingborough	—	—	—	—
Werrington	—	—	1	—
Wetherby	—	—	—	—
Whatton	—	—	—	—
Wayland	—	—	2	—
Winchester	—	—	1	3
Wormwood Scrubs	2	—	6	1
Wymott	1	—	1	—

	Tuberculosis	*Hepatitis A*	*Hepatitis B (including carriers)*	*HIV Positive*
1987-88				
Acklington	—	—	—	1
Albany	—	—	—	—
Aldington	—	—	—	—
Ashford	—	—	—	2
Ashwell	—	—	5	—
Askham Grange	—	—	1	—
Aylesbury	—	—	—	1
Bedford	1	—	5	3
Birmingham	—	—	—	—
Blantyre House	—	—	—	—
Blundeston	—	—	3	—
Bristol	—	—	3	3
Brixton	1	—	8	27
Brockhill	—	—	2	1
Buckley Hall	—	—	—	—
Bullwood Hall	—	—	3	2
Camp Hill	—	1	22	6
Campsfield House	—	—	—	—
Canterbury	—	—	4	—
Cardiff	—	—	11	—
Channings Wood	—	—	7	1
Castington	—	—	—	—
Chelmsford	—	4	2	8
Coldingley	—	—	—	—
Cookham Wood	—	—	—	3
Dartmoor	—	—	2	3
Deerbolt	—	—	—	—
Dorchester	—	—	3	1
Dover	—	—	1	—
Drake Hall	—	—	4	—
Durham	—	—	3	3
East Sutton Park	—	—	—	—
Eastwood Park	—	—	—	—
Erlestoke	—	—	—	—
Everthorpe	—	—	—	—
Exeter	—	—	6	2
Full Sutton	—	—	—	—
Featherstone	—	—	—	—
Feltham	—	—	1	—
Finnamore	—	—	—	—
Ford	—	—	—	—
Foston Hall	—	—	—	—
Frankland	—	—	—	—
Gartree	—	—	—	—
Glen Parva	—	—	4	—
Gloucester	—	—	—	—
Grendon	—	—	—	—
Gringley	—	—	—	—
Guys Marsh	—	—	—	—
Haslar	—	—	—	—
Hatfield	—	—	—	—
Haverigg	—	—	3	—
Hewell Grange	—	—	—	—
Highpoint	—	—	1	—
Hindley	—	—	6	—
Hollesley Bay	—	—	—	—
Lindholme	—	—	—	1
Holloway	—	—	4	9
Hull	—	—	—	—
Huntercombe	—	—	—	—
Kirkham	—	—	—	—
Kirklevington	—	—	—	—
Lancaster	1	—	—	—
Latchmere House	—	—	—	—
Leeds	—	—	24	1
Leicester	—	—	2	—
Lewes	—	—	4	4
Leyhill	—	—	4	—
Lincoln	—	—	9	4
Liverpool	2	—	31	—
Long Lartin	1	—	3	—
Lowdham Grange	—	—	1	—
Low Newton	—	—	—	—
Littlehey	1	—	—	—
Maidstone	—	—	—	—
Manchester	4	2	40	6

	Tuberculosis	*Hepatitis A*	*Hepatitis B (including carriers)*	*HIV Positive*
Morton Hall	—	—	—	—
Medomsley	—	—	—	—
Mount	—	—	—	—
New Hall	—	—	1	—
Northallerton	—	—	—	—
Northeye	—	—	—	—
North Sea Camp	—	—	—	—
Norwich	—	—	10	1
Nottingham	—	—	—	—
Onley	—	—	—	—
Oxford	—	—	3	—
Parkhurst	—	—	1	2
Pentonville	2	—	13	15
Portland	—	—	—	—
Portsmouth (Kingston)	—	—	—	—
Preston	—	—	—	—
Pucklechurch	—	—	—	—
Ranby	—	—	1	—
Reading	—	—	—	4
Risley	—	1	43	3
Rochester	—	—	—	—
Rudgate	—	—	—	—
Send	—	—	—	—
Shepton Mallet	—	—	3	—
Shrewsbury	—	1	9	—
Spring Hill	—	—	—	—
Stafford	—	—	4	1
Standford Hill Open	—	—	—	—
Stocken	—	—	—	—
Stoke Heath	—	—	—	—
Styal	—	—	3	2
Sudbury	—	—	—	—
Swansea	—	—	—	—
Swinfen Hall	—	—	—	—
Thorp Arch	—	—	—	—
Thorn Cross	—	—	—	—
Usk DC	—	—	—	—
Verne	—	—	—	—
Wakefield	—	—	1	—
Wandsworth	—	—	14	10
Wellingborough	—	—	—	—
Werrington	—	2	2	—
Wetherby	—	—	—	—
Whatton	—	—	—	—
Wayland	—	—	—	1
Winchester	—	—	5	5
Wormwood Scrubs	1	2	—	6
Wymott	—	—	2	—

Rating Reform

Mr. Leigh: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether category C prisoners will be required to pay the community charge.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: This is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment, but I understand that the Local Government Finance Bill exempts all sentenced prisoners, except for rates, community charge and fine defaulters, from paying the community charge.

Prison Building

Mr. Leigh: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the proportion of *(a)* initial prison construction work and *(b)* repair and renovation of prison buildings undertaken by small local building contractors.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: One contract for the construction of a new prison, typically costing £40 million to £50 million would normally be awarded. By virtue of the size and complexity of the scheme the firm to which it was let would be a large national concern. All such firms would however sub-let elements of the work, and local firms would be able to compete for this where they had the relevant skills and capacity.

Small local building contractors are similarly able to compete for elements of large schemes of repair and renovation at existing establishments. They undertake the great majority of minor repairs and minor new works at these prisons, also on a competitive basis.

Prisons (Local Shopping)

Mr. Leigh: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the percentage proportion of prison purchasing done in small local retail shops for each prison.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Certain items may be purchased from local retail shops, but the information requested is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. Such shops are, however, used extensively by prison staff and their families living in the area.

Stonehenge

Mr. Key: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the chief constable of Wiltshire on the policing of events at and around Stonehenge over the period of the summer solstice; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I understand from the chief constable of Wiltshire that the police have made effective use of their powers under the Public Order Act 1986. There were two serious outbreaks of disorder, both at Stonehenge. On 17 June a group of people rammed the perimeter fence and their attempted occupation of the monument led to 32 arrests, mainly for public order offences. On the night of 20/21 June large groups of people again invaded the stones. There were attacks on the police which led to officers being deployed with protective equipment. Sixty-seven arrests were made and seven officers required hospital treatment. Those celebrating the solstice have now dispersed from the area and did so without further incident.

Departmental Staff

Ms. Quin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will give for each standard planning region of England *(a)* the number of employees of his Department, *(b)* the amount spent in wages and salaries and *(c)* the proportion of total expenditure in each region by his Department which is represented by personnel costs.

Mr. Hurd: The total number of permanent staff employed by the Home Office at 1 April 1988 was 39,228. Total Home Office expenditure on salaries and wages for 1987-88 amounted to £593 million, which represented about 53 per cent. of total direct Home Office expenditure for the year. A breakdown of these figures by standard planning region is not available and could be produced only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether his Department's staff are permitted to give progress reports and case workers' direct telephone numbers to *(a)* the general public and *(b)* representatives of commercial organisations; if he will renew the relevant guidance to staff; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: Case workers ae generally encouraged to give progress reports, and direct telephone numbers, to members of the public who have submitted applications and to their representatives. This is, of course, subject to case workers satisfying themselves as to the identity and relevance of the caller to the case in question. I see no need for general guidance on this at present.

Sports Clubs (Sex Discrimination)

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when, pursuant to the answer given to the hon. Member for Barking (Mrs. Richardson) of 16 June, *Official Report*, column *198*, he expects to be in a position to report the Government's response to the Equal Opportunities Commission's paper on sex discrimination in private sports clubs.

Mr. John Patten: The Equal Opportunities Commission's proposal to amend the Sex Discrimination Act 1975 to bring private clubs with both male and female members within the scope of the Act is one of a number of proposals which were published by the commission on 8 March. The proposals require detailed consideration. It is too early to make any commitment on the timing of responses.

Community Radio

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether it is his intention to proceed with an experimental pilot scheme in community radio.

Mr. Renton: It did not prove possible to proceed in 1986 with the proposed community radio experiment and we have no plans to revive it, but we have indicated to the IBA and other interested organisations that we will look without commitment at any proposals in advance of the proposed broadcasting legislation for further developing the indepenent radio broadcasting sector within the current framework of the Broadcasting Act 1981.

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is his policy towards the European Parliament's resolution to reserve part of the radio spectrum for non-commercial community radio stations.

Mr. Renton: The Government's proposals for the assignment of frequencies to, and licensing of, independent radio stations at the local level (including the community level), under the new regime planned for radio broadcasting, were set out in paragraph 7.12-23 of the Green Paper "Radio: Choices and Opportunities".

Passports

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will establish an inquiry into the implications for the administration of the Passport Office of statements by Mr. Steven Cockings, manager of Visa Shop Ltd., that can obtain a new passport in 12 days, compared with the normal time for processing applications made by post of up to 12 weeks; and what action he is taking to ensure that all members of the public receive equal service from the Passport Office.

Mr. Renton: Priority is given to all passport applications requiring urgent attention, whether these are lodged personally by individual members of the public, or by one of the over 230 agencies accredited by the London passport office to lodge applications in bulk. The agency section benefits all members of the public who call at the busy London passport office by reducing the number of applications which have to be examined on the spot. This reduces the average time callers have to wait to lodge their applications.

Lunar House

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what is his assessment of how delays experienced by the public awaiting attention at Lunar house, Croydon, are likely to be affected by the actions of a company known as Bureaucracy Control Ltd. in having representatives at Lunar house with tickets for times throughout the day; what action he proposes to take to ensure that the public are not further inconvenienced at Lunar house; whether he is aware of any other organisations engaged in similar activities; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will establish an inquiry into statements made in a letter, dated 21 May, from Mr James Wallace-Dunlop, chairman of Bureaucracy Control Ltd., of Chislehurst, Kent, claiming that his company can obtain all-day queueing tickets at Lunar house, submit and have dealt with same-day applications, call files into the central computer terminal and obtain progress reports and caseworkers' direct telephone numbers.

Mr. Renton: I am not aware of the details of the claims to which the hon. Member refers, but I have seen the reports in this morning's press. If the hon. Member has any evidence of abuse of the public inquiry office facilities at Lunar house which he cares to submit to me, I shall arrange for inquiries to be made.

Central Computer Terminal

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what access is provided for the general public and commercial organisations to the central computer terminal at the Home Office.

Mr. Renton: There are 117 computer systems processing personal data in the Department. All are registered in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1984, and disclosure of information from them is permitted only as described in the registration appropriate to each system.

Newton Lodge Secure Unit

Mr. O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information he has as to the areas where inmates at the Newton Lodge secure unit in Wakefield are allowed to visit when on unaccompanied parole, and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Patients detained at the Newton Lodge secure unit at Fieldhead hospital subject to a restriction order under section 41 of the Mental Health Act 1983 may be granted escorted or unescorted leave outside the hospital grounds only with my right hon. Friend's consent. This will be given only after consideration of all the circumstances of the case, including proposals about the areas which the patient will visit while on leave. These proposals will vary according to each individual case.

The movement of patients within the hospital grounds is a matter for the responsible medical officer.

Drug Charges (Mr. Alan Waite and Others)

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if, pursuant to the answer given to the hon. Member for Birkenhead on 17 June, *Official Report*, column *327*, he will call for a report from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis on the exact nature of the doubts about the reliability of police evidence which led to the dropping of drugs charges in each of the cases of Mr. Alan Waite, Mr. Geoffrey Pope, Mr. Marcel Mullins, Mr. Mark Whittaker, Ms. Theresa James and Mr. Paul Brown.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: No. The decision whether or not to prosecute in each case was an operational matter for the police.

Knives (Amnesty)

Mr. Greg Knight: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps he intends taking to institute a knives amnesty in England and Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Building on the success of the campaigns which a number of police forces have held already we have asked forces throughout England and Wales to run campaigns during the period 27 June to 11 July inclusive to encourage people to dispose of knives and other offensive weapons.

The casual carrying of knives in public is totally unacceptable and the campaign will be an opportunity for people to dispose of their knives and other weapons safely. I would urge them to do so. When the Criminal Justice Bill becomes law a person who carries a knife, other than a small folding pocket-knife, in a public place and cannot show good reason for carrying it will commit a criminal office.

As I indicated in a reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Sir E. Griffiths) on 17 May at column 376, a separate amnesty for firearms will be held for one month from 1 September this year.

Crime (Forfeiture of Property)

Mr. Soames: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps are being taken to encourage the use of the powers which exist to deprive offenders of the use of vehicles used in the commission of crime; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hurd: Under section 43 of the Powers of the Criminal Courts Act 1973 a court can order the forfeiture of any property used to commit an offence punishable with a sentence of two or more years' imprisonment. The Criminal Justice Bill extends this power to offences with lower maximum penalties. Section 44 of the Act empowers the Crown court to disqualify from driving a person convicted of an offence carrying a maximum sentence of two or more years' imprisonment, if the court is satisfied that a motor vehicle was used in the commission of the offence.

Radio Surveillance Equipment

Mr. Cran: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what responsibilities his Department has for monitoring the use of radio surveillance equipment following the issue of a licence; and what requirements are imposed upon licensees concerning the use of such equipment.

Mr. Butcher: I have been asked to reply.

In respect of monitoring I refer my hon. Friend to my reply of 21 June 1988 to my hon. Friend the Member for Beverley (Mr. Cran) at column 492. The requirements placed upon licensees are broadly to avoid causing interference to other radio users and to maintain equipment in accordance with the relevant specification. I understand that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Home Department will shortly be writing to my hon. Friend about his wider concerns on this subject.

Custody

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many males and females aged 17 years or under were sentenced to a period of custody during *(a)* 1985, *(b)* 1986 and *(c)* 1987;

(2) how many males and females aged 17 years and under who were from an ethnic minority were sentenced to a period of custody during *(a)* 1985, *(b)* 1986 and *(c)* 1987.

Mr. John Patten *[holding answer 17 June 1988]*: The readily available information is given in the following table:

Persons aged 17 and under received under an immediate custodial sentence into Prison Department establishments: by ethnic origin and sex, 1985-87

Ethnic origin	*Males* 1985	*Males* 1986	*Males* [1]1987	*Females* 1985	*Females* 1986	*Females* [1]1987
White	9,655	7,522	7,090	196	158	148
West Indian/Guyanese, African	694	493	422	16	16	6
Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi	162	172	148	2	–	–
Chinese, Arab, Mixed origin	264	222	207	14	3	6
Other, not recorded (including refusals)	143	78	36	11	3	1
All	10,918	8,487	7,903	239	180	161

[1] Provisional data.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Eritrea

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps he is taking to encourage the Ethiopian Government to cease their military campaigns in Eritrea; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what initiatives are being taken by Her Majesty's Government to bring about peace and a reduction in suffering and casualties in Eritrea.

Mrs. Chalker: We remain deeply concerned about the suffering caused by the civil wars in northern Ethiopia. With our partners in the European Community we urge a political solution of the conflict and we are discussing with them whether more could be done to encourage this process. In our view this must ensure observance of human rights and take account of the distinctive historic and cultural identity of Eritrea. We recognise the territorial integrity of Ethiopia within its existing frontiers.

Kurdish Political Prisoners

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether, following the improvement in relations with the Iraqi Government, he has raised with them the issue of human rights violations, especially the executions of Kurdish political prisoners, both adult and minors.

Mr. Mellor: As I made clear in my answer on 11 March, we regret the denial of basic human rights wherever they may occur. We are aware of reports of human rights violations in Iraq and continue to take every opportunity to voice our concern about such abuses. I raised this issue at the highest levels during my visit there in February. When my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State met the Iraqi Foreign Minister in March, he reiterated in strong terms our concern about human rights violations, and the plight of Iraqi Kurds in particular. We have also protested vigorously about the use of chemical weapons on the civilian town of Halabja in Iraqi Kurdistan.

Mr. Tom Carlin

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) what representations he has made to the Government of Nepal concerning the ill-treatment and torture of Mr. Tom Carlin while in custody in Kathmandu between January and May 1987;

(2) what representations he has made to the Government of Nepal concerning the re-arrest and further detention of Mr. Tom Carlin following his acquittal of all charges in May 1987;

(3) what representations he has made to the Government of Nepal regarding compensation for the costs resulting from Mr. Tom Carlin's ill-treatment, torture and detention in Kathmandu between January and May 1987.

Mr. Eggar: On 25 May 1987, the day of Mr. Carlin's acquittal and re-arrest, Her Majesty's embassy at Kathmandu made immediate representations to the district superintendent of police. On 29 May 1987, the embassy made further representations to secure Mr. Carlin's release to the chief of protocol of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. These were repeated on 1 June 1987. On 5 June 1987, Her Majesty's ambassador at Kathmandu drew to the attention of His Majesty the King of Nepal the circumstances of Mr. Carlin's detention. Her Majesty's Government have made no representations for compensation in Mr. Carlin's case. It is open to Mr. Carlin to pursue any claim direct with the Nepalese authorities.

Sharpeville Six

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs why Her Majesty's Government will not be taking the same diplomatic action as the other countries of the European Community if the Sharpeville Six are executed; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: Contrary to recent speculation in the press, our partners in the Twelve have not agreed on how to respond should the Sharpeville Six be executed. As was made clear in the chairman's summary of discussions on South Africa at the Toronto summit on 20 June, we continue to urge that all legal options available in South Africa should be used to secure clemency for the Six.

Gibraltar (Shootings)

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information Her Majesty's Government have now received about the timing of the preliminary hearings in relation to the inquest into the deaths of three Irish Republican Army personnel shot by British service men in Gibraltar; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: The Gibraltar coroner announced on 21 June that the preliminary hearing concerning the inquest will open on 4 July. We expect it to set the date of the main inquest and hope this will be as soon as possible.

Nuclear Weapons (Tests)

Mr. Colin Shepherd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is Her Majesty's Government's policy on the further limitation of nuclear weapons tests.

Mr. Mellor: For the foreseeable future the United Kingdom's security will depend on deterrence based, in part, on the possession of nuclear weapons. That will mean a continuing requirement to conduct underground nuclear tests to ensure that our nuclear weapons remain effective and up to date.

We hope that the peaceful nuclear explosions treaty and the threshold test ban treaty will be ratified soon. Further steps to limit tests will then have to be considered. But serious technical problems of verification remain. As thresholds are reduced, verification becomes more important but also more difficult.

A comprehensive test ban remains a long-term goal. Progress will be made only be a step-by-step approach. This must take account of technical advances on verification as well as progress elsewhere in arms control and the attitude of other states.

UNITA

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on Her Majesty's Government's policy towards UNITA.

Mrs. Chalker: I refer the hon. Member to the answer which I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Basingstoke (Mr. Hunter) on 22 April at column *586*.

EMPLOYMENT

Restart

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give the full numerical basis of the national restart interview results referred to in a Manpower Services Commission evaluation report on follow-up interviewees and the restart programme, paragraph 4.34, page 16, Manpower Services Commission, CSBI, March, which outlines the people starting menu items as a proportion of submissions to that item; how many interviews referred to each item; and how many started each of those menu items.

Mr. Lee: Information on the numbers interviewed on the restart programme between July 1986 and April 1988 and the numbers referred to each menu item is shown in the table. We do not know how many people ultimately end up in a job or other opportunity after a restart interview since we do not follow up every referral. The figures on which the table in the report are based are not comprehensive but taken together with the other evidence in connection with the pilot exercise they confirm the effectiveness of the follow-up interviews. Between July 1986 and 29 April 1988, 3,725,563 restart interviews took place. These resulted in:

	Referrals
Jobs	326,700
Community Programme	299,800
Voluntary Projects Programme/Voluntary Work	80,600
Jobclub	323,200
New Job Training Scheme	253,900
Other Training	306,900
Employment Rehabilitation Centre	9,200
Restart Course	283,300
Enterprise Allowance Scheme	145,000
Disablement Resettlement Officer	126,500
Claimant Adviser	157,300
Other Referrals (inc. PER)	678,500

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what were the results of the Manpower Services Commission's evaluation of the impact that follow-up restart interviews have had on the unemployment count.

Mr. Lee: The evaluation of the impact of follow-up restart interviews showed that these further interviews are particularly effective. Increasing the take-up of opportunities available under the restart programme will inevitably have an effect on the number of people claiming unemployment benefit.

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether it is his intention to introduce national follow-up restart interviews; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State announced in the White Paper "Training for Employment" the restart programme will be developed further during 1988-89. An important aspect of this development is the phased introduction of follow-up interviews throughout the country.

Unemployment Mismatch

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what evidence he has of significant increases in unemployment mismatch; and what steps he is taking to overcome this problem.

Mr. Lee: The economy is growing fast, generating half a million new jobs in 1987 alone, and as a result unemployment, particularly long-term unemployment, is falling rapidly. Although unemployment remains high, there are an estimated 700,000 unfilled vacancies in the economy.

In our White Paper "Training for Employment" we drew attention to the need to equip the unemployed with the skills today's jobs demand. That is why we are investing £1·5 billion in the employment training programme starting in September, to provide relevant training for up to 600,000 unemployed adults.

Redundant Workers

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the percentage of jobs found by redundant workers that are with their previous employer.

Mr. Lee: The information requested is not available.

Tourism

Mr. Franks: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the launch of the tourism business advisory service.

Mr. Lee: I welcome the initiatives of those regional tourist boards which, together with their local small firms service, have established advisory services for tourism businesses in their regions. I was delighted to have the opportunity personally to launch the first such initiative for East Anglia in June 1987, and the west country initiative in May this year.

Mr. Curry: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give a breakdown of the main items of overseas visitors' spending.

Mr. Lee: The table gives the most up-to-date estimates.

Expenditure in the United Kingdom by overseas visitors: 1988

Category of spending	*Per cent.*
Accommodation	32
Eating out	23
Travel within the United Kingdom	9
Shopping	23
of which:—	
Clothes	14
Other	13
Entertainment	5
Services	3
Other	2
Total Expenditure	£5·5 billion

Mr. Barry Field: to ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will take steps to encourage the greater use of unmanned tourist information centres for use by tourists after normal working hours.

Mr. Lee: The English tourist board estimates that around 10 per cent. of manned tourist information centres have some form of electronic information system. The ETB is actively encouraging the widespread use of interactive video systems to provide information to visitors outside normal working hours, and is establishing a database of recommended systems.

Engineering

Ms Quin: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many jobs have been lost in the engineering industry since June 1979; and how many of these jobs have been in the northern region of England.

Mr. Lee: There are no figures for job losses and Job gains. Between June 1979 and june 1987 there was a net decrease of 541,000 in the number of employees in employment in the mechanical, electrical and electronic, office machinery and data processing equipment, and instrument engineering industries in Great Britain. In the northern region, there was a corresponding net decrease of 41,000. The figures are unadjusted for the effects of seasonal variations.

Shipbuilding

Mr. Boyes: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many jobs have been lost in the shipbuilding industry since June 1979; and how many of these jobs have been in the northern region of England.

Mr. Lee: There are no figures for job losses and job gains. Between June 1979 and June 1987, there was a net decrease of 63,000 in the number of employees in employment in the shipbuilding and repairing industry (SIC 80: Activity Heading 3610) in Great Britain.

My Department's employment statistics for the northern region for this period relate to the broader industry class "manufacture of other transport equipment" (SIC 80: class 36 which includes shipbuilding and repairing, railway and tramway vehicles, cycles and motorcycles, aerospace equipment manufacturing and repairing, and other vehicles). In September 1984 the number of employees in shipbuilding and repairing in the northern region was 95 per cent. of the total employees in the broader industry class. Between June 1979 and June 1987 the number of employees in employment in the broader industry class decreased by 24,000 in the northern region and by 126,000 in Great Britain.

The figures are unadjusted for the effects of seasonal variations and are subject to considerable estimation error due to the relatively small number of employees in the industry.

YTS

Mr. Boyes: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what steps he proposes to take to increase the number of employed young people on the YTS.

Mr. Cope: The Training Commission, which administers YTS, is encouraging employers to recruit 16 and 17-year-olds through YTS whether or not they gave them immediate "employed" status, to continue YTS training for those who do become employees, and to enrol in YTS any 16 and 17-year-old employees who are not already in the programme.

YTS Managing Agents

Mr. Paice: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will update the answer to the hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, South-East of 9 May, *Official Report*, column 47, regarding the final outcomes for those YTS managing agents initially awarded provisional ATO status.

Mr. Cope: By 31 May 1988 of the 1,715 managing agents who had been awarded provisional ATO status after the first monitoring period, 1,516 had been awarded full status, 95 had withdrawn and 16 had been rejected. Decisions on the remaining 88 are expected shortly.

Willenhall Jobcentre

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will publish in the *Official Report (a)* the reasons why the west midlands region of his Department wishes to offer a co-housing arrangement inside Willenhall jobcentre to the local chamber of commerce, *(b)* the benefits he expects to accrue from such an arrangement to his Department and job seekers and *(c)* the terms, financial and otherwise, on which the offer has been negotiated; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: This is an experimental project in partnership with an organisation which has a common interest in promoting enterprise and the various Government initiatives offered by my Department and the Department of Trade and Industry. If successful, this will clearly benefit the public generally and usefully extend the range of services available from the jobcentre. Negotiations with the chamber are continuing and have not yet been finalised.

Departmental Staff

Ms. Quin: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give for each standard planning region of England *(a)* the number of employees of his Department, *(b)* the amount spent in wages and salaries and *(c)* the proportion of total expenditure in each region by his Department which is represented by personnel costs.

Mr. Lee: This information could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Wages Council Orders

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will place in the Library the instructions he has issued to jobcentres on action to be taken when a vacancy covered by a wages council order is notified.

Mr. Lee: These instructions form part of a two-volume working guide for officials on the operational aspects of the jobcentre service. I do not consider it would be appropriate or practical to place such a document in the Library. The existing instructions on handling vacancies covered by a wages council order are currently being amplified. I will arrange for the hon. Gentleman to be sent a personal copy of both the current and the revised guidance as soon as it is ready.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will publish a table showing the risk of unemployment by social or occupational class.

Mr. Lee: Preliminary estimates from the 1987 labour force survey of (i) the previous occupation of those unemployed persons who left their last job less than three years earlier and (ii) the proportion of the economically active in each occupation group these represent, are shown in the table:

Unemployed Persons[1] in Great Britain in Spring 1987 by Occupation

	Unemployed (thousands)	*As proportion of Economically Active (Per cent.)*
Total[2]	2,789	10·3
of which:		
Persons who left job within last 3 years	[3]1,741	6·7
of which: occupation in previous job		
Codot Major Group		
1. Professional and related supporting management and administration	43	2·9
2. Professional and related in education, welfare and health	78	3·5
3. Literary, artistic and sports	20	6·1
4. Professional and related in science, engineering, technology and similar fields	28	2·6
5. Management	90	3·6
6. Clerical and related	214	5·0
7. Selling	136	7·5
8. Security and protective service	29	6·4
9. Catering, cleaning, hairdressing and other personal services	250	8·1
10. Farming fishing and related	56	11·5
11. Processing, making, repairing and related (excluding metal and electrical)	139	8·0
12. Processing, making repairing and related (metal and electrical)	176	7·0
13. Painting, repetitive assembly, product inspecting, packaging and related	133	13·3
14. Construction, mining and related NIE	149	15·0
15. Transport operating, materials moving and related	135	8·4
16. Miscellaneous	59	21·2
Broad Grouping		
Managerial and professional	260	3·4
Clerical and related	204	5·0
Other non-manual	142	7·0
Craft and similar occupations	336	7·8
General labourers	51	22·0
Other manual occupations	746	9·8

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[1] Those without a job who were looking for work in the survey reference week.

[2] Includes 1,048,000 who had never had a job or left their last job three or more years ago (not asked about previous occupation).

[3] Includes 4,000 who had had a job within last 3 years but did not state that occupation.

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the fall in unemployment in the year up to the publication of the labour force survey of 1987.

Mr. Lee: The information was included in an article on page 144 of the March 1988 edition of *Employment Gazette*, a copy of which is in the Library.

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if, in view of the fact that unemployment figures are based on the number receiving unemployment benefit, he will retitle the unemployment figures in the *Employment Gazette* and other official publications the "unemployment benefit" figures.

Mr. Lee: The monthly unemployment figures are based on the records of those claiming benefit at unemployment benefit offices. This was explained when the series was introduced in November 1982. A description of the coverage of the figures is also given in the regular monthly press release issued by my Department and in the definitions given in the *Employment Gazette*.

Factory Inspectors

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many factory inspectors were employed by the Health and Safety Executive in each region, for each year from 1980 to 1987.

Mr. Nicholls: The Health and Safety Executive operates through an area office network. The number of factory inspectors employed in each area for each year from 1980 to 1987 is as follows:

The number of factory inspectors in post at area offices on 1 April of each year

Area location	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*
South West	32	30	28	27	26	26	26	29
South	30	28	27	27	29	26	27·5	27·5
South East	25	25	25	23	22	25	24	26·5
London North West[1]	30	26	24	22	21	—	—	—
London North	25	23	22	22	20	36	35·5	36
London South	30	37	34	32	28	40	35	34
East Anglia	24·5	25·5	27	26	25	24·5	25	21·5
North Home Counties	26	21	20	19	20	22	23	24·5
East Midlands	29	26	24	23	23	23	25	26
West Midlands	44	44	40	37	33	32	32	32
Wales	33	31	29	23	23	23	23	23
Marches	28	27	25	23	22	24	25·5	23·5
North Midlands	31	30	29	26	25	27	23	23
South Yorkshire	33	31	28	29·5	29	27	24·5	24
West and North Yorkshire	37	35	29	31	29	35·5	33·5	31·5
Greater Manchester	34·5	34·5	33	33	32	33·5	28·5	30·5
Merseyside	29	28	26	25	27	25	26	25
North West	26·5	30·5	28	27	25	28	24	23
North East	38	37	33	32	31	31	30	31
Scotland East	33	31	32	27	25	26	23	23
Scotland West	34	33	30	28	26	27	25	25

[1] The London North West office is no longer regarded as a separate area office. Factory inspectors located there are outstationed from either the London North or London South area offices.

Mines and Quarries

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment to what factor he attributes the increase in prohibition notices issued by the mines and quarries inspectorate from an average of four for the previous eight years to 30 so far in 1987-88; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls *[holding answer 23 June 1988]:* In view of the high level of accidents in quarries, the chief inspector of mines and quarries decided that a vigorous application of formal enforcement procedures is necessary as part of a wider strategy designed to raise standards of safety.

WALES

Welsh Language

4. **Mr. Butler:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales by what percentage direct Government support for the Welsh language has increased since 1979-80.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Since 1979-80 direct Government support for the Welsh language has increased by 1,285 per cent., an increase in real terms of 656 per cent.

23. **Mr. Geraint Howells:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether he is yet in a position to announce whether he plans to introduce a new Welsh language Act; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply I gave the hon. Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley) on 25 April.

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what are his estimates of the percentage of people in Wales who *(a)* use the Welsh Gaelic as their first language and *(b)* have a fluent knowledge of Welsh Gaelic.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Nineteen per cent. of residents (aged three or over) of Wales were recorded as Welsh speakers at the time of the 1981 Census. Information is not collected on the fluency of Welsh speakers nor on which language is used as a first language.

Rural Communities (Development)

16. **Mr. Wigley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what recent discussions he has held with Welsh local authorities concerning amendments to planning and housing legislation in order to safeguard rural communities from overdevelopment.

Mr. Grist: None.

Regional Development Grant

17. **Mr. Gwilym Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what have been the numbers of regional development grant applications in Wales made since January 1987; and what is the amount of investment and number of jobs connected with these applications.

Mr. Peter Walker: Since January 1987, 3,940 regional development grant applications have been received. If the full potential of these applications is realised they will produce additional investment of almost £1,700 million and create 64,000 new jobs. Over the last 12 months of this period almost £2,000 million of potential investment has been associated with RDG and RSA applications, and I am delighted that so many firms have demonstrated their confidence in Wales and its economic revival.

Health Authorities (Financial Control)

18. **Dr. Marek:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what lack of financial control he has identified in *(a)* the Clwyd health authority and *(b)* any other Welsh health authority.

Mr. Grist: My right hon. Friend and I are not aware of any serious weakness in financial control in Clwyd health authority. The hon. Gentleman has written to me on this matter and I shall reply to him shortly.

My right hon. Friend and I have discussed financial control with the chairmen of health authorities in order to obtain the most efficient methods of financial control.

House Building

19. **Mr. Michael:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether he will make a statement on his plans for house building in Wales up to the end of the century.

Mr. Grist: We plan to create conditions which will maintain housebuilding at the high level achieved in 1987 when over 10,500 new homes were started. We expect that "Housing for Wales" will give a fresh impetus to housing in Wales.

Labour Statistics

21. **Mr. Ray Powell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what are the latest unemployment figures for *(a)* the Ogmore constituency and *(b)* Wales.

Mr. Peter Walker: On 12 May 1988 the numbers of unemployed claimants in the Ogmore constituency and Wales were 3,502 and 132,962 respectively.

Single European Market

22. **Mr. Anderson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what steps he is taking to assess the overall effects on Wales of the 1992 development towards a unified market within the European Community.

Mr. Peter Walker: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Ynys Môn (Mr. Jones) on 26 May and to my reply to the hon. Member for Bridgend (Mr. Griffiths) earlier today.

Homelessness

Mr. Soley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing *(a)* the number of homeless households accepted by local authorities in Wales whose homelessness resulted from mortgage arrears, and *(b)* the percentage of homeless households which these represented, in each of the years from 1979 to 1987.

Mr. Grist: The information requested is shown in the following table:

Number of homeless households in Wales whose homelessness resulted from mortgage arrears

	Action by mortgagee	*Percentage of accepted cases*
1979	339	7·2
1980	398	7·3
1981	419	7·7
1982[1]	351	7·0
1983	448	8·9
1984	547	10·9
1985	732	13·6
1986	896	15·0
1987	795	15·0

[1] Figures for Neath were not categorized by household type and are excluded.

Mr. Soley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the local authorities where more than 20, 50, and 100 homeless households, respectively, were living in bed and breakfast hotels in Wales at the end of June 1979, December 1981, December 1983, December 1985 and at the latest date for which information is available.

Mr. Grist: No Welsh local authority has had more than 50 households accepted as homeless and living in bed-and-breakfast accommodation at the dates specified. Cardiff is the only local authority with more than 20 homeless cases living in bed-and-breakfast accommodation. This figure was exceeded on two of the stated dates: 31 December 1981 and 31 March 1988.

Rents

Mr. Soley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish a table showing the average level of *(a)* local authority rents, *(b)* fair rents registered for unfurnished housing association lettings, *(c)* fair rents registered for other unfurnished lettings and *(d)* fair rents registered for all unfurnished lettings in Wales in each of the years from 1979 to 1987, indicating the percentage increase in each on an annual cumulative basis; and how these increases compare with the movement of the retail prices index over that same period.

Mr. Grist: The information requested is given in the following table:

	1979	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*
Local authority[1]									
Average weekly rent (£)	6·32	7·85	11·43	13·93	14·55	15·51	16·53	17·23	17·91
Cumulative percentage increase	—	24·20	80·90	120·40	130·20	145·40	161·60	172·60	183·40
Housing associations									
Average registered weekly fair rents (unfurnished) (£)	7·63	8·48	10·10	11·15	11·56	13·29	14·60	16·40	17·48
Cumulative percentage increase	—	11·10	32·40	46·10	51·50	74·20	91·30	114·90	129·10
Private rented sector									
Average registered weekly fair rents (unfurnished) (£)	10·69	11·56	13·54	15·19	16·17	17·77	18·15	20·86	22·15

	1979	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*
Cumulative percentage increase	—	8·10	26·70	42·10	51·30	66·20	69·80	95·10	107·20
All fair rents[2]									
Average registered weekly fair rents (unfurnished) (£)	9·54	10·38	12·04	13·23	13·85	15·23	16·06	18·08	19·04
Cumulative percentage increase	—	8·80	26·20	38·70	45·20	59·60	68·30	89·50	99·60
Retail price index									
Cumulative percentage increase	—	18·00	32·00	43·40	50·00	57·50	67·10	72·70	79·90

[1] Local authority average rent is at April.

[2] Housing associations and private rented sector.

The actual rent paid can vary significantly from these figures depending upon the amount of housing benefit being paid.

Assured Tenancies

Mr. Soley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many assured tenancies of *(a)* newly built and *(b)* newly improved properties have been created in each of the years since 1980 in Wales.

Mr. Grist: There were no assured tenancies created in the years between 1980 and 1987. Since April 1988 a number of assured tenancies have been created by housing associations in Wales. The figures will be available following the 1988 monitoring exercise towards the end of this year.

Rating Reform

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if mature students in Wales paying the 20 per cent. community charge with a non-student spouse will be jointly and severally liable for their spouses' community charge at a rate of 100 per cent.

Mr. Grist: Yes. Students paying a one fifth community charge with a non student spouse will be jointly and severally liable for their spouses' community charge, subject to any benefit applicable to it.

Opencast Mining

Mr. Coleman: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what information he has concerning research into or a study of the incidence of respiratory disease in the general public living in areas adjacent to opencast mining sites; and what conclusions he has come to.

Mr. Grist: I am not aware of any published research or study.

European Structural Fund

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what are the implications for the economic policies of his Department of proposed changes in the European structural fund; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker: The Commission's review envisages concentration and co-ordination of the structural funds in order to maximise their impact on the reduction of regional imbalances. This will be achieved mainly through programmes of integrated development and my Department is already involved in several such initiatives.

Cardiff Bay Redevelopment

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) what studies his Department has conducted into the impact of the Cardiff bay redevelopment scheme on the south Wales valleys; and of what other studies he is aware;

(2) what is his assessment of the impact of the Cardiff bay redevelopment scheme on the south Wales valleys; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker: A report by consultants commissioned by the Welsh Office in 1986 suggested that a major innovative redevelopment in Cardiff would be of national and possibly international importance. It would enhance Cardiff as a capital city and also help the economy of south Wales as a whole by attracting the investment and creating employment. The programme for the Valleys and the developments of the Cardiff Bay Development Corporation will combine together to make a considerable impact on the south Wales economy.

The programme for the Valleys envisages very substantial public investment over the next three years and in addition to that the private investment provoked by regional development grants and regional selective assistance alone are anticipated to create £1,000 million of private investment in the Valleys. There will be, of course, much further private investment that does not fit into this category.

The projections undertaken recently for the Cardiff Bay Development Corporation suggest that the project there could stimulate the creation of about 30,000 jobs in the area and private investment of £1 billion.

Doubtless there will be those in Cardiff who will find employment opportunities in the Valleys and those in the Valleys who will find employment opportunities in Cardiff.

SCOTLAND

Rating Reform

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is his latest estimate of the total number of people who will be eligible to pay some or all of the poll tax in its first year.

Mr. Lang: Based on the latest population figures, in respect of 1987, the number of adults liable to pay all or part of the community charge is estimated at approximately 3·8 million.

Forestry

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the total area of land afforested by the Forestry Commission and private planning, respectively, in Britain in 1987-88; and if he will provide an estimate for 1988-89.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: In the year ended 31 March 1988, the Forestry Commission carried out 4,995 hectares of new planning and grant-aided 23,821 hectares of new planting by the private sector.

The commission proposes to carry out some 4,000 hectares of new planning in the current year. It is not possible, however, to provided a firm estimate of the level of private planting for this period until the likely pattern of forestry investment following the recent changes to the tax and grant arrangements becomes clearer.

Mental Handicap (Expenditure)

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give for each health board the total spending on care for the elderly with mental disability for each year since 1981, at 1981 prices.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The below shows health board's expenditure on elderly with mental disability in each year from 1981-82 to 1986-87.

Scottish Health Boards' Expenditure on Elderly with Mental Disability

	(£'000 at 1981-82 prices[1])					
	1981-82	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	*1984-85*	*1985-86*	*1986-87*
Argyll & Clyde	6,085	6,058	6,184	6,037	6,299	6,590
Ayrshire & Arran	2,345	2,552	2,872	2,910	3,064	3,590
Borders	1,645	1,840	1,745	1,830	1,909	1,884
Dumfries & Galloway	1,650	1,804	1,786	1,961	2,018	2,375
Fife	2,932	2,781	3,456	4,261	5,357	5,703
Forth Valley	[2]1,712	[2]1,688	1,713	2,437	2,491	2,440
Grampian	4,150	4,141	4,725	5,183	5,361	5,690
Greater Glasgow	15,222	10,262	13,776	14,544	15,633	17,448
Highland	622	701	717	717	701	747
Lanarkshire[3]	—	—	—	—	—	—
Lothian	4,553	4,874	4,142	4,050	3,971	4,875
Orkney[4]	—	—	—	—	—	—
Shetland	39	40	44	95	95	95
Tayside	5,206	7,109	6,955	6,495	6,634	7,240
Western Isles	0	0	0	0	0	Not Available
Total	46,161	43,850	48,115	50,520	53,533	[5]58,677

[1] Measured using the GDP Deflator.
[2] On different basis from later years.
[3] Expenditure on elderly with mental disability is included in returns of expenditure on mental illness.
[4] Expenditure on elderly with mental disability is included in returns of expenditure on care of the elderly.
[5] Excludes Western Isles.

Mr Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, pursuant to his answer of 17 June, if he will restate for each health board the spending on mental handicap for each year since 1981 at constant 1981 prices.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The table shows health boards' expenditure on mental handicap in each year from 1981-82 to 1986-87.

Scottish Health Boards' expenditure on Mental Handicap

	(£'000 at 1981-82 prices(1))					
	1981-82	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	*1984-85*	*1985-86*	*1986-87*
Argyll & Clyde	3,107	3,056	2,957	3,090	3,046	2,996
Ayrshire & Arran	856	944	984	992	1,043	1,188
Borders	662	694	709	667	587	544
Dumfries & Galloway	282	316	535	1,056	873	727
Fife	4,527	4,642	4,898	4,705	4,673	4,722
Forth Valley	7,239	7,416	7,471	7,637	7,923	8,479
Grampian	5,307	5,387	5,445	5,567	5,605	5,631
Greater Glasgow	9,548	9,333	9,288	9,252	9,369	10,067
Highland	2,275	2,224	2,327	2,307	2,179	2,232
Lanarkshire	3,987	4,052	4,063	4,589	4,779	5,010
Lothian	7,329	7,005	7,174	7,665	7,621	6,558
Orkney (2)	—	—	—	—	—	—
Shetland	1	1	1	1	1	1
Tayside	5,022	4,842	5,010	5,007	4,957	5,017
Western Isles	0	0	0	0	0	(4)
Total	50,142	49,894	50,862	52,6535	52,656	(3)53,142

(1) Measured using the GDP Deflator.
(2) Expenditure on mental handicap is included in returns of expenditure on mental illness.
(3) Excludes Western Isles.
(4) Not available.

CBI Scotland

Mr. Andrew Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he next expects to meet representatives of the Confederation of British Industry in Scotland; and what subjects he expects to discuss.

Mr. Lang: My right hon. and learned Friend and I have frequent discussions with CBI Scotland on a range of industrial and economic issues. I look forward to a continuing exchange of views.

Mental Health Expenditure

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, pursuant to his answer of 17 June, if he will restate for each health board the total spending on mental health for each year since 1981 at constant 1981 prices.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The table shows health boards' expenditure on mental health in each year from 1981-82 to 1986-87.

Scottish health boards' expenditure on mental health[1]

(£'000 at 1981-82 prices[2])

	1981-82	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	*1984-85*	*1985-86*	*1986-87*
Argyle and Clyde	17,037	16,895	17,095	16,992	16,926	17.141
Ayrshire and Arran	6,636	6,814	7,529	7,983	8,287	9,202
Borders	3,498	3,638	3,525	3,592	3,602	3,602
Dumfries and Galloway	6,798	6,872	7,246	7,642	7,370	7,437
Fife	11,110	11,501	12,293	13,013	13,949	14,613
Forth Valley	[3]14,140	[3]14,225	14,418	14,563	15,063	16,654
Grampian	19,250	19,104	19,120	19,483	19,860	20,218
Greater Glasgow	48,263	47,252	48,218	49,152	49,293	50,269
Highland	8,451	7,958	8,098	8,159	7,959	8,053
Lanarkshire	14,844	14,999	15,128	16,467	16,674	17,043
Lothian	30,847	30,481	29,617	29,688	29,296	30,383
Orkney[4]	11	16	15	15	16	17
Shetland	44	46	46	99	98	121
Tayside	21,698	21,486	21,484	21,728	21,314	21,317
Western Isles	38	21	38	42	48	n/a
Total	[3]202,655	[3]201,308	203,870	208,618	209,755	[5]216,070

[1] Mental health covers mental illness, care of the elderly with mental disability, and mental handicap.

[2] Measured using the GDP deflator.

[3] On a different basis from later years.

[4] Excludes care of the elderly with mental disability.

[5] Excludes Western Isles.

Physicists

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the number of current unfilled medical physicists posts for each health board.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Management information of this kind is not held centrally.

Homelessness

Mr. Soley: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing *(a)* the number of homeless households accepted by local authorities in Scotland whose homelessness resulted from mortgage arrears, and *(b)* the percentage of all homeless households which these represented, in each of the years from 1979 to 1987.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: This category was not separately identified prior to March 1984. Figures for later years are set out in the following table.

Households categorised as homeless by local authorities, Scotland

	1984-85	*1985-86*	*1986-87*
Number quoting court order for mortgage default as reason for loss of last or present accommodation	263	366	315
As per cent. of total	2·7	3·3	3·1

Mr. Soley: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the local authorities where more than 20, 50 and 100 homeless households, respectively, were living in bed-and-breakfast hotels in Scotland at the end of June 1979, December 1981, December 1983, December 1985 and at the latest date for which information is available.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information requested was not collected prior to 1980. Details for the other years are set out in the table.

Local authorities in Scotland with homeless households in bed and breakfast accommodation.

As at	*More than 20*	*More than 50*	*More than 100*
31 December 1981	None	None	Glasgow
31 December 1983	None	None	Glasgow
31 December 1985	Renfrew	None	Glasgow
31 December 1987	Glasgow	Renfrew	None

Rents

Mr. Soley: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a table showing the average level of *(a)* local authority rents, *(b)* fair rents registered for unfurnished housing association lettings, *(c)* fair rents registered for other unfurnished lettings and *(d)* fair rents registered for all unfurnished lettings in Scotland in each of the years from 1979 to 1987, indicating the percentage increase in each on an annual cumulative basis; and how these increases compare with the movement of the retail prices index over that same period.

Lord James Douglas Hamilton: The information requested on local authority rents, registered rents for unfurnished private sector lettings and the retail prices index was given in my answer to the hon. Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson) on 16 May 1988 at columns *343-344*. Information for housing associations is set out in the following table.

Housing Association tenancies[1]

Year	*Annual average rent* £	*Percentage increase over previous year*	*Percentage increase since 1979*
1979	396	—	—
1980	446	12·6	12·6
1981	488	9·4	23·2
1982	709	45·3	79·0
1983	766	8·0	93·4
1984	878	14·6	121·7
1985	977	11·3	146·7
1986	985	0·8	148·7
1987	1,069	8·5	169·9

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[1] registered by Rent Officers.

Housing Revenue Account Dwellings

Mr. Soley: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the value of the Exchequer subsidies and rate fund contributions, respectively, to Scottish local authority housing revenue account dwellings in total and on a per dwelling basis for the years 1978-79 to 1987-88.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information is given in the table.

	Exchequer Subsidy		*Rate fund Contributions*	
	Total *£ million*	*Per Dwelling* *£*	*Total* *£ million*	*Per Dwelling* *£*
1978-79	142·7	160·69	55·6	62·61
1979-80	213·4	238·87	72·9	81·60
1980-81	228·2	254·96	79·4	88·71
1981-82	161·9	181·24	106·3	119·00
1982-83	104·6	118·26	124·7	140·98
1983-84	72·1	82·61	122·6	140·47
1984-85	67·2	77·93	138·7	160·84
1985-86	64·2	75·24	98·4	115·32
1986-87	44·5	52·76	76·3	90·46
1987-88	41·9	50·39	41·8	50·27

Notes:

(1) Figures for 1978-79 to 1985-86 are based on audited accounts.

(2) Figures for 1986-87 and 1987-88 are based on authorities' near actual outturn returns.

Assured Tenancies

Mr. Soley: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many assured tenancies of *(a)* newly built and *(b)* newly improved properties have been created in each of the years since 1980 in Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: None. Sections 56 to 58 of the Housing Act 1980, which introduced the existing scheme of assured tenancies, do not apply to Scotland. There is no comparable provision in Scottish legislation.

Reprocessing Plant, Dounreay

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he expects to be able to announce his decision on the planning inquiry in respect of the application to build the European demonstration reprocessing plant at Dounreay, prior to the parliamentary summer adjournment.

Mr. Rifkind: No.

Scottish Gaelic

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what are his estimates of the percentage of people in Scotland who *(a)* use the Scottish Gaelic as their first language and *(b)* have a fluent knowledge of Scottish Gaelic.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Information is not available in the form requested. At the time of the 1981 census some 1·6 per cent. of the population of Scotland aged three or over were identified as Gaelic speakers.

Erskine Bridge

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will place in the Library his traffic forecasts for the Erskine bridge, as referred to in the report of the Comptroller and Auditor General (HC 387, 1987-88, page 18).

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The latest published accounts for the Erskine bridge are in respect of 1986-87 (HC387). The Comptroller and Auditor General's report is to be found on page 11 of the White Paper account. The report makes no reference to traffic forecasts.

Health Boards (Members' Interests)

Mr. Andrew Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will indicate by board which chairmen and members of health boards have declared any interests in matters being considered by their boards under the terms of the National Health Service (Health Boards: Membership, Procedure and Payment of Subscriptions) (Scotland) Regulations 1975; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: This information is not held centrally.

Training Courses (Offenders and Prisoners)

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the vocational courses of the industrial training boards presently available to *(a)* adult and *(b)* young offender male prisoners.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The vocational courses of the industrial training boards presently available to *(a)* adult and *(b)* young offender male prisoners are listed below. The full range of courses listed is not available at any establishment.

Vocational courses available to adult male prisoners

1. Bricklaying
2. Carpentry and joinery
3. Catering
4. Domestic appliance repair and servicing
5. Electronic wiring and computer appreciation
6. Hairdressing
7. Horticulture
8. Painting and decorating
9. Upholstery
10. Welding/fabrication

Vocational courses available to young offender male prisoners

1. Bricklaying
2. Carpentry and joinery
3. Computer appreciation
4. Hairdressing
5. Horticulture
6. Mechanical/electrical engineering
7. Motor vehicle mechanics
8. Painting and decorating
9. Vehicle body repair/paint spraying
10. Welding/fabrication

Hospital Waiting Lists

Mr. Allan Stewart: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what are the most recent available figures for hospital waiting lists in Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Provisional figures show that on 30 September 1987 77,772 people were awaiting in-patient treatment at NHS hospitals in Scotland. This is a 4·6 per cent. reduction from the March 1987 figure, and a 12 per cent. reduction from the 1983 peak of 88,338 which was caused by industrial action in 1982. Recent disruptive action taken by the trade unions resulted in nearly 3,500 operations being cancelled earlier this year. I have, however, recently taken a series of major initiatives to reduce substantially the time people have to wait for treatment.

Scottish TUC (NHS)

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he will next meet the Scottish Trades Union Congress to discuss the National Health Service in Scotland.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: My right hon. and learned Friend has no plans to meet the Scottish Trades Union Congress to discuss the National Health Service in Scotland.

Housing (Scotland) Bill

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will seek to amend the Housing (Scotland) Bill to ensure that no house may be transferred from a public sector landlord to a private sector landlord, with consequent effects on the tenant's status as a secure tenant, without the positive consent of the tenant of the house.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: No. The requirement for the Secretary of State's consent to be obtained to disposal of houses already provides adequate safeguards in such circumstances and it will continue to do so.

Scottish Homes

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make it his policy that the proposed Scottish Homes organisation will not dispose of any housing stock to any private sector landlords without the consent of the tenant of each house involved in the proposed transfer.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My right hon. and learned Friend will ensure, through his use of his powers of consent in relation to disposals, that tenants of Scottish Homes are treated no less favourably than tenants of local authorities in relation to any proposal to dispose of houses, irrespective of whether the proposed disposal is to the private or public sector.

Leukaemia (Rosyth)

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the latest information available to him on the levels of leukaemia in the Rosyth area and the national average.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The latest published information on the levels of leukaemia in the Rosyth area and the national average is that contained in the study undertaken by the information and statistics division of the Common Services Agency into the incidence of leukaemia in Scotland which was published last year in the May edition of the Health Bulletin issued by the Chief Medical Officer of the Scottish Home and Health Department. I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave my hon. Friend the Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) on 9 July 1987 at column *245*.

Fish Farms (Pesticides)

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will place in the Library a list of the pesticides used with the formal approval of the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland on salmonid fish farms.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 16 June]:* Pesticides require approval from six departmental Ministers acting jointly. My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland is one of these. All pesticides approved for sale in the United Kingdom appear in the book "Pesticides 1988" copies of which are already in the Library of the House.

Records are not held centrally on the use of specific approved products on salmonid fish farms.

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will place in the Library a copy of the regulations governing the use of the pesticide Nuvan 500 EC on salmonid fish farms.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 16 June]:* Pesticides are controlled under the Control of Pesticides Regulations 1986 made under the Food and Environment Protection Act 1985. Any product or substance used on fish farms and which is added to the water or given orally or otherwise for the treatment, control or prevention of ectoparasites however is regarded as an animal medicine and as such requires a product licence under the Medicines Act 1968. A copy of the Medicines Act is already in the Library of the House.

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what research has been conducted, or commissioned by the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland into the use of pesticides on fish farms; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 16 June]:* No general research into the use of pesticides on fish farms has been commissioned. However, in addition to its work on the toxicity of Nuvan 500 EC to a number of marine organisms, the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland marine laboratory, in conjunction with the university of Stirling, has studied the effect of Nuvan 500 EC on farmed salmon and the susceptibility of salmon lice to Nuvan 500 EC.

Nuvan 500 EC

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what research has been conducted, or commissioned, by the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland into the effects of Nuvan 500 EC on marine organisms; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 16 June]:* The Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland's marine laboratory in Aberdeen has carried out an investigation into the toxicity of Nuvan to a number of marine organisms including neritic phytoplankton species, representative neritic copepod species, the larvae of the oyster (Crassostrea gigas), the larvae of the common lobster (Homarus vulgaris), the developing eggs of the prawn (Nephrops norvegicus) and to the early larvae of the herring (Clupea harengus). In addition, one dispersion study to simulate the treatment of 10 salmon rearing cages has been undertaken. Further work is planned in the current year.

Community Programme

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has any proposals to provide extra central Government money for good quality Manpower Services Commission community programme projects in the community care field which cannot meet the requirements of the new adult training programme.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 22 June 1988]*: My right hon. and learned Friend hopes that bodies which have operated successful projects under the community programme will be able to adapt to the requirements of employment training. He has no plans to set up special funding arrangements for providing alternative grant assistance to such projects. Local authorities and health boards both routinely provide assistance to local voluntary projects in the community care field.

CIVIL SERVICE

Equal Opportunities

Mr. Janner: To ask the Minister for the Civil Service by what methods his personnel policies are designed to ensure that all staff, no matter what their age, disability, ethnic or national origin, marital status, race or sex, respectively, have equal opportunity for employment and advancement solely on the basis of their ability, qualifications and suitability for the work; when these were introduced; and with what results.

Mr. Luce: The principle of equality of opportunity applies to the whole range of personnel management issues in the Cabinet Office. Policy statements on equal opportunities for men and women, and race relations were issued in 1984 and have resulted in increased awareness at all levels of the potential problems and a willingness to overcome them.

Mr. Janner: To ask the Minister for the Civil Service whether he has appointed an equal opportunities officer.

Mr. Luce: Yes. There has been an equal opportunities officer for the Cabinet Office (OMCS) since 1984.

Mr. Janner: To ask the Minister for the Civil Service, how many, and what percentage of officers in each grade and overall in his Department, are women and from ethnic minorities, respectively.

Mr. Luce: The information as at 1 May 1988 is:

	Total Staff	*Women*		[1] *Ethnic Minorities*	
		Number	*Per cent.*	*Number*	*Per cent.*
Grades 1-7	337	55·5	16	2	1
SEO and HEO	222·5	84·5	38	2	1
EO	220·5	86·5	39	3	1
AO and below	787·5	590·5	75	52	7
Industrials	9·5	1·5	16	0	0
TOTAL	1,577	818·5	52	59	4

[1] Ethnic minority representation figures are based on questionnaires voluntarily completed by staff and not all have been returned.

Mr. Janner: To ask the Minister for the Civil Service whether he has any plans to improve equality of opportunity for women and for people from ethnic minorities in all grades of his Department, in connection with employment, training and promotion, respectively.

Mr. Luce: My Department is constantly looking for ways to develop and improve its equal opportunities programme. Current initiatives include alternative working patterns, especially part-time working and job-sharing, and recruitment reviews.

Mr. Janner: To ask the Minister for the Civil Service whether he has carried out monitoring exercises in accordance with the codes of the Commission for Racial Equality and the Equal Opportunities Commission, respectively.

Mr. Luce: Monitoring exercises of recruitment, promotion and training have been carried out in accordance with these codes. The results of the exercises are being studied.

Civil Servants (Secondment)

Mr. Soley: To ask the Minister for the Civil Service how many civil servants are currently seconded to private companies; what are their names; and to which companies they are seconded, other than those companies in which the state takes more than a 25 per cent. interest.

Mr. Luce: Information in the form requested is not held centrally and could be assembled only at disproportionate cost. The report on interchange of staff between the Civil Service and other organisations in 1987, a copy of which has been placed in the Library, gives a range of information about secondments being undertaken in that year, notably between the Civil Service and industry and commerce. The industrial and commercial organisations which took part in the secondment programme in 1987 are listed in annex B of the report.

THE ARTS

Equal Opportunities

Mr. Janner: To ask the Minister for the Arts whether he has carried out monitoring exercises in accordance with the codes of the Commission for Racial Equality and the Equal Opportunities Commission, respectively.

Mr. Luce: Monitoring exercises in respect of Office of Arts and Libraries staff have been carried out by the Cabinet Office, in accordance with the codes.

Mr. Janner: To ask the Minister for the Arts by what methods his personnel policies are designed to ensure that all staff, no matter what their age, disability, ethnic or national origin, marital status, race or sex, respectively, have equal opportunity for employment and advancement solely on the basis of their ability, qualifications and suitability for the work; when these were introduced; and with what results.

Mr. Luce The policy of the Office of Arts and Libraries follows that of the Cabinet Office, which agreed the adoption of policies on race relations and equality of opportunity for women with departmental trade unions in 1984. These policies take account of the codes of practice issued under the Race Relations Act 1976 and the Equal Opportunity Act 1975. Policy statements were circulated to all staff in 1984.

Mr. Janner: To ask the Minister for the Arts whether he has appointed an equal opportunities officer.

Mr. Luce: The services of the Cabinet Office equal opportunities officer are available to the Office of Arts and Libraries and its staff.

Mr. Janner To ask the Minister for the Arts whether he has any plans to improve equality of opportunity for women and for people from ethnic minorities in all grades of his Department, in connection with employment, training and promotion, respectively.

Mr. Luce: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave him on 26 May at column *257*.

Southern Arts Association

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Minister for the Arts what was the grant to the Southern Arts Association for 1987-88 and 1988-89.

Mr. Luce: The grant was £1,496,020 in 1987-88 and £1,666,615 in 1988-89.

Cultural Centres

Mr. Rathbone: To ask the Minister for the Arts what Her Majesty's Government are doing to support the Council of Europe initiative to establish networks of cultural centres to encourage cultural co-operation and exchanges throughout Europe.

Mr. Luce: Her Majesty's Government welcomed this initiative by the Council of Europe, and has put the Council in touch with appropriate centres in the United Kingdom via the Arts Council.

Budgets (Statistics)

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Minister for the Arts (1) what information he has as to what percentage of the total budget of *(a)* the National theatre, *(b)* the Royal Shakespeare Company, *(c)* the Royal Exchange theatre, Manchester, *(d)* the Royal Court, *(e)* the Crucible theatre, Sheffield and *(f)* the Liverpool playhouse has been spent on (i) productions, (ii) administration and (iii) marketing in each of the last five years;

(2) whether he will publish a table showing *(a)* the total budget, *(b)* earned income and *(c)* income from sponsorship and expressing both *(b)* and *(c)* as a percentage of *(a)* for (i) the Derby playhouse, (ii) the Belgrave theatre, Coventry, (iii) the Yvonne Arnaud theatre, Guildford, (iv) the Salisbury playhouse, (v) the Theatre Royal, Bristol, (vi) the Theatre Royal, Stratford East, (vii) The Bolton Octagon and (viii) the Victoria theatre, Stoke on Trent in each of the last five years;

(3) what information he has as to what has been the advertising and marketing budget for *(a)* the Royal Opera house, *(b)* the English National opera, *(c)* Kent opera and *(d)* Opera North in each of the last five years;

(4) what information he has as to what has been the advertising and marketing budget for *(a)* the National theatre, *(b)* the Royal Exchange theatre, Manchester, *(c)* the Royal Court, *(d)* the Royal Shakespeare Company, *(e)* the Sheffield Crucible theatre, *(f)* the Leeds playhouse, *(g)* the Liverpool playhouse and *(h)* the Theatre Royal, Bristol in each of the last five years;

(5) whether he will publish a table showing *(a)* the total budget, *(b)* earned income, and *(c)* income from sponsorship and expressing both *(b)* and *(c)* as a percentage of *(a)* for (i) the National theatre, (ii) the Royal Shakespeare Company, (iii) the Royal Exchange, Manchester, (iv) the Sheffield Crucible theatre, (v) the Liverpool playhouse, (vi) the Birmingham repertory theatre and (vii) the Royal Court, (viii) the Leeds playhouse in each of the last five years;

(6) what information he has as to what has been the education budget of *(a)* the Royal ballet, *(b)* Sadler's Wells ballet, *(c)* the London Festival ballet and *(d)* the Ballet Rambert in each of the last five years;

(7) what information he has as to what has been the education budget of *(a)* the Royal Opera house, *(b)* the English National opera, *(c)* Kent opera and *(d)* Opera North in each of the last five years;

(8) what information he has as to what has been the education budget of *(a)* the National theatre, *(b)* the Royal Shakespeare Company, *(c)* the Royal Exchange theatre, Manchester, *(d)* the Royal Court, *(e)* the Crucible theatre, Sheffield, *(f)* the Liverpool playhouse and *(g)* the Leeds playhouse in each of the last five years;

(9) whether he will publish a table showing *(a)* the total budget, *(b)* earned income, and *(c)* income from sponsorship and expressing both *(b)* and *(c)* as a percentage of *(a)* for (i) the Royal Opera house, (ii) the English National opera, (iii) Kent opera and (iv) Opera North in each of the last five years;

(10) what information he has as to what has been the advertising and marketing budget for *(a)* the Royal ballet, *(b)* Sadler's Wells ballet, *(c)* the London Festival ballet and *(d)* Ballet Rambert in each of the last five years;

(11) whether he will publish a table showing *(a)* the total budget, *(b)* earned income and *(c)* income from sponsorship and expressing both *(b)* and *(c)* as a percentage of *(a)* for (i) the Royal ballet, (ii) Sadler's Wells ballet, (iii) the London Festival ballet and (iv) Ballet Rambert in each of the last five years.

Mr. Luce: This information is not held centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Research

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) if he will list the name, location, constituency and numbers of people employed in each non-governmental and university research establishment where his Department commissions research;

(2) if he will list the name, location, constituency and numbers employed, of each Government research establishment where his Department conducts or commissions research.

Mr. Donald Thompson: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) on 3 May, at column 404. The comprehensive information requested is not kept centrally.

Fisheries Council

Mr. McLoughlin: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the outcome of the Fisheries Council in Luxembourg on 23 June; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply given to our hon. Friend for Waveney (Mr. Porter) on Friday 24 June 1988.

Prices Agreement

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if the provisional agreement on 1989 prices agreed by 11 member states at the recent Council meeting will ensure that the agricultural guideline will not be exceeded; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. MacGregor: The Commission has provided assurances that the costs of the package provisionally agreed by 11 member states at the recent Council can be contained within the guideline.

Price Cuts

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food why the United Kingdom representatives at the recent Council meeting did not support the Dutch proposal for linked monetary compensatory amount-European currency unit price cuts; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. MacGregor: At the insistence of the United Kingdom, as well as the Dutch, the Council examined various ways, including price cuts, for offsetting the costs of the final package so as to respect the European Council's decisions.

The Commission proposed a number of green rate changes during the negotiations, and in response to United Kingdom demands have confirmed in a clear statement that the package finally agreed by the Council on 23 June enables it to comply with the 1988 budget and the 1989 preliminary draft budget, and therefore the guideline, and that it will effect management economies to ensure this.

Food Prices

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what progress was made at the recent Council meeting in aligning EEC food prices with world prices; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. MacGregor: The Council agreed to hold common prices for all major commodities unchanged for the coming year, and to make some changes in intervention arrangements which will have the effect of reducing support prices. There were also changes to green currency rates, which will affect support levels for certain commodities. Further reductions in support levels are also likely through the operation of the new stabiliser arrangements. The gap between the resulting Community prices and world prices will depend on how world prices move.

Land Classification

Mr. Boswell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he has now considered the responses to the consultation document on the revised agricultural land classification for England and Wales.

Mr. MacGregor: We have received a number of helpful and detailed comments on the draft revised guidelines and criteria. I intend to defer publication of the definitive system until October 1988 to allow time for the appropriate adjustments to be made. The revised system will come into actual operation on 1 January 1989 which will give practitioners time to familiarise themselves with the detail.

Agriculture Council

Mr. Boswell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the outcome of the Council of Agriculture Ministers meeting on 23-24 June in Luxembourg; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. MacGregor: As I reported in a written reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, West (Mr. McLoughlin) on 20 June, these negotiations almost reached a conclusion at the end of a meeting of the Council of Agriculture Ministers which finished on 17 June, but were blocked by the need for further discussion on one issue of particular importance to Greece. At that point 11 member states were prepared to vote for the package and agreed that there should be no further changes to it with the exception of the one Greek point. This was further confirmed at an informal Council in Germany from 19-21 June.

I am glad to report now that further discussions last week resolved that difficulty. Final agreement was reached on this issue by the presidency, Commission and Ministers concerned towards the end of last week which enabled the whole package to be formally endorsed at a Council meeting in Luxembourg on 23-24 June.

My major objectives during these negotiations were to ensure that a settlement was reached within the limits for CAP expenditure set by the meeting of Heads of Government in February; and to ensure a fair outcome for United Kingdom farmers which would improve their competitive position. Both these objectives were achieved.

The Commission confirmed that cost savings in the management of the CAP, including on the subsidisation of skimmed milk powder in animal feed, will enable expenditure to be kept within the provision in the 1988 budget and the preliminary draft budget for 1989 for agriculture guarantee expenditure.

So far as our farmers are concerned, I secured a devaluation of the "green rate" at which support prices fixed in ECU are converted into sterling greater than that agreed for any other member state except Greece and Portugal, where exceptional circumstances apply. It will therefore improve our farmers' position relative to those in all the remaining nine member states. This devaluation will reduce monetary compensatory amounts by 3·2 percentage points, more than double those for France and Ireland. It will take effect on 1 January 1989 for all commodities except beef, for which decisions on green rates are to be taken later.

The agreement included a declaration of the intention of the Council and the Commission to dismantle remaining monetary gaps in four stages between now and 1992. At first it was proposed that this should apply only to countries which belong to the EMS exchange rate mechanism. At my insistence, it was accepted that parallel measures must apply to other member states as well.

So far as the rest of the package is concerned all basic support prices fixed in ECU will remain unchanged for 1988-89, except those for some varieties of tobacco, which will be reduced. But the basic support prices are in several cases liable to be cut automatically, under the budgetary stabiliser arrangements agreed earlier this year, if output exceeds a given level. In addition there will be indirect reductions in support for certain commodities, through lower monthly price increases for cereals and oilseeds, and through changes in the intervention arrangements for beef, where sales into intervention have remained at a high level despite the reforms agreed in 1986. There are also to be reductions in the prices at which some surplus wine is taken off the market, to complement the stabiliser system for wine previously agreed.

The package includes the extension of stabiliser mechanisms to three further horticultural crops, namely, oranges, lemons and peaches, as well as the detailed arrangements for operating the stabiliser for tobacco.

A solution was agreed to the long-standing problem of the inadequate margin for the refining of raw cane sugar. The margin will be supplemented by direct payments to refiners. This will ensure our ability to continue to fulfil the Community's commitment to import and refine sugar from the ACP countries.

A proposal from the Commission for a sharp increase in the levies on imports of birdseed, which would have led to a considerable increase in the price of birdseed, was dropped following strong United Kingdom criticism.

Overall, this is a good settlement for United Kingdom interests. It keeps within the budgetary limits. It will maintain pressure on the prices of surplus commodities in line with the stabiliser mechanisms already agreed. And it does at the same time further improve the competitive position of United Kingdom farmers.

Sheep (Radiation)

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, of the 15,854 lambs and sheep marked blue and released for further fattening between 28 September 1987 and 10 January 1988 in Cumbria, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, how many above the 1,000 kg action level were remonitored before 1 June in each of the four countries; and how many were monitored and tagged for slaughter before 1 June in each of the four respective countries.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Of the 15,854 sheep which had been marked blue between 28 September 1987 and 10 January 1988, 5,578 were remonitored before 1 June 1988. 33 out of these 5,578 remained above the action level. However, these animals all passed on subsequent re-testing. All 5,578, therefore, were ear-tagged as eligible for slaughter before 1 June.

The breakdown by country of the remonitoring is as follows:

Country where sheep remonitored	*Number of sheep marked blue (28 September 1987 to 10 January 1988) and remonitored before 1 June 1988*
England	593
Northern Ireland	33
Scotland	3,572
Wales	1,380
Total	5,578

NORTHERN IRELAND

Elderly People

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was, for hospital and community health services for elderly people in Northern Ireland, the number of geriatric in-patient cases, geriatric out-patient attendances, geriatric day patient attendances together with the expenditure after allowing for general inflation, expenditure, after allowing for hospital and community health service inflation and the number of district nursing staff and average length of stay for geriatric in-patients in each year from 1976-77.

Mr. Needham: The health and social services boards' accounts are not maintained at present in such a way as would enable the expenditure on geriatric services to be identified separately. The statistical information requested is as follows:

	In-patient cases	*Out-patient attendances*	*Day patient attendances*	*Average length of stay*	*Number of district nurses*
1976	4,010	1,452	[1]	196·7	n/a
1977	4,700	1,396	[1]	172·6	n/a
1978	4,686	1,571	[1]	178·6	n/a
1979	4,586	1,546	[1]	184·3	673
1980	4,994	1,725	[1]	170·8	667
1981	4,716	4,287	23,216	176·9	654
1982	4,719	4,289	15,073	[1]	651
1983	5,365	4,501	20,123	165·7	624

	In-patient cases	*Out-patient attendances*	*Day patient attendances*	*Average length of stay*	*Number of district nurses*
1984	5,441	4,279	18,961	157·6	640
1985	5,536	3,739	21,225	152·7	623
1986	6,580	4,223	28,109	148·3	621

[1] Not available

Mentally Handicapped People

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was, for hospital services for the mentally handicapped in Northern Ireland, the number of nursing staff per occupied bed, expenditure after allowing for general inflation, expenditure after allowing for hospital and community health service inflation and the number of occupied in-patient beds in each year since 1976-77.

Mr. Needham: The information requested is as follows:

Mentally handicapped

	1976-77	*1977-78*	*1978-79*	*1979-80*	*1980-81*	*1981-82*	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	*1984-85*	*1985-86*	*1986-87*
Number of occupied in-patient beds	1,382	1,390	1,397	1,398	1,387	1,425	1,393	1,374	1,367	1,361	1,289
Number of nursing staff per occupied bed	n.a.	0·65	0·71	0·70	0·74	0·77	0·76	0·81	0·79	0·77	0·78
Expenditure adjusted to allow for:	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
1. General Inflation	14,209,491	15,048,243	15,888,936	16,438,431	17,923,363	18,364,878	18,253,126	18,237,036	18,240,959	17,941,004	17,831,572
2. H&CHS inflation	15,268,819	16,960,311	18,089,323	18,149,215	18,330,806	19,080,250	19,096,280	19,001,234	18,765,705	18,590,371	17,813,572

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will give the discharge rates for National Health Service hospitals in Northern Ireland, as a whole and for each area board, stating these as a rate per 10,000 resident population, for the years 1983, 1984, 1985 and 1986.

Mr. Needham: The discharge rates for the Health Service hospitals, excluding hospitals for the mentally ill and mentally handicapped are:

	1983	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*
Northern Ireland	1,623	1,630	1,705	1,665
Eastern Board	2,143	2,149	2,272	2,151
Northern Board	1,011	1,025	1,071	1,129
Southern Board	1,354	1,373	1,429	1,420
Western Board	1,524	1,513	1,537	1,519

Deaths are included in the discharge rates.

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will give the number of patients leaving mental illness hospitals and units after a stay of five or more years in Northern Ireland and by area board in the years 1983, 1984, 1985 and 1986.

Mr. Needham: The numbers of discharges and deaths are:

	1983	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*
Northern Ireland	186	205	197	199
Eastern Board	90	85	81	118
Northern Board	28	19	27	24
Southern Board	12	30	25	15
Western Board	56	71	64	42

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement in tabular form containing information, broken down by health and social services boards in Northern Ireland, on identifiable improvements in services in the National Health Service since 1983, the resources which have been made available for such service improvements and the monitoring by the Department of Health and Social Services, Northern Ireland, and health boards to ensure that money allocated for service improvements is spent on them; and if he will give information for Northern Ireland as a whole.

Mr. Needham: This information is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. The operational planning system, including the annual accountability reviews, is the process through which the Department determines the global allocations for each board, agrees the targets and objectives for the year ahead and in time reviews progress towards these.

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what are his Department's guidelines for acute service targets in the following priority areas: coronary bypass, hip operations, bone marrow transplants, cataract operations and end stage renal failures; what progress has been made so far in meeting these targets; what further progress he expects health and social services boards to make within existing resources; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Needham: The targets which are set out in the regional strategy (1987-1992) published last August are as follows:

Coronary by-pass—450 by-pass operations included in a target of 750 for cardiac surgery.

Hip operations—reduction of average waiting time for admission to hospital from nine months to six months.

End State Renal Failure—acceptance rate for treatment of 50 new patients per million by 1990. Bone Marrow Transplants—12 operations per year. It has not been thought necessary to set targets for cataract operations.

As we are only one year into the strategy, it is too soon to expect significant improvements but I am currently reviewing progress through the present round of accountability reviews. I am confident that the target will be met.

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will give figures for progress towards acute sector targets for Northern Ireland for 1983, 1986-87 and 1990.

Mr. Needham: The regional strategy for the health and personal social services 1987-1992 published in August 1987 establishes bed targets for the acute hospital sector based on 1983 data. The target for 1992 is 6,250 beds overall and by the end of 1987 the figure was 6,690.

Immunisation

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the current uptake level in Northern Ireland for measles, diphtheria, tetanus, polio and rubella immunisation; and what are his Department's target uptake levels.

Mr. Needham: The immunisation uptake rates for 1986; the most recent year for which information is available; together with minimum uptake targets to be achieved by 1992 are as follows:

	1986 Uptake Rates per cent.	*Minimum Uptake Targets per cent.*
Measles	51	90
Diphtheria	81	90
Tetanus	82	90
Polio	82	90
Rubella	94	95

Royal Ulster Constabulary

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many officers of the rank of inspector or above have resigned from the Royal Ulster Constabulary each year since 1983; for what reasons; and from which rank.

Mr. Tom King *[holding answer 21 June 1988]:* The information is as follows:

	1983		*1984*		*1985*	
	R[1]	*R*[2]	*R*[1]	*R*[2]	*R*[1]	*R*[2]
Deputy Chief Constable	—	—	—	1	—	—
Senior Assistant Chief Constable	—	—	—	—	—	1
Assistant Chief Constable	—	—	1	—	—	—
Chief Superintendent	1	—	—	1	1	4
Superintendent	—	—	—	9	—	8
Chief Inspector	—	—	—	2	—	7
Inspector	—	—	—	3	—	7
Totals	1	—	1	16	1	27

[1] Resigned—Reasons not given

[2] Resigned on Pension (ie after 25 or 30 years service)

	1986		*1987*		*1988*[3]	
	R[1]	*R*[2]	*R*[1]	*R*[2]	*R*[1]	*R*[2]
Deputy Chief Constable	—	—	—	—	—	—
Senior Assistant Chief Constable	—	—	—	—	—	—
Assistant Chief Constable	—	—	—	—	—	—
Chief Superintendent	—	8	—	5	—	1
Superintendent	—	7	—	4	—	—
Chief Inspector	—	6	—	4	—	—
Inspector	—	4	1	6	1	2
Totals	—	25	1	19	1	3

[1] Resigned—Reasons not given.

[2] Resigned on Pension (ie after 25 or 30 years service).

[3] Up to 31 May 1988.

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many officers of the rank of inspector or above who were interviewed for the purposes of the Stalker-Sampson report and in respect of whom there was evidence to suggest that they were guilty of the crime of perverting or attempting to pervert or conspiring to pervert the course of justice or any other offence relating to the shooting incidents in November and December 1982 in Armagh have resigned from the Royal Ulster Constabulary; and for what reasons.

Mr. Tom King *[holding answer 21 June 1988]:* I have seen only those parts of the Stalker-Sampson report which have a direct bearing on my responsibility for policing matters. I have therefore no knowledge of what evidence exists of possible offences relating to perverting the course of justice or of any person who might have been involved.

Irish Language

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will seek to establish a co-operation scheme with the Republic of Ireland for the cross-border exchange of Irish medium teachers for short periods during the school year.

Dr. Mawhinney *[holding answer 21 June 1988]:* We have no current plans to do so, but under existing reciprocal in-services arrangements, Northern Ireland teachers are able to attend Irish language courses in the Republic of Ireland.

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make available a copy of the Ministry of Education circular which declared the Irish textbook "Cosan an Oir" unsuitable for school use.

Dr. Mawhinney *[holding answer 21 June 1988]:* The Department of Education has not issued such a circular.

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) how many of the students who applied to study Irish/Celtic as part of the degree—bachelor of education course in 1985-86 were accepted;

(2) how many students applied to study Irish/Celtic as part of a bachelor of education course in 1985-86.

Dr. Mawhinney *[holding answer 21 June 1988]:* There were 57 applicants of whom 12 were accepted.

Modern Languages

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the level of financial support to teachers involved in modern languages in-service training in Northern Ireland.

Dr. Mawhinney *[holding answer 21 June 1988]:* Financial support in 1987-88 totalled £109,000.

DEFENCE

Royal Navy

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what representations he has received on his Department's policy towards the maintenance of a 50-ship fleet.

Mr. Ian Stewart: My colleagues and I have received 13 letters from hon. Members and others on this subject since the beginning of the year.

Mr. Allason: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how much of the Royal Navy's surface fleet is truly operational; and how many ships are currently undergoing sea trials and refits.

Mr. Ian Stewart: There are currently 126 ships in the surface fleet that are operational or engaged in preparing for service or trials or training. All these ships can be made available for operational deployment immediately or within a short period. In addition there are 17 ships in refit or on standby.

Low-flying Aircraft

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what recent representations he has received concerning military low-flying exercises in Wales.

Mr. Freeman: Between 1 April and 31 May 1988 the Ministry of Defence received 279 inquiries or complaints from Wales about low-flying military aircraft.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what minimum height is specified for military jet aircraft performing simulated attacks on RAF St. Athan; and within what range of airfield flying at the minimum height is permitted;

(2) what minimum height is specified for military jet aircraft performing simulated attacks on RAF Valley; and within what range of the airfield flying at the minimum height is permitted;

(3) what minimum height is specified for military jet aircraft performing simulated attacks on RAF Brawdy; and within what range of the airfield flying at the minimum height is permitted.

Mr. Freeman *[holding answer 13 June 1988]:* The information requested is as follows:

RAF station	*Height*
RAF Brawdy	— 200 ft
RAF Valley	— 100 ft (single aircraft) 500 ft (formations)
RAF St. Athan	— 100 ft (single aircraft) 500 ft (formations)

Such activity is permitted only within the boundaries of the stations themselves.

Mr. Adley: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if any low-flying aircraft were in the immediate vicinity of the A303 road at the Wylye bypass, between 12.00 and 13.30 on Thursday 16 June; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman *[holding answer 23 June 1988]:* Two Harriers from RAF Wittering were operating near the A303 Wylye bypass between 12.00 and 13.30 on 16 June. Two RAF Jaguars from RAF Coltishall were also operating in the vicinity between 11.30 and 11.50 on the same day.

Royal Naval Armament Depot, Beith

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what proportion of roof and other insulation material at the Royal Naval Armament Depot, Beith, is made of asbestos; what work is currently under way to replace this material; and what is the planned date by which the removal of all asbestos from the site will be completed.

Mr. Chope: I have been asked to reply.

Insulation material containing asbestos is present in the roof of one building at RNAD Beith. Asbestos material was used in the construction of some 15-20 per cent. of the remaining buildings on the site. Building components containing asbestos are replaced under normal maintenance procedures when they become life expired, and there is no planned date for the removal of all asbestos from the site.

Departmental Staff (Religious Affiliations)

Mr. McCusker: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he hopes to publish the results of the survey presently being undertaken to monitor the religious affiliation of civil servants employed by his Department in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Sainsbury: The results of the religious affiliation survey of home civil servants employed in Northern Ireland will be published when they have been collated and analysed.

Military Establishments

Mr. Leigh: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list all military establishments region by region which are currently surplus to military requirements, or are due to become surplus to military requirements in the next 12 months.

Mr. Freeman: We have already announced that MOD sites in the following areas are currently, or will become, surplus to defence requirements. Details of sites under consideration cannot be given for managerial and commercial reasons.

ENGLAND
Yorkshire and Humberside
Binbrook, Lincolnshire

East Midlands
Ruddington, Nottinghamshire
Newark, Nottinghamshire
Chilwell, Nottinghamshire
East Anglia
Orfordness, Suffolk

South East
Woolston, Hampshire
Priddy's Hard, Hampshire
Eastney, Hampshire
Artington, Surrey
Peninsula Barracks, Hampshire
Stoughton Barracks, Surrey
The Meadows, Surrey
Horseshoe Barracks, Essex
Whetstone, London
Hendon, London
Mychett, Surrey
Preston Barracks, Sussex
Infirmary Barracks, Kent
Gillingham, Kent
Bramley, Hampshire
Worthy Down, Hampshire
Harefield, London
Leavesden Airfield, Hertfordshire
Connaught Barracks, London
Plumstead, London
Beavers Lane Camp, London

South West
Filton Airfield, Avon
Factory, Locking, Avon
Plymouth, Devon (various locations)
Innsworth, Gloucestershire

West Midlands
Wood Farm Camp, Worcestershire

North West
Dean Row, Cheshire

SCOTLAND
Bridge of Don, Grampian

WALES
Vauxhall Camp, Monmouth
Llangennech, Dyfed

NORTHERN IRELAND

Departmental Staff

Ms. Quin: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will give for each standard planning region of England *(a)* the number of employees of his Department; *(b)* the amount spent in wages and salaries; and *(c)* the proportion of total expenditure in each region by his Department which is represented by personnel costs.

Mr. Sainsbury: For *(a)* I would refer the hon. Member to table 4.13 of volume 2 of "Statement on the Defence Estimates 1988", which gives the latest available figures. Figures for *(b)* and *(c)* are not readily available and could be prepared only at disproportionate cost.

Tactical Warhead

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether work has started since 21 January at the Atomic Weapons Research Establishment, Aldermaston, on the design of a new tactical warhead.

Mr. Sainsbury: I have nothing to add to my answer to the hon. Member for Leyton on 21 January, at column 774.

NATO (Briefings)

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many British *(a)* groups and *(b)* individuals visited North Atlantic Treaty Organisation headquarters in each of the past three years for briefings and information; what are the figures for visits from each other North Atlantic Treaty Organisation country, in numbers and in cost; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ian Stewart: Recent information on visitors to NATO headquarters is contained in the "NATO Information Service Survey of Output, 1987", a copy of which I have placed in the Library of the House. The cost of all such visits is met from the NATO information service budget, but details of the cost by individual nation or visit is not available.

Bangladeshi Military Personnel (Training)

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what proportion of the courses run by the British military advisory team training Bangladeshi military personnel deal with human rights issues;

(2) what proportion of the total year's training provided by the British military mission in Dhaka is given over to human rights training;

(3) what training in human rights issues is included in the courses run by British military advisers for Bangladeshi military personnel;

(4) what emphasis in the training provided by the British military mission in Dhaka is placed on the responsibility of each individual member of the Bangladeshi armed forces to ensure that human rights are protected;

(5) to what extent the training programme provided by the British military mission in Dhaka deals with the various categories of human rights violations that have been alleged against the Bangladeshi security forces in the recent past; and whether the programme spells out the appropriate and internationally recognised minimum standards applicable in such situations.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The British military advisory team in Bangladesh assists with military staff courses for all three services at the Bangladesh Defence Services Command and Staff College. The courses are not specifically directed at conditions in any one country: students from countries other than Bangladesh also attend the college. Although no specific training is given in human rights legislation, the courses include reference to the laws and conventions governing armed conflict and military aid to a civil power. The college training at all times emphasises high ethical standards in line with the British military tradition.

Service Personnel (Charges)

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if, in any country in which they are stationed, members of the armed forces pay charges under the fiscal regulations of the receiving state in respect of the provision of *(a)* refuse collection, *(b)* education services, *(c)* environmental health services and *(d)* water and drainage services; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman *[holding answer 23 June 1988]*: Members of the armed forces who are operating abroad under the provisions of the NATO status of forces agreement are exempt, under article X of the agreement, from any charges under the fiscal regulations of the receiving state in respect of the services listed by the hon. Member. It may be helpful, however, if I explain that within NATO Her Majesty's Government make a payment in lieu of rates (or their equivalent), or a direct payment for the services provided where this is appropriate. Outside NATO we generally seek to ensure that neither the service man, nor Her Majesty's Government, is liable to pay charges under the fiscal regulations of the receiving state for the provision of any essential services.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Pre-tax Income

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish in the *Official Report* the amount and share of pre-tax income accruing to *(a)* the top 1 per cent., *(b)* the top 5 per cent., *(c)* the top 10 per cent., *(d)* the top 25 per cent., *(e)* the top 50 per cent., *(f)* the top 75 per cent. and *(g)* all taxpayers in each year 1978-79 to 1988-89, and the amount and share of tax liability for each of these groups.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Estimates are given in the tables for 1978-79 and 1983-84 to 1988-89. Information for other years could be provided only at disproportionate cost. All estimates of income are based on information reported to tax offices and collected through the annual surveys of personal incomes. For years before 1985-86, estimates exclude employees' contributions to occupational pension schemes and some investment income on which tax is deducted at source.

Group of taxpayers

Year	Top 1 per cent. Amount £ billion	Top 1 per cent. Share per cent.	Top 5 per cent. Amount £ billion	Top 5 per cent. Share per cent.	Top 10 per cent. Amount £ billion	Top 10 per cent. Share per cent.	Top 25 per cent. Amount £ billion	Top 25 per cent. Share per cent.	Top 50 per cent. Amount £ billion	Top 50 per cent. Share per cent.	Top 75 per cent. Amount £ billion	Top 75 per cent. Share per cent.	All taxpayers Amount £ billion
Gross incomes before tax													
1978-79	5·1	5	15·0	15	24·3	24	45·9	45	72·6	71	91·4	89	102·8
1983-84	9·7	6	28·3	16	45·0	26	81·7	47	125·1	72	155·0	89	173·7
1984-85	10·9	6	31·4	17	49·6	26	89·3	47	135·8	72	168·5	89	188·8
1985-86[1]	13·6	6	36·4	17	56·7	27	101·8	48	154·2	72	190·0	89	213·1
1986-87[1]	14·6	6	39·4	17	61·4	27	110·2	48	166·5	73	204·6	89	228·9
1987-88[1]	16·1	7	43·3	17	67·4	27	121·0	49	182·1	73	223·4	90	249·0
1988-89[1]	18·2	7	48·5	17	75·3	27	134·8	49	202·7	73	248·9	90	277·4
Income tax liabilities													
1978-79	2·3	11	4·9	24	7·0	34	11·5	57	16·4	81	19·4	96	20·2
1983-84	3·8	11	8·5	26	12·2	36	19·5	58	27·4	82	31·9	96	33·4
1984-85	4·2	12	9·3	26	13·3	38	21·1	60	29·2	82	33·9	96	35·4
1985-86[1]	5·5	14	11·2	28	15·4	39	23·9	61	32·8	83	37·8	96	39·5
1986-87[1]	5·9	14	12·1	29	16·6	40	25·6	61	34·9	83	40·1	96	41·9
1987-88[1]	6·6	15	13·2	30	17·9	41	27·2	62	36·8	84	42·2	96	44·1
1988-89[1]	5·7	13	12·5	28	17·3	39	27·0	61	37·0	83	42·6	96	44·5

[1] Provisional; includes estimates of occupational pension contributions and investment income not reported to tax offices.

Tax Liabilities

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will show, for the tax base existing in each year from 1979-80 to 1988-89, the difference between actual tax liabilities and liabilities under the indexed 1978-79 tax regime, for each of the following tax groups: top 1 per cent., top 2 to 5 per cent., top 6 to 10 per cent., top 11 to 20 per cent., top 21 to 30 per cent., top 31 to 40 per cent., top 41 to 50 per cent. and the bottom 50 per cent.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Estimates are not available in the precise form requested. For each financial year shown in the table, the yield from the tax regime in that year is compared with the yield under the 1978-79 tax regime. All estimates are based on a provisional 1988-89 income base projected from the 1985-86 survey of personal incomes and all tax regimes are indexed to 1988-89 levels according to the statutory formula. The comparison therefore allows for budgetary changes in income tax since 1978-79 but not for changes in definition or any other factors which might affect the income base.

Reductions (+)/increases (−) in income tax compared with 1978-79 indexed regime (£ billion)

Point of income distribution in 1988-89[1]	Number of units paying tax in 1988-89[2] (millions)	1979-80	1980-81	1981-82	1982-83	1983-84	1984-85	1985-86	1986-87	1987-88	
Top 1 per cent.	0·21	2·4	2·2	1·9	2·0	2·1	2·7	2·7	2·7	2·8	4·7
Top 2 to 5 per cent.	0·84	1·5	1·3	0·7	0·7	1·1	1·4	1·5	1·7	2·0	2·8
Top 6 to 10 per cent.	1·00	0·8	0·7	0·3	0·3	0·6	0·8	0·9	1·0	1·4	1·8
Top 11 to 20 per cent.	2·10	1·0	0·8	0·4	0·4	0·7	0·9	1·1	1·4	1·9	2·6
Top 21 to 30 per cent.	2·10	0·8	0·6	0·2	0·2	0·4	0·6	0·8	1·0	1·4	1·9
Top 31 to 40 per cent.	2·10	0·6	0·4	0·1	0·2	0·3	0·5	0·6	0·8	1·0	1·5
Top 41 to 50 per cent.	2·10	0·5	0·4	0·1	0·1	0·3	0·4	0·5	0·7	0·9	1·3
Bottom 50 per cent.[3]	10·50	1·4	0·8	−0·6	−0·4	0·4	0·9	1·4	1·7	2·4	3·4
All	20·90	9·0	7·2	3·0	3·5	5·9	8·2	9·5	11·0	13·9	20·0

[1] Based on 20,900,000 single people and married couples expected to pay tax in 1988-89 and excluding 1,100,000 who would pay tax under the revalorised 1978-79 regime.

[2] All information is in terms of tax units, i.e. married couples are counted as one and their incomes combined.

[3] Including reductions and/or increases for 10·5 million units paying tax in 1988-89 and other units who would pay tax under the revalorised regimes for each year.

Unlimited Liability Insurance

Mr. Wheeler: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer which Government Departments, and under what circumstances, seek to require contractors to provide for unlimited liability insurance as part of any agreed contract of service.

Mr. Brooke: It is unlikely that any Government Department will require, in any circumstances, a contractor to provide for unlimited liability insurance as part of an agreed contract of service. Under the standard conditions used in departmental contracts, a contractor may have unlimited liability for any costs arising from a default by him. But it is normally left to the contractor to determine what insurance he needs. In certain cases, however, a contractor may be required to insure for a particular level of cover.

Credit-checking Services

Mr. Wheeler: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will state the implementation date for the revised customs interpretation of the value added tax treatment of credit-checking services; and if such services remain standard rated.

Mr. Lilley: The service of checking on the creditworthiness of a particular subject is standard-rated for VAT purposes. This has been so since the inception of the tax; there has been no recent change in Customs' interpretation of the law. If my hon. Friend has a particular case in mind, perhaps he would like to write to me.

Nationalised Industries (Manpower)

Mr. Blair: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing, for the years 1979-80 to 1988-89, for each organisation treated as a nationalised industry in at least one year, in the external financing tables of the annual public expenditure White Paper, the number of employees, indicating whether these are on a head-count or full-time equivalent basis.

Mr. Major: The three tables show, for the years 1979-80 to 1986-87, the number of employees for each organisation treated as a nationalised industry in at least one year during that period. The data are taken from individual industries' annual report and accounts. In the large majority of cases, these are not yet available for 1987-88. It is neither the public nor the private sector's practice to provide employee projections for future years.

Table One: Employees (year end unless stated), Financial Accounting Years

	1979-80	*1980-81*	*1981-82*	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	*1984-85*	*1985-86*	*1986-87*
BA[1][2]	56,866	52,578	43,221	37,517	36,794	38,240	39,969	40,440
BAA[2]	7,655	7,459	7,120	7,094	6,969	6,959	7,238	7,462
BGC	103,900	106,000	105,500	103,000	99,200	95,300	91,500	88,469
BT[3]	240,056	246,725	251,647	245,976	241,124	235,178	235,988	234,927
BS[4][5]	78,300	69,980	66,613	64,444	58,200	45,700	10,160	8,642
BSC	181,000	142,200	112,100	92,300	75,900	70,850	64,700	53,950
CAA	7,555	7,547	7,433	7,256	7,036	6,824	6,691	6,442
ESI	158,780	154,910	146,655	141,385	137,210	133,718	131,466	131,067
Giro[5]	4,940	5,116	5,294	5,169	5,091	5,554	5,869	5,838
BCC[5]	297,000	296,000	282,000	268,000	243,300	22,580	199,600	162,800
NSHEB	4,146	4,115	4,005	3,920	3,840	3,830	3,767	3,795
Posts[6]	178,406	181,310	177,778	176,158	175,287	177,381	179,753	185,723
RWAs	62,679	62,125	60,563	58,350	55,177	51,780	50,180	48,206
SSEB	13,658	13,624	13,005	12,720	12,307	12,019	12,172	12,339

Notes:

[1] Worldwide employees. Excludes parent company employees not on BA contracts of employment from 1981-82 onwards.

[2] Year average for 1986-87 onwards. Excludes BCal employees.

[3] 1979-80: Post Office Telecommunications excluding share of PO HQ staff.

[4] 1979-80 to 1984-85: includes warship yards (not separately distinguishable).

[5] Year average.

[6] Excludes sub-postmasters.

Table Two: Employees (year average unless stated) Calendar Accounting Years

Periods	*1979*	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*
ABP[1]	11,455	11,455	10,874	9,569	8,956	8,231	6,872	6,355
BAe[2]	75,110	74,130	75,520	80,142	77,980	77,980	75,998	75,500
BNOC[3]	1,423	1,651	2,137	108	128	123	86	—
NBC[4]	63,429	58,399	53,172	51,951	51,561	50,845	—	—
NFC[5]	34,459	30,995	23,943	24,521	23,125	23,158	25,732	25,431
STG	13,342	12,336	11,067	10,527	10,364	10,309	10,219	10,732

Notes to Table Two:

(1) Formerly British Transport Docks Board.

(2) Year end for 1979.

(3) Wound up in 1985. North Sea oil exploration and production transferred to Britoil in 1982.

(4) Group total. Aggregation of privatised units after 1984 would involve disproportionate cost.

(5) Year end for 1979 and 1980.

Table Three: Employees (year end unless stated), Mixed Accounting

Periods	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	[1]1984-85	1985-86	1986-87
BRB	244,084	239,680	227,171	212,722	200,789	180,669	173,760	166,989
BWB[2]	3,185	3,283	3,223	3,184	3,171	3,152	3,081	2,983
LRT	60,449	59,879	59,748	58,072	57,400	55,800	51,920	47,291

Notes to Table Three:

(1) 15 month period.

(2) Year average.

Notes to all tables:

(a) It is conventional in company accounts to provide employee data on a full-time equivalent basis although annual reports and accounts do not always state that such a convention has been followed.

(b) Estimates refer to direct United Kingdom employment unless stated.

Housing Expenditure

Mr. Soley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish a table showing the share of total public spending taken up by housing spending *(a)* in Great Britain and *(b)* in England, in each of the years from 1974 to 1987.

Mr. Major: The table shows, for Great Britain and England, identifiable public expenditure on the housing function as a percentage of total identifiable public expenditure:

Percentages

	Great Britain	England
1982-83	4·0	3·7
1983-84	4·4	4·1
1984-85	4·1	4·0
1985-86	3·4	3·3
1986-87	3·0	2·8

The term "identifiable expenditure" refers to expenditure that can be indentified from official records as having been incurred in a particular territory. Total identifiable expenditure accounts for just over 80 per cent. of total public departmental expenditure: it excludes expenditure on defence, overseas aid and other overseas services which are deemed to have been incurred on behalf of the United Kingdom as a whole. It also excludes Government net landing to, and the market and overseas borrowing of, the public corporations (including nationalised industries), due to the difficulty of allocating this finance to expenditure in a particular country.

Figures prior to 1982-83 are not available on a consistent basis because of changes in definition that have taken place between different public expenditure White Papers. Figures for 1987-88 are not yet available.

Parliamentary Questions

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he will reply to the question tabled by the hon. Member for Coventry, South-East concerning pre-tax incomes and tax liabilities, for answer on 27 May.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Today.

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he expects to reply to the question tabled by the hon. Member for Birkenhead on the cumulative impact of Budget changes, tabled for answer on 9 June.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Today.

Planning Totals

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table, showing for the years 1975-76 to 1987-88 in a form consistent with table 2.18 of Cm. 288-I, the planning totals analysed by Department and spending authority.

Mr. Major: The information requested is given for the years 1982-83 to 1987-88. Since Cm. 288 there have been some minor reallocations from Voted receipts subject to cash limits to Consolidated Fund extra receipts which are not cash limited. A table on this revised basis for 1988-89 is also given. Corresponding figures for earlier years are not readily available.

Planning total by department and spending authority plans for 1982-83

£ million

	Central government			Local authorities	Public corporations		Planning total		
	Voted in Estimates		Other		Voted in Estimates	Other	Voted in Estimates	Other	Total
	Cash limited	Other							
Departments									
Defence	14,395	—	−4	—	6	−33	14,401	−37	14,364
Foreign and Commonwealth Office	1,360	106	44	—	34	−54	1,501	−10	1,490
European Communities	−111	−985	1,685	—	—	—	−1096	1,685	589
Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food	334	1,207	−4	213	50	−2	1,591	207	1,798
Trade and Industry	398	1,720	−350	62	892	−551	3,009	−840	2,169
Energy	315	84	−4	—	700	−193	1,099	−197	902
Employment	1,470	341	491	85	12	−2	1,823	575	2,398
Transport	923	150	−6	2,379	887	6	1,960	2,379	4,338
DOE—Housing	29	1,086	327	1,143	117	8	1,233	1,478	2,711
DOE—Other environmental services	226	6	—	2,952	109	257	340	3,208	3,549

	Central government			Local authorities	Public corporations		Planning total		
	Voted in Estimates		Other		Voted in Estimates	Other	Voted in Estimates	Other	Total
	Cash limited	Other							
Home Office and legal departments	785	324	−98	3,147	—	—	1,109	3,048	4,157
Education and Science	2,047	19	−4	10,680	—	—	2,065	10,676	12,741
Arts and Libraries	241	—	−2	367	—	—	241	365	606
DHSS—Health and personal social services	9,204	2,616	10	2,038	—	4	11,820	2,051	13,871
DHSS—Social security	578	11,508	19,331	1,037	—	−4	12,086	20,364	32,451
Scotland	1,774	1,057	−22	3,268	200	232	3,030	3,479	6,509
Wales	748	407	13	1,242	67	28	1,222	1,284	2,506
Northern Ireland	138	—	2,603	519	—	304	138	3,426	3,564
Chancellor's departments	1,117	664	70	—	−2	−7	1,778	63	1,841
Other departments	693	1,026	−291	—	—	−4	1,719	−295	1,424
Privatisation proceeds	—	—	−488	—	—	—	—	−488	−488
Planning total	36,665	21,336	23,299	29,132	3,070	−12	61,071	52,420	113,491

Planning total by department and spending authority plans for 1983-84

£ million

	Central government			Local authorities	Public corporations		Planning total		
	Voted in Estimates		Other		Voted in Estimates	Other	Voted in Estimates	Other	Total
	Cash limited	Other							
Departments									
Defence	15,475	—	−10	—	5	4	15,480	−6	15,474
Foreign and Commonwealth Office	1,530	82	36	—	37	4	1,649	40	1,689
European Communities	−157	−850	1,842	—	—	—	−1,008	1,842	834
Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food	381	1,445	−6	181	31	−1	1,858	174	2,032
Trade and Industry	527	992	−218	66	711	−354	2,230	−505	1,725
Energy	314	198	−2	—	742	−144	1,254	−146	1,108
Employment	1,934	380	490	95	−1	—	2,314	586	2,900
Transport	944	97	−6	2,523	912	−161	1,952	2,357	4,309
DOE—Housing	30	1,183	−114	1,934	119	1	1,332	1,821	3,153
DOE—Other environmental services	278	5	—	3,050	150	322	433	3,372	3,805
Home Office and legal departments	926	353	−117	3,417	—	—	1,279	3,300	4,579
Education and Science	2,144	23	−4	11,260	—	—	2,168	11,256	13,424
Arts and Libraries	245	—	—	402	—	—	245	401	646
DHSS—Health and personal social services	9,678	2,822	11	2,208	—	13	12,500	2,232	14,732
DHSS—Social security	751	11,454	20,422	2,556	−2	−22	12,202	22,957	35.159
Scotland	1,890	940	−21	3,554	192	288	3,022	3,820	6,842
Wales	818	385	10	1,384	50	31	1,253	1,425	2,679
Northern Ireland	136	—	2,796	560	—	328	136	3,685	3,821
Chancellor's departments	1,323	202	99	—	−2	−9	1,523	90	1,612
Other departments	670	1,112	−833	—	—	−4	1,782	−837	945
Privatisation proceeds	—	—	−1,142	—	—	—	—	−1,142	−1,142
Planning total	39,837	20,824	23,234	33,192	2,944	295	63,605	56,721	120,326

Planning total by department and spending authority plans for 1984-85

£ million

	Central government			Local authorities	Public corporations		Planning total		
	Voted in Estimates		Other		Voted in Estimates	Other	Voted in Estimates	Other	Total
	Cash limited	Other							
Departments									
Defence	17,110	—	−10	—	5	83	17,115	72	17,187
Foreign and Commonwealth Office	1,603	84	75	—	39	3	1,726	78	1,804
European Communities	−147	−657	1,779	—	—	—	−805	1,779	974
Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food	409	1,413	−13	168	24	−2	1,846	153	1,999
Trade and Industry	621	1,033	−63	71	872	−536	2,527	−528	1,999
Energy	312	204	−2	—	1,613	463	2,129	462	2,591
Employment	2,267	371	395	103	−1	−4	2,638	495	3,132

	Central government			Local authorities	Public corporations		Planning total		
	Voted in Estimates		Other		Voted in Estimates	Other	Voted in Estimates	Other	Total
	Cash limited	Other							
Transport	1,050	106	−6	2,654	867	−73	2,024	2,575	4,598
DOE—Housing	32	1,160	−51	2,009	119	−7	1,311	1,951	3,262
DOE—Other environmental services	321	6	−1	3,221	140	260	468	3,480	3,948
Home Office and legal departments	1,000	408	−108	3,862	—	−3	1,408	3,751	5,159
Education and Science	2,221	32	−4	11,692	—	—	2,253	11,688	13,941
Arts and Libraries	268	—	—	431	—	—	268	431	698
DHSS—Health and personal social services	10,293	3,106	9	2,352	—	23	13,399	2,384	15,783
DHSS—Social security	781	12,885	21,558	2,893	−4	—	13,662	24,451	38,114
Scotland	2,025	962	−14	3,556	187	397	3,174	3,940	7,114
Wales	827	431	−8	1,344	48	36	1,306	1,372	2,678
Northern Ireland	143	—	2,976	593	—	393	143	3,962	4,105
Chancellor's departments	1,415	237	38	—	−2	−9	1,649	29	1,678
Other departments	770	1,184	−821	—	—	7	1,954	−814	1,140
Privatisation proceeds	—	—	−2,132	—	—	—	—	−2,132	−2,132
Planning total	43,319	22,965	23,597	34,950	3,909	1,031	70,193	59,578	129,772

Planning total by department and spending authority plans for 1985-86

£ million

	Central government			Local authorities	Public corporations		Planning total		
	Voted in Estimates		Other		Voted in Estimates	Other	Voted in Estimates	Other	Total
	Cash limited	Other							
Departments									
Defence	17,937	—	−16	—	−3	36	17,934	20	17,954
Foreign and Commonwealth Office	1,633	89	87	—	41	−7	1,763	80	1,843
European Communities	−222	−479	1,518	—	—	—	−702	1,518	816
Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food	430	1,843	−6	154	16	−1	2,288	148	2,436
Trade and Industry	605	945	−190	77	656	−252	2,206	−365	1,840
Energy	304	576	−2	—	912	−1,109	1,793	−1,111	682
Employment	2,551	258	430	106	11	—	2,820	536	3,356
Transport	1,084	145	−14	2,377	1,172	−137	2,400	2,226	4,626
DOE—Housing	34	1,184	−28	1,691	90	−8	1,308	1,656	2,964
DOE—Other environmental services	332	6	−1	3,285	135	146	472	3,430	3,902
Home Office and legal departments	1,083	469	−124	3,889	—	—	1,551	3,765	5,316
Eduation and Science	2,323	39	−4	12,055	—	—	2,363	12,052	14,414
Arts and Libraries	284	—	—	456	—	—	284	456	740
DHSS—Health and personal social services	10,864	3,296	12	2,445	—	23	14,159	2,479	16,639
DHSS—Social security	834	14,353	23,083	3,211	−3	—	15,184	26,294	41,478
Scotland	2,157	1,000	−13	3,590	202	279	3,359	3,857	7,215
Wales	874	461	—	1,386	42	19	1,377	1,405	2,781
Northern Ireland	158	—	3,167	641	—	398	158	4,206	4,364
Chancellor's departments	1,530	292	10	—	−2	−20	1,819	−10	1,809
Other departments	769	1,286	−838	—	—	−5	2,055	−843	1,212
Privatisation proceeds	—	—	−2,707	—	—	—	—	−2,707	−2,707
Planning total	45,562	25,762	24,365	35,363	3,267	−638	74,591	59,090	133,681

Planning total by department and spending authority plans for 1986-87

£ million

	Central government			Local authorities	Public corporations		Planning total		
	Voted in Estimates		Other		Voted in Estimates	Other	Voted in Estimates	Other	Total
	Cash limited	Other							
Departments									
Defence	18,161	—	—	—	—	−12	18,161	−12	18,149
Foreign and Commonwealth Office	1,692	93	118	—	31	−7	1,816	110	1,926
European Communities	−234	−1,319	2,632	—	—	—	−1,554	2,632	1,079

	Central government			Local authorities	Public corporations		Planning total		
	Voted in Estimates		Other		Voted in Estimates	Other	Voted in Estimates	Other	Total
	Cash limited	Other							
Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food	431	1,150	−4	167	13	−1	1,595	163	1,757
Trade and Industry	585	1,510	−11	79	310	−136	2,404	−68	2,337
Energy	290	621	−2	—	833	−1,931	1,744	−1,932	−189
Employment	3,278	140	339	115	4	—	3,422	454	3,876
Transport	1,168	108	−16	2,464	1,050	−65	2,326	2,383	4,709
DOE—Housing	38	1,244	24	1,303	85	−58	1,367	1,269	2,637
DOE—Other environmental services	354	7	—	3,381	148	−20	510	3,361	3,870
Home Office and legal departments	1,200	513	−133	4,245	—	—	1,713	4,112	5,826
Education and Science	2,410	49	—	13,232	—	—	2,459	13,232	15,691
Arts and Libraries	337	—	—	480	—	—	337	480	817
DHSS—Health and personal social services	11,643	3,536	—	2,738	—	27	15,179	2,764	17,944
DHSS—Social security	1,037	15,205	24,705	3,469	—	—	16,242	28,174	44,416
Scotland	2,285	1,027	−3	3,942	198	282	3,510	4,222	7,732
Wales	942	511	—	1,540	43	22	1,496	1,562	3,058
Northern Ireland	161	—	3,429	716	—	327	161	4,473	4,634
Chancellor's departments	1,735	417	−77	—	—	−7	2,152	−84	2,068
Other departments	249	1,220	−152	—	—	—	1,373	−56	1,317
Privatisation proceeds	—	—	−4,422	—	—	—	—	−4,422	−4,422
Planning total	47,761	26,032	26,429	37,872	2,717	−1,579	76,414	62,818	139,232

Planning total by department and spending authority plans for 1987-88

£ million

	Central government			Local authorities	Public corporations		Planning total		
	Voted in Estimates		Other		Voted in Estimates	Other	Voted in Estimates	Other	Total
	Cash limited	Other							
Departments									
Defence	18,850	—	—	—	—	—	18,850	—	18,850
Foreign and Commonwealth Office	1,790	94	153	—	30	−22	1,913	131	2,044
European Communities	−243	−1,354	2,997	—	—	—	−1,597	2,997	1,400
Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food	450	1,429	−5	169	17	—	1,896	164	2,060
Trade and Industry	627	580	—	89	127	−362	1,333	−272	1,061
Energy	284	310	—	—	840	−1,165	1,434	−1,165	269
Employment	3,692	—	145	127	4	—	3,696	272	3,967
Transport	1,302	126	−10	2,473	1,061	−230	2,488	2,233	4,721
DOE—Housing	42	1,209	45	1,141	84	−72	1,335	1,115	2,450
DOE—Other environmental services	408	22	—	3,641	225	−300	655	3,342	3,996
Home Office and legal departments	1,449	594	−150	4,760	—	—	2,043	4,610	6,653
Education and Science	2,641	62	—	14,467	—	—	2,703	14,467	17,169
Arts and Libraries	361	—	—	524	—	—	361	524	885
DHSS—Health and personal social services	12,600	3,912	14	3,027	—	12	16,511	3,053	19,565
DHSS—Social security	1,212	15,655	25,770	3,764	—	—	16,867	29,533	46,401
Scotland	2,480	1,016	−2	4,326	198	193	3,694	4,517	8,212
Wales	1,050	506	10	1,665	78	1	1,634	1,675	3,309
Northern Ireland	178	—	3,632	754	—	346	178	4,732	4,910
Chancellor's departments	1,876	464	−23	—	—	−7	2,339	−30	2,309
Other departments	280	1,296	−104	—	—	—	1,501	−30	1,472
Privatisation proceeds	—	—	−5,000	—	—	—	—	−5,000	−5,000
Adjustment	—	—	596	—	—	—	—	596	596
Planning total	51,328	25,920	28,668	40,926	2,663	−1,605	79,837	67,463	147,300

Planning total by department and spending authority plans for 1988-89

£ million

	Central government			*Local authorities*	*Public corporations*		*Planning total*		
	Voted in Estimates		*Other*		*Voted in Estimates*	*Other*	*Voted in Estimates*	*Other*	*Total*
	Cash limited	*Other*							
Departments									
Defence	19,208	—	—	—	—	—	19,208	—	19,208
Foreign and Commonwealth Office	1,914	98	114	—	32	−1	2,044	113	2,157
European Communities	−213	−1,383	2,395	—	—	—	−1,596	2,395	800
Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food	487	1,505	—	200	20	—	2,012	200	2,212
Trade and Industry	742	641	—	91	99	−205	1,482	−113	1,369
Energy	325	187	—	—	401	−793	913	−793	120
Employment	3,972	—	139	131	1	—	3,973	270	4,242
Transport	1,347	118	−9	2,649	873	168	2,338	2,809	5,147
DOE—Housing	48	1,175	97	1,687	88	−75	1,311	1,709	3,020
DOE—Other environmental services	419	22	—	3,372	251	−251	692	3,121	3,813
Home Office and legal departments	1,608	662	−179	4,935	—	—	2,269	4,756	7,025
Education and Science	2,871	67	—	15,032	—	—	2,939	15,032	17,971
Arts and Libraries	417	—	—	497	—	—	417	497	913
DHSS—Health and personal social services	13,345	4,189	15	3,124	—	10	17,535	3,148	20,683
DHSS—Social security	1,257	16,444	26,752	4,007	—	—	17,701	30,759	48,460
Scotland	2,686	1,010	−2	4,409	208	195	3,904	4,603	8,506
Wales	1,178	478	8	1,683	89	14	1,746	1,705	3,451
Northern Ireland	196	—	3,800	825	—	323	196	4,948	5,144
Chancellor's departments	1,866	507	95	—	—	−7	2,373	88	2,461
Other departments	289	1,464	−147	—	—	—	1,628	−22	1,607
Reserve	—	—	3,500	—	—	—	—	3,500 −5,000	3,500
Privatisation proceeds	—	—	−5,000	—	—	—	—		−5,000
Planning total	53,962	27,184	31,579	42,642	2,061	−622	83,082	73,724	156,806

Social Security

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish in the *Official Report* an analysis of plans and outturns for programme 15, social security, for the years 1982-83 to 1990-91 in a form analogous to table 1·5 of Cmnd. 288-I.

Mr. Major: The information requested on programme 15 is as follows.

Social Security Expenditure in Great Britain[1]: Plans and Outturn

£ billion

	1982-83	*1983-84*	*1984-85*	*1985-86*	*1986-87*	*1987-88*	*1988-89*	*1989-90*	*1990-91*
March 1982 White Paper (Cmnd. 8494)	32·0	33·5	35·4						
February 1983 White Paper (Cmnd. 8789)	32·4	34·4	35·9	37·9					
February 1984 White Paper (Cmnd. 9143)	32·4	35·3	37·2	39·5	41·6				
January 1985 White Paper (Cmnd. 9428)	32·4	35·2	37·9	40·1	41·9	44·0			
January 1986 White Paper (Cmnd. 9702)	32·4	35·2	38·1	41·2	42·9	44·4	45·9		
January 1987 White Paper (Cmnd. 56)	32·5	35·2	38·1	41·5	44·5	46·0	47·5	49·3	
January 1988 White Paper (Cmnd. 288)	32·5	35·2	38·1	41·5	44·4	46·4	48·5	51·1	53·6

[1] Including administration.

Public and Government Expenditure

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table, for the years 1982-83 to 1990-91 providing a detailed reconciliation between the public expenditure planning total and general Government expenditure.

Mr. Major: A detailed reconciliation between the public expenditure planning total and general Government expenditure for outturn years was given in "The Government's Expenditure Plans 1988-89 to 1990-91" Cm 288-1, Table 6.4 with an associated explanation. The differences between these two aggregates for later years are estimates and individual components would be subject to considerable margins of error.

GNP (Definition)

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if the Government have now agreed to the European Commission's proposal for a directive on the harmonisation of definitions of gross national products; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: The Commission's proposal for a directive on the harmonisation of definitions of gross national product (GNP) (document 5647/88 (COM(88)176)) forms part of a package of measures to implement the conclusions of the European Council in February on the future financing of the Community. The proposal has been deposited in Parliament, and an explanatory memorandum was submitted on 20 May. The substance of the directive has now been agreed by member states in a way consistent with the United Kingdom's interests, ensuring that GNP data will be rigorously controlled with involvement by member states, and compiled in a way that does not put unreasonable burdens on them. In view of a recommendation by the Select Committee on European Legislation that the proposal should be debated, the United Kingdom placed a Parliamentary scrutiny reserve on it in Council discussions. It subsequently proved necessary however for the United Kingdom to lift this reserve to enable the Council to adopt a common position on the proposal, along with the rest of the future financing package, at the Agriculture Council on 16 June.

This was done in preparation for a conciliation meeting with the European Parliament on 20 June, and notwithstanding the fact that, for technical legal reasons, formal adoption of the GNP directive itself cannot take place until the proposed new decision on the Community's system of own resources has been approved by national Parliaments. I regret that it was not possible to arrange a debate on the draft directive before the common position was adopted: the Government took the view that it would not be in the United Kingdom's interest to hold up a common position on the future financing package as a whole, which we strongly support, not least in its effect on strengthening budget discipline; indeed, the Government made clear that the various future financing measures must be agreed as a package. The broader issues raised by the future financing package were of course debated by the House on 19 May. The Government will seek to ensure that the House has an early opportunity to debate the GNP directive itself.

TRANSPORT

Traffic

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what was the increase in rigid lorry traffic in the first quarter of 1988; and what was his Department's forecast;

(2) what was the increase in motor traffic in the first quarter of 1988 over the first quarter of 1987; and what were his Department's forecasts;

(3) what was the increase in motorway traffic in the first quarter of 1988 over the first quarter of 1987; and what were his Department's forecasts.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The estimated increases in vehicle kilometres on the first quarter of 1987 were:

	Per cent.
All motor vehicles	13
Rigid Heavy Goods Vehicles	11
All motor vehicles on motorways	19

Forecasts are not made for particular three-month periods or particular road classes. There are no separate forecasts for rigid goods vehicles which are included in those for the heavy goods vehicle category.

The latest traffic forecasts for all vehicle categories are given in table 2.42 of "Transport Statistics of Great Britain 1976-1986", which is held in the Library.

A10 (Dualling)

Mr. Paice: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans exist for dualling the A10 from Cambridge to Ely.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: There are no proposals at present. We shall continue to keep the situation under review.

Road Accidents

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what percentage of accidents involving road vehicles, for each of the last five years, are attributable to *(a)* driver error, *(b)* vehicle disrepair or faultiness, with particular regard to vehicle tyre condition; what was the number of people killed, seriously injured or injured as a result of those accidents, for each category of principal causal factor; and what action he intends to take to seek to reduce the casualty toll.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The information requested is not collected on the STATS 19 form, and cannot be provided in the form requested.

Studies carried out by TRRL during the 1970s indicated that human error was a contributory factor in 95 per cent. of all road accidents and was the main cause in about 70 per cent. of them. A more recent study suggests that 5 per cent. of road accidents have vehicle defects as their main contributory factor.

We have set up a behavioural studies unit at TRRL, and put in hand new research into driver behaviour. We are also considering the recommendations of the North report as regards the enforcement of vehicle standards.

Tolls

Mr. Thorne: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will consider waiving the toll charges at estuarial crossings during those holiday weekends when motorists can expect to experience frustrating delays.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The Severn bridge is the only estuarial crossing for which the Secretary of State is directly empowered to levy tolls. There are no plans to waive these at peak times.

Casualty Values

Mr. Stevens: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he proposes to make any changes to the casualty values used in transport appraisals.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: In the light of the recommendations of the report of the interdepartmental review of road safety we have carried out a comprehensive review of the available research evidence on the valuation of fatal casualties. Following this review we now propose to increase significantly the value to be attached to a fatal road accident casualty, from the present level of £283,000 to £500,000. This new figure would be adopted by the Scottish, Welsh and Northern Ireland offices in addition to the Department of Transport. A consultation paper dealing with this—"Valuation of Road Accident Fatalities" has been published today. A copy has been placed in the Library.

Last year, values for casualties were increased as an interim measure in line with the increase in the value of time savings. At the time of that announcement we made it clear that the basis of valuation would be kept under review. Research into what people are willing to pay to reduce accident risks both in the United Kingdom and the United States of America yielded a wide range of values. Although the available evidence does not point unequivocally to any single valuation and a considerable element of judgment seems unavoidable, the Government believe a significantly higher value for a fatal casualty is justified, and considers that the figure proposed should command widespread support. Because of the importance of minimising uncertainty on road improvement schemes already at public inquiry or awaiting a final decision from the appropriate Secretary of State a final decision on the new value needs to be reached quickly. We have therefore sought views from those directly concerned by mid-August. We shall also give careful consideration to any other views we receive. Current values of accident costs will continue to be used until there is a further announcement.

An increased value for fatality costs should increase the emphasis on safety in road schemes, particularly the smaller schemes which can often do so much to reduce casualties. The proposed change underlines our continuing commitment to make our roads safer for everyone.

Rebuilt Car Write-offs

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) if he will take steps to ensure that all persons and organisations who were consulted by the Association of Chief Police Officers in preparing a report on rebuilt car write-offs will be given the opportunity to comment on the draft report:

(2) if he will place in the Library a copy of the draft report of the Association of Chief Police Officers on rebuilt car write-offs.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Home Department has received a copy of the final report. In preparing it, the Association of Chief Police Officers took full account of the views of all those consulted, although the Government are not in any way committed to its conclusions. My right hon. Friend will be carrying out such further consultation as he considers necessary. A copy of the final report has been placed in the Library.

Women Motorists (Assistance)

Mr. Dickens: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will launch a national campaign to encourage women motorists and passengers to render assistance to stranded women motorists.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Our advice is:

> "Before going on any long journey make sure your vehicle is in good condition and has enough fuel. If you break down on the motorway, get your car as near to an emergency phone as possible. If you cannot see a phone look for the marker arrows and follow them—they show the direction of the nearest phone. While on the hard shoulder, or telephoning, keep a sharp look out, and do not accept lifts from strangers; wait for the police or breakdown service."

We encourage drivers to be courteous and helpful to others, both while on the road, and in the event of accidents or breakdowns.

Gade Valley Viaduct, M25

Mr. Robert B. Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement of the remedial work on the M25 Gade valley viaduct.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Additional welding was carried out as part of the original contract for M25 to correct minor deficiencies in the construction of the viaduct. The integrity of the structure is not in doubt. There is no danger to the travelling public from the continuing use of the road.

Integrated Ticketing (Greater London)

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what action he expects to take to maintain or extend the current systems of integrated period ticketing covering both bus and rail services in Greater London; what studies or reports he has commissioned or received encouraging multi-mode journeys; and if he will direct London Regional Transport to retain this facility.

Mr. David Mitchell: Fares structures and ticketing are matters for the operators concerned. No specific studies have been commissioned or received, but my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State discusses such matters with the chairmen of British Rail and London Regional Transport from time to time in the London Passenger Transport Group.

Cross-Channel Ferries

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list in the *Official Report* each roll-on/roll-off cross-Channel passenger ferry currently operating out of Dover, its maximum passenger load and the number of occasions on which each ship was inspected by his Department in the last six months without notification; and if he is satisfied that all such ships have been operated with the recommended manning levels.

Mr. David Mitchell: Roll-on/roll-off cross-Channel passenger ferries currently operating out of Dover.

Ferry	*Maximum Passenger load*
European Clearway	107
European Endeavour	107
European Trader	107
Pride of Bruges	1,326
Pride of Calais	2,290
Pride of Dover	2,290
Pride of Kent	1,326
Pride of Sandwich	1,035
St. Anselm	1,350
St. Christopher	1,400

Ferry	Maximum Passenger load
Champs Elysees	1,804
Cote D'Azur	1,600
Nord Pas De Calais	30
Prince Laurent	1,302
Princess Marie Christine	1,200
Prins Albert	1,200
Prinses Beatrix	1,500
Prinses Marie Esmeralda	1,280
Reine Astrid	1,200
Saint Eloi	1,000

Although it is the Department's normal policy to undertake some inspections without prior notification to the owner, no such inspections have been carried out in the past six months on the vessels listed above because of the large number of pre-arranged inspections that have been required. On each occasion that an inspection was carried out the manning level was satisfactory.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the recommended bridge personnel complement on a roll-on/roll-off cross-Channel ferry.

Mr. David Mitchell: It is a statutory requirement that the bridge is manned by a duly certificated deck officer at all times when the ship is at sea. A helmsman is also required when the ship is not in automatic steering and must be immediately available to take the wheel. A lookout must be posted during the hours of darkness, during restricted visibility and at any other time when required by the officer of the watch or the master.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport on how many occasions marine surveyors from his Department have made unannounced inspections of cross-Channel roll-on/roll-off ferries in which they remained aboard the relevant vessel throughout the duration of the Channel crossing.

Mr. David Mitchell: This information is not readily available.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will give, for each roll-on/roll-off cross-Channel ferry inspected by marine surveyors in the last six months, where notification of intention to inspect the relevant vessel was given to the relevant company prior to inspection, what amount of time elapsed between notification and inspection.

Mr. David Mitchell: My surveyors made 88 inspections of roll-on/roll-off cross-Channel ferries in the last six months where notification of intention to inspect was given prior to inspection. In general, at least 24 hours notice was given.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport on what basis the decision is made either to notify or not to notify a cross-Channel ferry operator of the intention to inspect a roll-on/roll-off ferry.

Mr. David Mitchell: In general, the operator is notified when the inspection requires some preparatory organisation.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many inspections by marine surveyors have been carried out on cross-Channel roll-on/roll-off ferries in the last six months; how many of those inspections were carried out without prior notification of the intention to inspect; and if he has any plans to improve current procedures in regard to notification.

Mr. David Mitchell: A total of 118 inspections have been carried out in the last six months. Thirty inspections were carried out without prior notification. Procedures are continually kept under review.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the average length of time spent, per inspection, aboard roll-on/roll-off cross-Channel ferries by marine surveyors from his Department over the last six months.

Mr. David Mitchell: The length of time spent, per inspection, aboard roll-on/roll-off cross-Channel ferries by my marine surveyors over the last six months varied from two surveyor hours to two surveyor days, averaging about one surveyor day.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport by what criteria his Department's marine surveyors satisfy themselves during an inspection of a cross-Channel ferry that the manning complement is adequately trained to perform their respective roles.

Mr. David Mitchell: My marine surveyors satisfy themselves in two ways. A check is made of the qualifications of crew members and a drill of emergency procedures is witnessed during which crew members can be seen performing their duties and can be questioned by the surveyor.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what steps are taken by his Department to ensure that a roll-on/roll-off cross-Channel ferry's staffing complement recorded during an inspection of the vessel at any one time is wholly representative of that vessel's appropriate manning complement once the inspection has been completed.

Mr. David Mitchell: It is the Department's experience from subsequent inspections that the manning complement remains as inspected.

Mr. Douglas: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will give an indication of the progress of research on roll-on/roll-off ferry studies arising from the Herald of Free Enterprise disaster; and if he will give details of the techniques to be employed on such studies.

Mr. David Mitchell: Progress is continuing to be made under the guidance of the steering committee set up in October last year to administer, assist and advise the Department on the management of the three-year programme of research into ferry design. A copy of that programme has been deposited in the Library.

European Trader (Fire)

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has as to whether properly trained radio officers were available for radio operations during the fire involving the vessel European Trader.

Mr. David Mitchell: I have not received the inspector's report of his investigation of this casualty, but I understand that a properly trained radio officer and in addition VHF radio facilities were available for radio operations during the fire involving the vessel European Trader.

London Assessment Studies

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what progress has been made by the consultants carrying out the London assessment studies; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Since December 1987 the consultants have been developing a range of options aimed at relieving the problems in the four study areas, identified in their stage 1 reports. They have now produced a preliminary set of options of varying feasibility, for further assessment. The suggestions put forward in the consultants' working papers represent a wide range of alternative approaches. They include different levels of investment and different combinations of public transport improvements, road schemes and management measures. It is not for us to take a view at this stage on the consultants' suggestions. They will complete stage 2 after consultation with the local boroughs, transport operators and police, evaluate them and report to us next summer.

Copies of the consultants' working papers can be purchased from them. I have arranged for copies to be available in the Library.

SOCIAL SERVICES

AIDS

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what information he has on the rate of HIV infection identified amongst groups of pregnant mothers in Hackney.

Mr. Newton: *The Lancet* of 18 June reports a study, on unnamed blood samples, of women attending City and Hackney health district antenatal clinics.

NHS Paymaster

Mr. Martlew: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what was the cost of the consultant report by Touche Ross into the paymaster function of the National Health Service.

Mr. Tony Newton: £75,306·32.

Elderly Patients

Mr. Cran: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many representations he has received concerning the problem of elderly mentally ill patients being mixed with elderly physically ill patients; and whether there has been any change in the guidance provided to local National Health Service management on the subject.

Mrs. Currie: Since March 1987 the Department has received 47 representations on this issue. There has been no change in the policy indicated in my reply to my hon. Friend on 7 June, at column *565*.

Southern Derbyshire Health Authority

Mr. McLoughlin: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how much in lieu of rates is paid by the Southern Derbyshire health authority to Derbyshire county council, and what this sum would be if the county precept was reduced to 215p in the pound.

Mr. Newton: Southern Derbyshire health authority makes payments in lieu of rates to Derby city council, Amber Valley district council, Erewash borough council, South Derbyshire district council and West Derbyshire district council. In 1987-88 the total contribution was about £2·2 million. The health authority does not pay county rates directly; the local authorities concerned pay a proportion of what they receive to Derbyshire county council to cover the county rate. My hon. Friend may care to contact the chairman of Southern Derbyshire health authority for details of current payments and Derbyshire county council for information about the effects of changes in the county precept.

Royal Liverpool Hospital

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what information he has as to the reasons why visitors to the Royal Liverpool hospital are being charged to park their cars in the hospital car park; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: Arrangements for car parking at hospitals are a matter for the district health authority concerned. It is perfectly legal for hospitals to charge for car parking, and some are doing so as a means of generating income. I understand, however, that because of the high incidence of vandalism to vehicles at the Royal Liverpool hospital a car park attendant has been appointed and the parking charge is to cover the cost. If the hon. Member requires more detail he may care to contact the district chairman of the Liverpool health authority.

Family Credit

Mr. Squire: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many children are in families receiving family credit.

Mr. Portillo: This information will not be available until the autumn.

Neonatal Intensive Care Facilities

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the transferral rate from Trafford and North Lincolnshire health authorities to other health districts for patients requiring neonatal intensive care facilities.

Mrs. Currie: Information is held centrally only for babies treated in special care baby units. This does not cover all neonatal intensive care.

In 1985 (the latest year for which information is available centrally), some 470 babies resident in Trafford and 500 babies resident in north Lincolnshire were treated in special care baby units. The transferral rates to other health authorities were 60 and 40 per cent. respectively.

Medical Physicists

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will give the number of current unfilled medical physicists posts for each health authority;

(2) what action his Department is taking to ensure that health authorities can retain and recruit medical physicists; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: Vacancy figures for medical physicist posts are not collected centrally.

The management side of the Scientific and Professional Staffs Whitley council has recently offered to increase the pay rates of scientists (including physicists) and clinical psychologists by 5·5 per cent. This offer is now being considered by the staff side. The management side has also agreed to undertake a review of the recruitment and retention of these staff in the light of service needs.

Pensions

Sir Nicholas Bonsor: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish a table showing average rates of pension payable in each member state of the European Community on the most nearly comparable basis.

Mr. Scott: A copy of "Tables of Social Benefit Systems in the European Community (position at 1 Janaury 1987)" published by the Department is available in the Library. This sets out the pension system in each member state of the European Community. Figures for average rates of pension are not available, since in most countries the pension is earnings related and calculated on the number and level of contributions during working life.

Section 64 Grants

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the awards given to voluntary organisations under section 64 procedure, for the current and preceding years, indicating which are new grants.

Mr. Portillo: Our section 64 grant scheme provides core grants to assist national organisations with their administration costs; and project grants to support projects which are experimental or innovative for a specific period. The scheme also provides a small number of capital grants.

The table lists all grants awarded in the financial year 1987-88 and those awarded in 1988-89 as at 22 June 1988. New grants are asterisked.

Section 64 grants to voluntary organisations

Organisation	*1987-88 Grant*	*1988-89 Grant*
Access Committee (England)	91,000	91,000
Action on Smoking and Health	200,000	[1]50,000
Adfam	13,579	0
Advance	33,500	33,000
Advocacy Alliance	15,000	11,250
Age Concern	252,000	252,000
Age Exchange Theatre Company	2,000	0
Aid For Children With Tracheostomies	5,000	0
Alcohol Concern	500,000	500,000
Alcohol Concern	20,000	0
Alzheimers Disease Association	110,000	0
Anorexic Family Aid	27,000	29,000
Anthony Nolan Fund	11,000	0
Association for Spina Bifida and Hydrocephalus	26,000	35,000
Association for Spina Bifida and Hydrocephalus	6,000	7,000
Association of Breastfeeding Mothers	4,500	0
Association of Carers	31,667	0
Association of Professions for Mentally Handicapped	5,000	0
Association of Residential Communities	4,000	0
Association to Combat Huntington's Chorea	20,000	20,000
Asthma Society	10,000	10,000
Babylife Support Systems	8,000	8,000
Bacup	10,000	10,000
Breakthrough Trust	35,000	35,000
Breast Care and Mastectomy Association of Great Britain	15,000	15,000
Bridge	0	[2]60,000
British Agencies for Adoption and Fostering	276,000	0
British Association of Services to the Elderly	12,000	12,000
British Association for Immediate Care	12,500	10,000
British Association of the Hard of Hearing	30,000	0
British Association of the Hard of Hearing	20,000	0
British Council of Organisations of Disabled People	4,500	0
British Deaf Association	20,000	0
British Fluoridation Society	20,000	0
British Institute of Industrial Therapy	17,000	25,000
British Institute of Mental Handicap	35,000	35,000
British Kidney Patient Association	35,000	35,000
British Organ Donor Society	5,000	5,000
British Red Cross Society	10,000	10,000
Brook Advisory Centres	45,000	45,000
Campaign for Mentally Handicapped	16,800	16,800
Campaign for Mentally Handicapped	10,000	5,000
Cancer Line	10,000	10,000
Catholic Child Welfare Council	1,875	1,500
Catholic Marriage Advisory Council	40,000	40,000
Centre for Policy on Ageing	24,300	0
Centre on Environment for the Handicapped	40,000	38,500
Chest Heart and Stroke Association	13,000	23,000
Child Accident Prevention Trust	71,325	10,125
Child Accident Prevention Trust	0	[1]18,000
Child Care	29,000	0
Child Care	26,000	0
Child Care	62,000	0
Child Poverty Action Group	17,000	17,000
Childrens Legal Centre	38,000	38,000
Children's Society	15,000	0
Children's Society	20,000	0
Children's Society	10,000	10,000
Children's Society	60,000	[2]0
Chinese Health Information Centre	15,000	30,000
Chinese Health Information Centre	12,505	0
Coeliac Society	14,000	0
Community Service Volunteers	2,500	7,452
Community Service Volunteers	37,650	48,000
Compassionate Friends	4,500	0
Contact	30,000	30,000
Contact A Family	28,000	20,000
Contact A Family	10,000	25,000
Cope	104,500	87,000
Coronary Prevention Group	40,000	0
Council for Advancement of Communication with Deaf People	40,000	0
Crossroads Care Attendant Schemes	75,000	0
Cruse	114,000	114,000
Cry-Sis	2,000	0
Cry-Sis	1,500	500
Debra	8,000	0
Demand	10,500	0
Dial UK	40,000	40,000
Disability Alliance	20,000	20,000
Disabled Living Foundation	3,800	0
Disabled Living Foundation	297,800	0
Disabled Income Group*	0	5,000
Disabled Income Group	17,000	0
Downs Syndrome Association	9,000	0
Dr. Barnardos	230,000	0
Dr. Barnardos	15,000	0
East Community Centre	17,476	0
Ethnic Study Group	8,000	67,000
Ethnic Study Group	11,000	7,000
Exploring Parenthood	9,000	9,000

Organisation	*1987-88 Grant*	*1988-89 Grant*
Extend	20,000	0
Family Forum	32,400	41,500
Family Holiday Assocation	7,000	7,000
Family Planning Association	7,960	0
Family Planning Association	130,000	130,000
Family Planning Association	2,300	0
Family Policy Studies Centre	108,000	83,500
Family Rights Group	24,000	[1]6,000
Family Service Units	160,000	160,000
Family Welfare Association	96,450	96,450
First Key	86,000	91,000
Forward	28,000	0
Foundation for the Study of Infant Deaths	10,000	10,000
Friends for the Young Deaf	7,500	0
Gingerbread	78,000	78,000
Good Practices in Mental Health	65,000	0
Greater Manchester Council on Alcoholism	4,792	0
Headway	30,000	0
Herpes Association	5,000	5,000
Holiday Care Service	10,000	10,000
Home Farm Trust	10,000	0
Home Start Consultancy	30,000	0
Homes for Homeless People	45,800	48,000
Horticultural Therapy	50,000	52,000
Housing Campaign for Single Homeless	33,300	0
Hyde Park Community Action	5,146	0
Immunity	1,195	0
Immunity	1,805	0
In Touch	2,500	2,500
Incest Crisis Line	6,000	0
Institute for the Study of Drug Dependence	240,000	60,000
International Social Service	47,500	47,500
Invalids at Home Trust	1,500	0
Iris Fund	2,500	2,500
John Hunt Award Trust	1,500	0
Joint Committee on Mobility for the Disabled	1,000	0
La Leche League of Great Britain	6,500	0
London Lesbian and Gay Switchboard	3,400	0
London Lighthouse	1,250,000	0
London Lighthouse	100,000	0
L'Arche Ltd.	10,500	0
Marie Curie Memorial Foundation	10,000	10,000
Marriage Research Centre	800	0
Marriage Research Centre	5,000	0
Maternity Alliance	37,000	37,000
McIntyre Schools (Shipton)	12,000	2,000
Medical Commission on Accident Prevention	6,000	0
MENCAP	220,000	220,000
MENCAP	138	0
Mental After Care Association	40,000	0
Mental Health Film Council	26,000	0
Mental Health Foundation	27,000	27,000
Mildway Mission Hospital	29,000	0
Mildway Mission Hospital	171,000	0
Miscarriage Association	2,000	0
Mobility Information Service	5,000	5,000
Motability	13,901	0
Motability	617,955	0
Motor Neurone Disease Association	10,000	0
Muscular Dystrophy	10,000	0
Myalgic Encephalomyelitis Association*	0	5,000
NACRO	298,135	300,000
NAFSIYAT	5,000	5,000
National Aids Trust	46,800	0
National Aids Trust	493,500	0
National Association for Maternal and Child Welfare	10,000	10,000
National Association for Mental Health (Mind)	415,000	415.000
National Association for Patient Participation	7,100	0
National Association for the Childless	31,000	33,000
National Association for the Limbless Disabled	15,000	15,000
National Association for the Welfare of Children in Hospital	90,000	90,000
National Association for Voluntary Hostels	5,250	5,250
National Association of Citizens' Advice Bureaux	17,000	0
National Association of Leagues of Hospital Friends	13,500	24,000
National Association of Young People in Care	48,000	0
National Autistic Society	10,000	0
National Back Pain Association	20,000	0
National Childbirth Trust	20,000	10,000
National Childbirth Trust	11,000	0
National Childminding Association	22,500	0
National Childminding Association	105,000	105,000
National Childrens Bureau	111,000	111,000
National Childrens Bureau	80,000	80,000
National Childrens Bureau	1,800	34,200
National Childrens Bureau	11,350	45,212
National Childrens Bureau	25,750	12,590
National Childrens Bureau	20,000	0
National Childrens Bureau	27,387	0
National Childrens Bureau	13,333	0
National Childrens Home (Leeds)	19,542	17,500
National Council for Carers and their Elderly Dependants	27,000	27,000
National Council for One Parent Families	150,000	150,000
National Council for Voluntary Organisations*	0	105,000
National Council for Voluntary Organisations	23,783	0
National Council for Voluntary Organisations	94,000	90,000
National Council for Voluntary Organisations	8,183	0
National Council for Voluntary Organisations	92,500	7,500
National Counselling and Welfare Service for Sick Doctors	2,625	0
National Deaf Childrens Society	25,000	0
National Eczema Society	10,000	5,000
National Federation of Kidney Patients	6,300	0
National Foster Care Association	91,000	[1]22,750
National Institute for Social Work	2,125	0
National Institute for Social Work	57,875	0
National Institute for Social Work	73,400	0
National Out of School Alliance	60,000	60,000
National Out of School Alliance	8,500	17,000
National Playbus Association	35,000	[1]12,500
National Playbus Association	15,000	0
National Schizophrenia Fellowship	91,000	91,000
National Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Children	125,000	125,000
National Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Children	35,000	0
National Step-family Association	8,000	0
National Tape Magazine for the Blind	500	0
National Toy Libraries Association	45,000	45,000
National Voluntary Organisations Anti-racism Consortium	20,000	12,500
National Youth Bureau	74,000	74,000
NORCAP	5,000	5,000
North Lambeth Day Centre Ltd.	16,000	16,000
North Regional Association for the Blind	52,007	50,669
North Regional Association for the Blind	0	2,500
North West Fellowship	20,000	20,000
Northern Scizophrenia Fellowship	20,000	0
Ockenden Venture	5,401	0
Ockenden Venture	89,380	0
One to One	6,300	0
OPUS	30,000	3[illegible],000
Organisation for Sickle Cell Anaemia Research	15,000	15,000

Organisation	*1987-88 Grant*	*1988-89 Grant*
OUTSET	14,500	0
Overseas Doctors Association	15,000	15,000
Pain Relief Foundation	8,000	8,000
Parent to Parent Information on Adoption Service	6,500	6,500
Parents Against Injustice (PAIN)	10,000	10,000
Parents for Children	48,500	48,500
Parkinson Disease Society	14,375	15,000
Partially Sighted Society	10,000	0
Patients Association	7,500	7,500
Phobic Action	5,000	5,000
Phobics Society	5,000	5,000
Physically Handicapped and Able Bodied	23,000	0
Pre-school Playgroups Association	2,480	0
Pre-school Playgroups Association	385,000	385,000
Prince of Wales Advisory Group on Disability	15,000	15,000
Queen Elizabeth Foundation for the Disabled	32,500	32,500
Rape Counselling and Research Project	25,000	25,000
Rathbone Society	16,000	0
Raynauds Association Trust	3,500	0
Research Council for Complementary Medicine	5,000	0
Reseach Trust for Metabolic Diseases	5,000	5,000
Richmond Fellowship	97,000	97,000
Royal Association for Disability and Rehabilitation (RADAR)	225,000	0
Royal Association for Disability and Rehabilitation (RADAR)	12,000	0
Royal National Institute for the Blind	20,000	20,000
Royal National Institute for the Blind	250,000	250,000
Royal National Institute for the Deaf	28,800	30,500
Royal National Institute for the Deaf	35,000	0
Samaritans	125,000	0
Save the Children Fund	18,000	0
Save the Children Fund	33,000	0
Save the Children Fund	259,500	0
Save the Children Fund	10,000	0
Scoliosis Association UK	1,000	0
Sense (NADBRH)	15,000	15,000
Sense (NADBRH)	30,000	0
Sequal	5,800	5,800
Sequal	35,200	35,200
Sexual & Personal Relationships of the Disabled	33,500	33,500
Sickle Cell Society	15,000	15,000
Society for Mucopolysaccharide Diseases	1,250	0
Society of Voluntary Associates	3,700	3,400
Society of Voluntary Associates	25,000	12,500
Social Work Training Grants	2,400	0
South Regional Association for the Blind	2,500	10,000
South Regional Association for the Blind	73,405	96,452
Spinal Injuries Association	25,000	25,000
St. John Ambulance	10,000	10,000
St. Katherine Housing Trust	18,000	0
Standing Committee on Sexual Abuse of Children (SCOSAC)	2,500	12,000
Standing Conference on Drug Abuse (SCODA)	168,179	0
Standing Conference on Drug Abuse (SCODA)	27,050	0
Stillbirth and Neonatal Death Association	22,000	22,000
Tay Sachs and Allied Diseases Association	1,000	1,000
Terrence Higgins Trust	300,000	0
Thalassaemia Society	5,000	0
Tibble Trust	1,000	500
Tuberous Sclerosis Association	1,000	1,500
Turning Point	99,000	[1] 24,750
Twins and Multiple Births Association	3,000	3,000
VOCAL	20,000	0
Voluntary Council for Handicapped Children	40,000	0
VOLCUF	27,000	27,000
Volunteer Centre	12,500	12,500
VORTEX	11,600	0
Walsingham Community Homes	10,000	10,000
Wessex Rehabilitation Association	24,000	0
West Yorks Youth Association	25,000	25,000
Westminster Pastoral Foundation	66,000	66,000
Widows Advisory Trust	18,000	18,000
Winged Fellowship Trust	15,000	0
Womens Aid Federation (England)	98,000	24,500
Womens Health Concern	7,000	0
Womens National Cancer Control Campaign	74,500	74,500
Womens Therapy Centre	5,000	5,000
Working Mothers Association	12,000	0
£ for £ Dr. Barnardos	32,865	0
£ for £ National Childrens Home	80,145	19,855
Grand total	14,443,694	7,211,705
Count	296	

[1] Interim payments—Grants not yet settled.

[2] The same project run by different organisations.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what recent changes there have been in the criteria for awarding section 64 grants.

Mr. Portillo: None.

Disability (OPCS Survey)

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services when he now expects to receive and to publish the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys survey on disability.

Mr. Scott: I refer the right hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) on 8 June, at column *575*.

Kirkby Kidney Fund

Mr. George Howarth: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will make a statement on the work carried out by the voluntary supporters of the Kirkby kidney fund;

(2) if he will take steps urgently to ensure that the Kirkby kidney fund is allowed to continue its work and that the difficulties caused by the Mersey regional health authority's refusal to help identify suitable acceptable accommodation are resolved.

Mrs. Currie: Supporters of the Kirkby kidney fund have worked very hard over the years to help those suffering from chronic renal failure, giving generously of their time and money. The Mersey regional health authority greatly appreciates and values the contribution they have made.

When the Kirkby kidney fund began its work dialysis facilities were scarce and similar units in a number of places across the region supported by voluntary workers were an appropriate solution at that time to provide additional facilities. Now no one needing dialysis in the Mersey region is waiting. As older and more ill patients are accepted it is being found that the priority must be provision of additional places in hospital premises where professional support is available. Patients not requiring hospital facilities are generally dialysed at home or by Continuous Ambulatory Peritoneal Dialysis which does not require regular attendance at a centre.

The regional health authority has suggested that the Kirkby kidney fund should review the help it provides. The hon. Member may care to contact the chairman of the Mersey regional health authority for further information.

HEA (Marketing Director)

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what was the role of the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health, the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie), in the interviews to select and appoint a marketing director for the Health Education Authority; and what is his policy on ministerial participation in the appointment of public servants.

Mr. John Moore: I assume the hon. Member is referring to the recent appointment by the Health Education Authority of a commercial manager. The appointment procedures were entirely in the hands of the authority and my hon. Friend was not involved. I have powers of appointment to a large number of public authorities, but the recruitment of officers to an authority is normally a matter for the body in question.

DHA and RHA Chairmen

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the names and addresses of each district and regional health authority chair; and if he will indicate whether or not their normal place of residence is within the boundaries of the health authority they chair.

Mrs. Currie: It is not our practice to disclose personal information of this sort. While most health authority chairmen have local connections, we do not regard residence within the area served by their health authority as essential to appointment.

Housing Benefit

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give the estimated amount that will be spent in publicising in the media and elsewhere the arrangements for transitional payments relating to loss of housing benefit; what national and provincial papers have been used for such advertising and how often; what has been the amount of advertising on commercial television; and how often such television advertisements have appeared so far.

Mr. Portillo: The first stage of an advertising campaign publicising changes to housing benefit capital rules and transitional payments appeared in the national press at the end of May. Advertisements appeared in:

the *Sun*
Today
the *News of the World*
the *Daily Mail* (two advertisements)
the *Sunday Mirror*
the *People*
the *Daily Mirror*
the *Sunday Telegraph*
the *Daily Telegraph* (two advertisements)
the *Daily Express* (two advertisements)
the *Sunday Express*
the *Daily Record*
the *Sunday Post*.

Total media and production expenditure for this campaign came to £263,000.

The estimated expenditure on the production of posters and leaflets which advertise and give information on the transitional payments is £241,000. Television advertising has not been used in this campaign.

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing the extent to which the increases in cash expenditure on housing benefit over the period 1982-83 to 1990-91 have been driven by other Government policy changes, identifying both the particular measure and the responsible Government Department.

Mr. Portillo: Housing benefit expenditure is affected by many different factors. Some of these, such as real terms increases in rents, will tend to increase expenditure and others, such as the recent fall in unemployment, will tend to reduce it. It is not possible meaningfully to isolate the effects of one factor from another or from general demographic and economic change over the period.

Details of the extent to which current plans take account of the proposed deregulation of private sector rents were given in my reply to the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) on 11 February 1988, at column *349*.

Mr. Soley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what was the total cost of providing housing benefit for the financial years 1983-84 to 1987-88, broken down by payments in respect of rent rebates, rent allowances and rate rebates; what was the total number of claimants involved; and what is the current estimate for 1988-89.

Mr. Portillo *[holding answer 10 June 1988]:* The information requested in relation to benefit expenditure and the average number receiving benefit is given in the table. There is a significant overlap between the three categories tabled as most households receiving help with rent will also be receiving help with rates.

Housing Benefit: Costs and Numbers of Recipients

	Rent Rebates		*Rent Allowances*		*Rate Rebates*	
	Cost £ million	*Numbers 000's*	*Cost £ million*	*Numbers 000's*	*Cost £ million*	*Numbers 000's*
1983-84	1,980	3,735	536	1,015	1,220	7,020
1984-85	2,145	3,745	688	1,080	1,360	7,230
1985-86	2,294	3,710	835	1,150	1,510	7,020
1986-87	2,421	3,720	947	1,180	1,650	7,050
1987-88	2,563	3,760	1,057	1,250	1,760	7,030
1988-89	2,740	3,430	1,130	1,055	1,390	5,845

Note: The information is taken from the public expenditure White Paper of January 1988 (tables 15.1 and 16.6).

The 1988-89 estimate takes account of the expected changes in case load and expenditure arising from the change to the housing benefit capital rules, the effect of the budget income tax changes and the latest information on rent and rates.

Unemployment Benefit

Mr. Clay: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what are the latest figures for the number of people claiming unemployment benefit with children.

Mr. Portillo: This information is not available.

Invalidity Benefit

Mr. Clay: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what are the latest figures for the number of people claiming invalidity benefit with children.

Mr. Portillo: At April 1986 there were 105,000 people receiving invalidity benefit with increases for dependent children.

Income Support

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people in each of the three categories mentioned in regulation 70(2) of the Income Support (General) Regulations 1987, persons from abroad, persons with notional income and seasonal workers, were receiving income support or supplementary benefit at the latest date for which information is available; in how many such cases benefit was awarded during the latest period of 12 months for which information is available; and what is his estimate of the additional cost of paying income support at the full rate to persons in each of those categories.

Mr. Portillo: This information is not available.

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services whether, in calculating the capital of a hospital patient for the purpose of entitlement to income support, the resettlement benefit which will become payable on discharge from hospital is taken into account.

Mr. Portillo: Resettlement benefit is an income resource payable on discharge from hospital and is disregarded under income support. Any amount of the benefit that remains after the period for which it is payable has expired will be treated as capital.

Social Fund

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many local offices of his Department had spent on community care grants from the social fund, by the end of May *(a)* nothing, *(b)* up to 1 per cent. of their budget for 1988-89, *(c)* between 1 and 2 per cent., *(d)* between 2 and 4 per cent., *(e)* between 4 and 6 per cent., and *(f)* more than 6 per cent.

Mr. Portillo: Details of social fund budget allocations to local offices for community care grants in 1988-89 and the budget balances remaining at the end of May 1988 are in the Library.

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many social fund inspectors have been appointed; at what cost to public funds; how many of them are engaged full-time as inspectors; how many reviews they have undertaken; and what other duties have been assigned to them.

Mr. Portillo: I am advised by the social fund commissioner that she has appointed 40 social fund inspectors, one of whom is engaged on a part-time basis. The cost to public funds is about £800,000 per annum. Social fund inspectors have so far received 53 cases for review and have completed 23. No other duties have been assigned to them.

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what were the numbers and amounts of budgeting loans, crisis loans and community care grants made by social fund officers in each local office and in the whole of Great Britain in May 1988, analysed by client groups, within application purpose, within application type;

(2) how many applications for community care grants were refused by social fund officers at each local office in May 1988, analysed by reasons for refusal, broken down by application purpose within client group.

Mr. Portillo: This information could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what are the social fund budget forecasts for each local office for June 1988.

Mr. Portillo: Local offices do not have monthly budgets. Details of the annual budget allocations for every local office are in the Library. Local office managers draw up monthly profiles of how they expect to spend their budget throughout the year.

Such profiles are an internal management tool only, designed to help local managers operate the social fund efficiently. They do not represent rigid budget targets or limits.

I regret that the individual local office profiles are not available centrally.

Community Care

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he will amend the social fund manual to make it clear that, where part of an applicant's needs can be met out of capital over £500 or money available from other sources, a community care grant up to the suggested maximum amounts in annex 4, or more if appropriate, should be made for the balance of the amount needed.

Mr. Portillo: The Social Fund Manual refers both to the relevant legal provisions under which an award may be made and to Secretary of State's direction 27, which relates to the £500 capital rule. However, it will be amended at the earliest opportunity to clarify the effects of both the £500 capital rule and the requirement to take into account in full other resources available to meet the applicant's need.

Attendance Allowance

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services in what circumstances it is permissible for doctors to charge patients for reports in connection with claims for attendance allowance.

Mr. Scott: Fees for medical reports commissioned by the Attendance Allowance Board, or its delegated doctors, are paid by the Department in accordance with a scale of charges negotiated and agreed with organisations representing the medical profession. Where a disabled person chooses to submit a medical report in support of a claim to attendance allowance, the doctor should provide this free of charge if the disabled person is under observation or receiving treatment and the information required is reasonably incidental to that observation or treatment. If, however, the doctor has to examine the disabled person or needs to undertake a considerable amount of work in making extracts from case notes for the report, the doctor can charge a fee.

Kidney Dialysis

Sir Michael McNair-Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) how many kidney patients requiring dialysis are now being treated on average per million of the population; and if he will publish the figures for each of the regional authorities;

(2) how many patients in total are receiving kidney dialysis; and what is the rate for new cases of renal failure to be accepted for this treatment per million of the population;

(3) how many persons are receiving dialysis or are in possession of a functioning kidney transplant.

Mrs. Currie: According to the latest information published by the European Dialysis and Transplant Association, a total of 13,694 patients, representing 242 per million population, were receiving renal replacement therapy in the United Kingdom at 31 December 1986. Of this total, 6,890 (122 patients per million population) were receiving dialysis and 6,804 (120 patients per million population) had a functioning transplant.

Within England the number and rate per million population of patients on dialysis at 31 December 1986 is estimated to be as follows:

Regional health authority	*Number on dialysis*	*Rate per million population*
Northern	487	157
Yorkshire	418	116
Trent	711	155
East Anglian	220	116
North West Thames	362	103
North East Thames	676	183
South East Thames	536	149
South West Thames	156	52
Wessex	192	69
Oxford	280	117
South Western	397	128
West Midlands	611	118
Mersey	233	97
North Western	504	126

These figures need to be interpreted with caution because patients sometimes cross administrative boundaries to receive treatment: these patient flows can sometimes be substantial, as in the case of South West and South East Thames, which have shared services.

Approximately 47 new patients per million population were accepted for renal replacement therapy in the United Kingdom in 1986. I understand that figures for 1987 should be available within the next month.

Sir Michael McNair-Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) who decides the number of renal cases to be treated by dialysis in each regional health authority; and what guidance or additional finance is provided by his Department to assist in the cost of this treatment;

(2) in what circumstances regional health authorities are empowered to deny renal treatment to sufferers on grounds of age; and what criteria are issued by his Department giving guidance on this matter.

Mrs. Currie: The planning and allocation of resources to renal services is the responsibility of health authorities. It is a matter for clinical decision whether or not treatment should be provided to any particular patient within the resources available to health authorities. However, in recent years health authorities have given priority to increasing facilities for the treatment of end stage renal failure. Data provided to the European Dialysis and Transplant Association, covering an estimated 84 per cent. of the new patients accepted for renal replacement therapy in 1986, show that approximately 47 per cent. of patients were aged 55 years or over.

Expenditure

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table, in a similar format to table 15.1 of Cm 288—II, showing for each expenditure line the percentage of expenditure for the years 1982-83 to 1990-91 which is demand led.

Mr. Scott: All expenditure on social security benefits is demand-led, other than for elements of the social fund from 1988-89 onwards. Those elements of social fund expenditure which are demand-led represent about a quarter of planned expenditure on the benefit in those years. Expenditure on administration is not demand-led.

Child Benefit

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will estimate the cost of raising child benefit in April 1989 in line with the projection of the retail prices index between September 1987 and September 1988.

Mr. Scott: Increases in the rate of child benefit are not statutorily linked to movements in the index of retail prices and, even for those benefits which are, the calculations are made on an "historical" and not a "projected" basis. Based on the assumptions in Cm. 288 (chapter 15, paragraph 37 and table 15.20) published in January 1988, the annual net cost of uprating child benefit by the projected increase in the retail prices index between September 1987 and September 1988 would be about £160 million.

Private Medical Insurance

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will give the estimated number of people who have taken out private medical insurance in England and Wales;

(2) if he will give the estimated number of persons including dependants, who have some form of private medical insurance, through their employers;

(3) if he will give the estimated average cost of treatment per person per annum provided under private medical insurance.

Mrs. Currie: Information on the average cost of treatment and the number of people with company insurance is not collected centrally. The estimated number of people in the United Kingdom covered by private medical insurance was 5·25 million at 31 December 1986 (latest available data).

Junior Doctors (Hours)

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make it his policy that additional junior doctors will be employed and funds provided for this purpose to ensure that there are no closures of acute hospital services, solely as a result of the initiative to reduce the number of hours worked by junior doctors.

Mr. Newton: Our objective, which has been endorsed by the leaders of the medical profession, is to eliminate regular rota commitments requiring junior hospital doctors to be on duty on average for more than one night and one weekend in three wherever resources and the needs of patients permit. We believe it is preferable for health authorities to devote the increased resources available to them to the expansion of the consultant grade and to the development of new patterns of medical staffing which are less heavily reliant on practitioners in the training grades.

Contact Lenses

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services whether prescriptions from opticians can include the prescribing of cleaning fluids for contact lenses.

Mr. Newton: Opticians are not permitted by their terms of service under the general ophthalmic services to write prescriptions for cleaning fluids for contact lenses. Patients have to purchase such fluids, like the lenses, privately.

The position in the hospital eye service is different, in that where contact lenses are prescribed because they are clinically necessary the HES also supplies the cleaning fluids.

Consultants and Junior Doctors

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list in the *Official Report* the number of consultants and junior doctors employed in each district health authority in England and Wales in each year since 1979 to the last date for which figures are available.

Mr. Newton: Information is not collected centrally for all medical staff groups in the form requested. Information about doctors is collected by employing authorities, which for consultants are regional health authorities, district health authorities designated for undergraduate teaching purposes, and special health authorities for the London postgraduate teaching hospitals; for senior registrars are regional health authorities and special health authorities only; and for other junior doctors are district health authorities and special health authorities. Because district health authorities were established only in 1982, comparable data about the staff groups mentioned are not available for the period requested. Information about medical staffing in each region at 30 September is published annually in "Hospital Medical Staff—England and Wales: Regional Tables", copies of which are in the Library.

Benefit Fraud Investigations

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if, pursuant to the answer given to the hon. Member for Newham, North-East on 20 June, *Official Report*, column *402*, he will place in the Library a copy of his Department's research which provides the basis for the assumption that a person voluntarily withdrawing a claim to unemployment benefit following a fraud investigation refrains from claiming benefit for an average of 22 weeks.

Mr. Portillo: The study which determined the basis for the calculation of benefit savings arising from anti-fraud activity was conducted by the Department's operational research services. A copy of its report, entitled "Evaluation of Specialist Claims Control and Comparison With Other Types of Anti-Fraud Work" was placed in the Library on 12 June 1985, together with a detailed statement of the conclusions reached on the recommendations made.

Sickle Cell Disease and Thalassaemia

Mr. Ken Hargreaves: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what steps his Department is taking to improve public awareness of, and screening, counselling and treatment for, sickle cell disease and thalassaemia; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: In view of the importance Ministers attach to work in this area, I met representatives of The Sickle Cell Society, the Organisation of Sickle Cell Anaemia Research (OSCAR) and the Sickle Cell Anaemia Relief Foundation (SCARF) on 23 June to discuss a number of matters which included

—the uptake of the haemoglobinopathy card (that is the cards for those with sickle cell anaemia or Thalassaemia, or with the trait for those diseases) launched in April this year

—a letter which the Department is today issuing to health authorities, seeking information about the screening and counselling they provide for people at risk from these diseases, to give us a baseline of information for a review of policy in these areas. (A copy of this letter is being placed in the Library)

—public and professional awareness of these serious blood disorders and the need for a future programme of work to increase this

—future co-ordination of voluntary work on the haemoglobinopathies

—future grant aid for the voluntary bodies.

The SCS and OSCAR already receive grants of £15,000 pa. I am glad to announce that the grant to the Thalassaemia Society, which is to have a meeting with me later this year, is being increased to £15,000 to help with their important work in providing information about the condition and support for sufferers and their families.

Fluvoxamine Maleate

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what information he has on the adverse side effects of the drug fluvoxamine maleate; if any fatalities resulting from its use have been reported to him; if he proposes to take any action to restrict its use; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton *[holding answer 10 June 1988]:* Reports by doctors of suspected adverse reactions to fluvoxamine maleate were summarised by the Committee on Safety of Medicines in "Current Problems 22", issued to doctors in May (a copy is in the Library). To date the committee has received six reports of suspected reactions to fluvoxamine where the patient has died from that event. However, subsequent analysis suggests that while two of the deaths may be attributable to recognised side effects of other drugs, none appears to have been caused by fluvoxamine. The manufacturers of fluvoxamine were informed and have written to all doctors to tell them of these findings.

After discussion with the licensing authority, Duphar Laboratories has amended the data sheet for fluvoxamine to limit the indications for this drug to "the treatment of depressive illness", and to contain an up-to-date description of the known side effects. The revised data sheet was sent to general practitioners in April. While fluvoxamine has a different mode of action to most other anti-depressants—and therefore a different adverse reactions profile—there is no evidence that the drug is less safe than alternative anti-depressants.

Social Security Acts

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what provisions of the Social Security Acts 1986 and 1988 are not yet in force; and what are the expected commencement dates.

Mr. Scott *[holding answer 17 June 1988]:* There are no provisions of the 1986 Act yet to come into force. The provisions of the 1988 Act which are yet to come into force are as follows:

		Expected commencement date
Section 2(i)-(2)	Retirement Allowance	April 1989
Section 4	Young persons	12 September 1988
Section 5	Annual Review of Child Benefit	No commencement is planned
Section 6	Short-term Benefits	2 October 1988
Section 7	Unemployment Benefit and Occupational Pension	1 January 1989

Dental Services

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what action his Department takes to monitor the service provided by dentists to their patients.

Mrs. Currie *[holding answer 23 June 1988]:* Monitoring of the general dental service is primarily undertaken by the Dental Estimates Board, which is responsible for the approval of treatment and authorisation of payment. The board may approve treatment or authorise payment only if it is satisfied that that treatment is or was proper and necessary to secure the patient's dental fitness or to maintain dental health, and that it has been completed to a satisfactory standard. In considering requests for its prior approval, or claims for payment for treatment provided, the board may seek further information from the dentist or may ask an officer of the Department's dental reference service to examine the patient. The dental reference is also responsible for checking the quality of treatment provided through the examination of a random sample of patients who have recently received treatment under the general dental service. Dental Officers examined 28,143 patients in 1987-88.

Clause 12 of the Health and Medicines Bill proposes increased powers for the Dental Estimates Board which will assist it in monitoring general dental practice for the purpose of preventing and detecting unnecessary treatment or other abuse; the clause also proposes a change of the Board's name—to the "Dental Practice Board"—so as to better reflect its functions.

In addition, family practitioner committees may also seek the examination of a patient by a dental officer if a complaint is received from a patient about general dental services.

Family Practitioner Committees

Mr. Caborn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) how many patients are covered by family practitioner committees in *(a)* Sheffield, *(b)* Liverpool, *(c)* Manchester, *(d)* Birmingham and *(e)* Leeds;

(2) if he will list the amount allocated for administrative purposes to family practitioner committees in *(a)* Sheffield, *(b)* Liverpool, *(c)* Manchester, *(d)* Birmingham and *(e)* Leeds.

Mr. Newton *[holding answer 23 June 1988]:* Following is the latest available information, as requested:

Family Practitioner Committee (FPC)	[1] *Allocation* £000	[2] *No. of patients* 000
Sheffield	471·8	549·3
Liverpool	594·2	535·8
Manchester	560·6	511·2
Birmingham	951·1	1,104·5
Leeds	653·6	738·4

[1] Revenue allocations for administrations, 1988-89.

[2] Patients registered with a doctor in contract with the FPC in 1986-87.

Revenue allocations, by agreement with representatives of FPCs, are not made on the basis of the number of patients registered with doctors nor on figures specifically related to population.

Allocations are based, historically, on expenditure by health authorities before 1 April 1985 on administration by FPCs of services provided not only by doctors but also by dentists, pharmacists and opticians. The historical figures have subsequently been adjusted:

a. to reduce the effect of any anomalies in the original figure negotiated with the local health authorities';
b. to reflect staff savings after computerisation;
c. in respect of movements in pay and prices;
d. in respect of changes in rent or the effect of purchasing new offices; and
e. to allow, in the current year, for growth at an average rate of 5½ per cent. in real terms.

ENVIRONMENT

Surrey Docks

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the price paid for land vested in the London Docklands development corporation in the Surrey docks.

Mr. Trippier: There are outstanding compensation issues in relation to this land. The total price has not yet therefore been established. I will write to the hon. Member when these matters are finally settled.

Planning Decisions

Mr. Warren: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many planning decisions taken by local authorities have been sustained, and how many have been overruled, on appeal to him in each of the last five financial years.

Mr. Waldegrave: The number of planning appeals decided and allowed in each of the last five financial years was as follows:

Year	*Appeals decided*	*Appeals allowed*
1983-84	11,119	3,612
1984-85	12,714	4,166
1985-86	14,130	5,581
1986-87	15,613	6,208
1987-88	18,474	6,955

Equal Opportunities

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment to what extent women have been under-represented in the higher grades of his Department; what measures he has taken to reduce that under-representation; when such measures were taken; and what results they have produced.

Mr. Ridley: About one third of the administative staff in my Department at executive office level and above are women but the proportion reduces in the higher grades. Measures taken to reduce under-representation over the last few years include advertising opportunities for part-time working, job-sharing and career breaks; women-only development training; encouragement of women to become promotion and recruitment board members; and participating in a central training review and promotion monitoring projects.

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment to what extent black and Asian staff have been under-represented in his Department; what measures he has taken to reduce that under-representation; when such measures were taken; and what results they have produced.

Mr. Ridley: The Department completed its staff-in-post ethnic origin survey in March 1988. Analysis of that survey and the recruitment monitoring survey which began in July 1987 is being carried out to see whether, and if so where, under-representation occurs. Measures already taken during 1987 and 1988 to reduce possible under-representation include using the ethnic minority press for advertising local vacancies; participating in feature articles to publicise the Department's work; taking part in schools liaison; using inner-city job centres and other outreach work; and participating in a central training review and promotion monitoring projects.

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what monitoring exercises he has carried out in accordance with the codes of the Equal Opportunities Commission and of the Commission for Racial Equality, respectively; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ridley: My Department has carried out monitoring exercises in the area of part-time working and job-sharing; reinstatement; special leave; selection for training; recruitment; and the ethnic origin of staff.

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what advertisements he has placed in the ethnic minority press; when; and with what results.

Mr. Ridley: My Department does not maintain a central record of recruitment advertising. For those campaigns for which details are readily available, the results were as follows:

Campaign date	*Newspaper*	*Applications mentioning the newspaper*	*Total applications*
September 1987	The Voice	155	859
	Garavi Gujarat	17	
April 1988	The Gleaner	22	66

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has appointed an equal opportunities officer; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ridley: I have appointed two equal opportunity officers, one for the Property Services Agency and one who serves the rest of my Department and the Department of Transport.

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many and what percentage of officers in each grade and overall in his Department are *(a)* women and *(b)* from ethnic minorities, respectively.

Mr. Ridley: Numbers and percentages of women are as follows, as at 31 May 1988:

Grade band	*Number*	*per cent.*
1 to 4	6	7
5	18	9
6	19	5
7	119	8
8 and 9	662	10
10	946	15
11 and 12	5,552	68
TOTAL	7,292	31

Numbers and percentages of ethnic minority staff are available, as at 31 March 1988, only for those staff who have responded to the voluntary monitoring surveys. Figures are as follows:

Grade	*Number*	*per cent.*
1 to 6	8	1½
7	17	1½
8	41	2
9	81	3
10	171	4
11	282	9
12	177	8
TOTAL	777	3½

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he has taken to ensure that there is equality of opportunity for women and for people from ethnic minorities in all grades of his Department, in connection with employment, training and promotion, respectively.

Mr. Ridley: The policy of equal opportunities is well established. Specific steps include publicity for the

Government policy statements on the subject; the appointment of equal opportunities officers; provision for part-time working and job-sharing; special leave arrangements for maternity, domestic and other reasons; conduct of surveys of ethnic origin; management and special skills training courses for women; and measures to reduce the risk of discrimination in recruitment and promotion procedures.

Town and Country Planning

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received from local authorities and local authority associations concerning the effect of the Town and Country Planning General Development (Amendment) Order 1981.

Mr. Waldegrave: We published consultation papers in January 1987 and February 1988 about the amendment and consolidation of the General Development Order 1977 as subsequently amended. Local planning authorities have made a number of representations about permitted development rights for householders. We intend to lay an amended and consolidated order later in the year.

Incinerated Sewage Sludge

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has any information on plans to import incinerated sewage sludge from the United States for dumping in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Moynihan: I have no information that there are any plans to import incinerated sludge from the United States.

Hazardous Waste

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will estimate the tonnage of hazardous waste imported into the United Kingdom for dumping in 1987.

Mr. Moynihan: Figures for special waste imported in 1987 are not yet available.

Disabled People (Property Reform)

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what safeguards he proposes under the provisions of the Housing Bill for disabled and housebound tenants of local authority properties, to vote in any possible ballot concerning proposed change in the ownership of such properties; and whether, in the event of such tenants being unable to vote, they will have been deemed to have given their assent to the proposed change in ownership.

Mr. Waldegrave: My right hon. Friend intends to provide in regulations made under clause 95 of the Housing Bill that tenants consulted on a proposal for transfer under tenants' choice should, if they wish, be able to vote by post. We intend as far as possible to ensure that all qualifying tenants are put in a position to cast their vote, and to do so on a fully informed basis. The means by which we propose to achieve this include an informal, preliminary phase of tenant consultation to be run by the Housing Corporation; a code of practice, compliance with which would be a condition of the applicant's approval, requiring applicants to inform tenants as key points in the procedures were reached; prescribing in regulations the form in which information is put to tenants during the formal consultation under clause 95; and a requirement on both applicants and the independent tellers that they will be obliged to employ to use best endeavours to see that the material is received and its significance understood by tenants eligible to vote. Applicants would be able to proceed with an acquisition unless the number of tenants voting to continue as tenants of their existing landlord exceeded 50 per cent. of those eligible to be consulted under clause 95. No secure tenant will be obliged to change landlord under tenants' choice against his or her will.

Chlorofluorocarbons

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what quantities of *(a)* chlorofluorocarbons and *(b)* chlorofluorocarbon substitutes have been used annually during the last five years.

Mr. Moynihan: In regard to the use of chlorofluorocarbons 11, 12, 113 and 114 I refer the hon. Member to the answers I gave to the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) on 29 March at columns *367* and *368*. Figures for the use of other chlorofluorocarbons and of substitutes for them are not available.

Hurricane Damage

Mr. Hanley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if, pursuant to his answer of 14 June, *Official Report*, columns *138-42*, he will show for each outer London borough not listed *(a)* whether a claim for hurricane damage has been submitted and *(b)* whether such a claim is expected by his Department.

Mr. Howard: The outer London boroughs referred to in my answer of 14 June were the only ones to have submitted claims up to 23 June 1988 at columns *138-42*. The Department has knowledge of no other claims for hurricane damage.

House Prices

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the average percentage rises in house prices, by region, annually in the last 10 years and the current average house price for each region.

Mrs. Roe: The average annual percentage rises in house prices and the average house prices in the first quarter of 1988, the latest available period, are given in the following table.

Annual Average Percentage Increases in House Prices

Year	*Northern*	*Yorks and Humberside*	*East Midlands*	*East Anglia*	*Greater London*	*South East*	*South West*	*West Midlands*	*North West*	*Wales*	*Scotland*	*Northern Ireland*
1978	12	13	13	15	19	17	15	15	16	16	13	15
1979	22	25	27	29	34	33	32	28	29	27	20	20
1980	18	23	24	26	22	21	25	19	23	19	15	11

Year	Northern	Yorks and Humberside	East Midlands	East Anglia	Greater London	South East	South West	West Midlands	North West	Wales	Scotland	Northern Ireland
1981	7	12	8	5	3	5	3	4	6	9	9	3
1982	4	1	3	4	1	2	4	2	3	6	7	4
1983	11	12	11	9	12	13	10	8	10	10	12	8
1984	6	6	10	10	16	13	8	7	6	4	6	4
1985	3	6	7	12	14	10	10	5	5	8	6	7
1986	8	9	11	16	22	17	15	9	10	6	5	7
1987	8	8	13	19	24	22	17	15	7	9	7	5
					Average House Prices(£)							
1988 Q1	28,699	29,091	35,269	48,961	69,289	64,933	50,146	34,884	30,685	29,358	26,808	28,951

[1] Prices of building society mortgage completions.

Green Belt (Chigwell)

Sir John Biggs-Davison: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to support the efforts of Epping Forest district council in any planning appeal to protect the green belt against encroachment made on land at Chigwell owned by a developer, and occupied by caravans and squatters.

Mr. Waldegrave: If an appeal is lodged in respect of the Chigwell site it will be determined on its merits, with regard to all material considerations, including the Government's commitment to protect the green belts from inappropriate development.

Publicly Owned Land

Mr. Hayes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much land remains on the registers of unused and under-used publicly owned land; and how much land was added to and removed from the registers during 1987.

Mr. Trippier: At the end of May 1988, there were some 88,400 acres of land on the land registers. During 1987, some 7,700 acres were added to the registers, and some 15,500 acres were removed. On 18 May, following my answer to a question about regional assistance from my hon. Friend, the Member for Wolverhampton, North-East (Mrs. Hicks) at column *931-2* I told the House that almost half the land added to the register during 1987 was directed by the Department to be sold. In fact, as the figures show, the land added to the registers during 1987 was equal to almost half of all the land that was removed during that year, which included land sold as a result of directions.

Housing Associations (Lettings)

Mr. Soley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish a table showing the total number of housing association dwellings for letting which have been made available through a combination of housing association grant and private sector funding.

Mrs. Roe: The figures available are for schemes approved by the Housing Corporation in 1987-88, the first year of the pilot programme of mixed funding. These schemes will provide 1,258 units for letting and 579 bed spaces in hostels or other shared accommodation.

Housing Associations (Subsidies)

Mr. Soley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish a table showing the total cost of subsidies to housing associations in the form of *(a)*housing association grant, *(b)* revenue deficit grant and *(c)* hostel deficit grant in each of the years from 1985 to 1987, and the estimated recovery of subsidy through grant redemption fund in the years for which the information is available.

Mrs. Roe: The information requested is as follows:

		£ million	
	1985-86	*1986-87*	*1987-88*
Housing association grant	919·1	809·4	750·1
Revenue deficit grant	10·7	11·4	12·2
Hostel deficit grant	4·5	6·6	9·5
Grant redemption fund payments	(5·2)	(9·5)	(14·7)

Homelessness

Mr. Soley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing *(a)* the number of homeless households accepted by local authorities in England whose homelessness resulted from mortgage arrears, and *(b)* the percentage of all homeless households which these represented, in each of the years from 1979 to 1987.

Mrs. Roe: Latest estimates are as follows:

Households accepted by Local Authorities in England under Homelessness Provisions of Housing Acts: where homelessness was attributed principally to mortgage default or arrears

Year	*Number*	*Percentage of all acceptances*
1979	2,000	4
1980	2,500	4
1981	3,600	5
1982	4,400	6
1983	4,800	6
1984	6,300	8
1985	8,600	9
1986	10,200	10
1987	10,500	9

Mr. Soley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the local authorities where more than 20, 50 and 100 homeless households, respectively, were living in bed and breakfast hotels in England, at the end of June 1979, December 1981, December 1983, December 1985 and at the latest date for which information is available.

Mrs. Roe: The information reported by local authorities is in the following table:

Local authorities by number of homeless households in bed and breakfast accommodation

Over 20, up to 50 households	*Over 50 up to 100 households*	*Over 100 households*
(a) At the end of June 1979		
Manchester	Camden	Hammersmith and Fulham
Doncaster	Tower Hamlets	Lambeth
Brighton		Wandsworth
Hounslow		Brent
Liverpool		Hackney
Torbay		Kensington and Chelsea
Shepway		Westminster
(b) At the end of December 1981		
Hove	Hackney	Brent
Brighton	Kensington and Chelsea	Hammersmith
York	Tower Hamlets	Westminster
Eastbourne	Camden	
Oxford	Ealing	
Slough	Hillingdon	
Blackpool		
Sutton		
Kingston upon Thames		
Wandsworth		
Haringey		
Hounslow		
(c) At the end of December 1983		
Harrow	Manchester	Ealing
Hammersmith and Fulham	Haringey	Lambeth
Bristol	Hounslow	Camden
Reading	Kingston upon Thames	Tower Hamlets
Rushmoor	Oxford	Hackney[1]
Sutton		Westminster[1]
Havant		Brent[1]
Wandsworth		
Crawley		
Brighton		
Slough[1]		
(d) At the end of December 1985		
Harrow	Kingston upon Thames	Brent
Brighton	Leicester	Haringey
Southend-on-sea	Southwark	Westminster
Woodspring	Rushmoor	Lambeth
Bexley	Hounslow	Wandsworth
Islington	Slough	Hillingdon
Enfield	Ealing	Hammersmith
Lewisham	Oxford	Manchester[1]
Kensington and Chelsea	Reading[1]	Camden[1]
Gloucester		Hackney[1]
Rochester upon Medway		Tower Hamlets[1]
Sutton		
Epsom and Ewell		
Havant		
Hove		
Bristol		
Nottingham		
(e) At the end of March 1988		
Richmond upon Thames	Harrow	Ealing
New Forest	Bristol	Manchester
Southend-on-sea	Slough	Brent
Colchester	Rushmoor	Haringey
East Hampshire	Oxford	Hammersmith and Fulham
Thurrock	Hove	Camden
Test Valley	Kensington and Chelsea	Newham
Rochester upon Medway	Kingston upon Thames	Lambeth
Peterborough	Ipswich	Tower Hamlets
Poole	Reigate and Banstead	Wandsworth
Tunbridge Wells		Westminster
Adur		Hackney
Middlesbrough		Shepway
Hart		Hillingdon
St. Albans		Reading
Arun		Hounslow
Gravesham		Brighton
Havant		Islington
South Wight		Enfield
Cambridge		Sutton
Bexley		Lewisham[1]
Kirklees		Southwark[1]

Over 20, up to 50 households	Over 50 up to 100 households	Over 100 households
Blackpool		
Runnymede		
Woodspring[1]		
Gloucester[1]		

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[1] Data not available so bed and breakfast figures at an earlier date have been used.

Mortgage Arrears

Mr. Soley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has on how many mortgagors *(a)* with a building society mortgage and *(b)* with another source of mortgage, were estimated to be (i) at least one month in arrears with their mortgage repayments, (ii) at least six months in arrears with their mortgage repayments and (iii) subject to repossession action by the mortgagee in each of the years from 1979 to 1987.

Mrs. Roe: The information is not available in precisely the form requested. Figures for building societies and local authorities are below. The corresponding information is not available for other lending institutions.

Building societies (United Kingdom)

Year	Loans, 6-12 months in arrears, end period: Number	Loans, 6-12 months in arrears, end period: Percentage of loans at end of period	Loans over 12 months in arrears, end period: Number	Loans over 12 months in arrears, end period: Percentage of loans at end of period	Properties taken into possession in period: Number	Properties taken into possession in period: Percentage of loans at end of period
1979	8,420	0·16	—	—	2,530	0·048
1980	13,490	0·25	—	—	3,020	0·056
1981	18,720	0·34	—	—	4,240	0·077
1982	23,790	0·42	4,810	0·085	5,950	0·105
1983	25,580	0·43	6,540	0·11	7,320	0·123
1984	41,940	0·66	8,260	0·13	10,870	0·171
1985	48,790	0·74	11,210	0·17	16,490	0·250
1986	45,250	0·64	11,310	0·16	20,930	0·296
1987	47,770	0·67	12,630	0·18	22,630	0·318

Local authorities (England)

Year	Loans, 6-12 months in arrears, end period: Number	Loans, 6-12 months in arrears, end period: Per cent. of loans at end of period	Loans over 12 months in arrears, end period: Number	Loans over 12 months in arrears, end period: Per cent. of loans at end of period	Properties taken into possession in period: Number	Properties taken into possession in period: Per cent. of loans at end of period
1978-79	—	—	—	—	1,800	—
1979-80	—	—	—	—	1,100	—
1980-81	—	—	—	—	1,000	0·14
1981-82	—	—	—	—	1,100	0·16
1982-83	8,730	1·3	4,500	0·6	950	0·14
1983-84	9,630	1·5	4,900	0·8	840	0·13
1984-85	12,330	2·1	6,520	1·1	570	0·10
1985-86	10,260	2·0	5,580	1·1	630	0·13
1986-87	8,500	2·0	4,700	1·1	490	0·12

Housing Association Dwellings

Mr. Soley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish a table showing the total number of housing association dwellings completed, including newly-built and rehabilitated dwellings for letting *(a)* on a fair rent, *(b)* on a shared ownership lease and *(c)* as an assured tenancy for each of the regions and for England as a whole in the years 1976-77 to 1987-88.

Mrs. Roe: Information on housing association completions available on the basis of standard statistical regions does not distinguish between homes for rent and for other tenures. The table therefore shows total completions for England, and fair rent completions funded by the Housing Corporation broken down by corporation region. Prior to 1987-88 registered housing associations did not provide homes to let on assured tenancy terms so the number of assured tenancy completions in the period was negligible. Provision for housing associations to build or rehabilitate homes for sale on shared ownership terms was first introduced following the Housing Act 1980 and, although no regional breakdown is available, information on total sales since 1981-82 is also shown below.

Housing association completions (new build and rehabilitation)

000's

	Total[1]	Of which Housing Corporation funded for fair rent: by Corporation region[2]							
		All	London and Home Counties	West	Midlands East	Midlands West	North East	North West	Mersey
1976-77	33·9	10·3	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
1977-78	42·1	20·5	7·8	1·8	2·0	3·9	2·5	2·4	—
1978-79	34·0	23·8	10·5	1·6	1·3	2·8	3·7	3·8	—

	Total[1]	Of which Housing Corporation funded for fair rent: by Corporation region[2]							
			London and Home Counties		Midlands		North		
		All		West	East	West	East	West	Mersey
1979-80	32·5	21·3	6·6	1·2	2·2	3·4	4·6	3·3	—
1980-81	34·4	26·0	8·1	2·0	1·7	4·8	3·9	5·4	—
1981-82	27·1	[2]20·0	2·2	2·3	2·1	3·3	5·5	2·3	2·4
1982-83	26·7	21·6	4·4	2·0	2·8	2·3	4·6	3·3	2·3
1983-84	30·7	20·7	6·3	1·7	2·3	2·9	4·3	1·6	1·6
1984-85	29·4	25·3	7·9	2·6	3·1	2·7	3·5	3·4	2·0
1985-86	22·0	21·3	6·5	2·3	2·0	2·0	3·6	3·0	1·9
1986-87	21·9	20·0	5·4	2·0	1·9	2·4	3·5	2·9	1·7
1987-88[3]	21·2	18·2	5·3	1·7	1·7	2·0	2·9	2·6	2·0

[1] Renovations figures consist of schemes approved up to 1977 and work completed thereafter; from 1981 total includes improvement for sale and from 1985 excludes hostel bedspaces.

[2] Housing Corporation regional boundaries adjusted in 1981-82, prior to that figures for London include whole of South East and Merseyside was included in North West region.

[3] Provisional.

Housing association shared ownership sales (introduced following Housing Act 1980)

	'000s
1981-82	[1]0·1
1982-83	[1]2·5
1983-84	[1]4·1
1984-85	[1]3·4
1985-86	[1]1·8
1986-87	[1]1·9
1987-88	1·5

[1] The revised figures show all housing association shared ownership units sold during the year including any actually completed in previous years.

Rents

Mr. Soley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish a table showing the average level of *(a)* local authority rents, *(b)* fair rents registered for unfurnished housing association lettings, *(c)* fair rents registered for other unfurnished lettings and *(d)* fair rents registered for all unfurnished lettings in England in each of the years from 1979 to 1987, indicating the percentage increase in each on an annual cumulative basis; and how these increases compare with the movement of the retail prices index over that same period.

Mrs. Roe: The figures on local authority rents, the average rents registered by rent officers and the movements in the retail price index from 1979 to 1987 are as follows:

(a) Average weekly unrebated rents at April for local authority dwellings

	Average rent £	Percentage increase over year	
1979	6·41	—	—
1980	7·70	20	20
1981	11·42	48	78
1982	13·48	18	110
1983	13·97	4	118
1984	14·66	5	129
1985	15·54	6	142
1986	16·36	5	155
1987	17·20	5	168

(b) Fair rents[1] (£ per week)

	Unfurnished housing association tenancies £	Other unfurnished tenancies[2] £	All unfurnished tenancies £	Retail prices index United Kingdom April percentage increase over year	since 1979
1979	10·69	9·25	9·79	—	—
1980	12·54	10·79	11·46	22	22
1981	13·98	12·40	13·02	12	36
1982	15·63	14·06	14·75	9	49
1983	17·19	14·85	15·92	4	55
1984	18·69	16·71	17·67	5	63
1985	19·75	17·44	18·58	7	75
1986	21·44	19·85	20·69	3	80
1987	22·87	20·60	21·81	4	87

[1] Service charges, if any, are included.

[2] Registered rents for private regulated tenancies only.

The mix of properties for which rents are registered varies from year to year for a number of reasons: for example, extension of decontrol in 1981; the reduction from 3 to 2 years in the minimum period for re-registration which led to re-registrations in 1983 of rents previously registered in 1980 and 1981. Therefore, comparison of averages for consecutive years do not properly reflect rent movements. Better estimates of rent movements are derived from previous and new registered rents for tenancies where there has been no material change in terms or in the physical condition. For properties with rents fixed in 1979, 1982, 1984 and 1986, the estimated percentage increases are:

	Unfurnished Housing Association Tenancies		*Other Unfurnished Tenancies*		*All Unfurnished Tenancies*	
	per cent. increase in period	*per cent. increase annualised*	*per cent. increase in period*	*per cent. increase annualised*	*per cent. increase in period*	*per cent. increase annualised*
1979-82	48	14	50	14	49	14
1982-84	18	9	19	9	18	9
1984-86	15	7	17	8	16	8

The estimated annualised increases for properties with rents fixed in 1987 were 8 per cent. 9 per cent. and 9 per cent. respectively for unfurnished housing association tenancies, other unfurnished tenancies and all unfurnished tenancies.

Housing Revenue Account Dwellings

Mr. Soley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the value of the Exchequer subsidies and rate fund contributions, respectively, to English local authority housing revenue account dwellings in total and on a per dwelling basis for the years 1978-79 to 1987-88.

Mrs. Roe: Housing Subsidy up to 1980-81 was paid under a different system. Information for the years 1981-82 to 1987-88 inclusive, has already been given in answer to the hon. Member's question on 10 June, column *736*. My hon. Friend, the Minister for Housing and Planning, wrote to him on 20 June to correct two computer-produced errors in that answer. The corrected information is reproduced below.

Main Housing Subsidy and Rate Fund Contributions 1981-82 to 1987-88
Local Authorities in England

	1981-82	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	*1984-85*	*1985-86*	*1986-87*	*1987-88*	*1988-89*
Main Housing Subsidy								
Total £ million	881·1	436·8	346·9	353·9	486·4	476·5	464·0	469·4
Per Dwelling:								
All LAs £	180	92	75	77	107	107	108	—
LAs in Subsidy £	184	209	250	263	342	374	371	—
Negative RFCs								
Total £ million	−17·1	−22·1	−28·0	−44·2	−58·3	−101·3	−59·7	—
Per Dwelling:								
All LAs £	−3	−5	−6	−10	−13	−23	−14	—
LAs in Subsidy £	−3	−4	−4	−8	−13	−11	−10	—
Positive RFCs								
Total £ Million	419·6	432·7	495·2	432·3	438·4	378·0	412·6	—
Per Dwelling:								
All LAs £	85	91	106	94	97	85	96	—
LAs in Subsidy £	87	184	309	207	260	242	262	—

Note: Not all local authorities in receipt of Exchequer subsidy are also making contributions from the general rate fund. Note also that the figures for main housing subsidy are those for authorities' total entitlement each year; they exclude any adjustments in respect of prior years.

Assured Tenancies

Mr. Soley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many assured tenancies of *(a)* newly built and *(b)* newly improved properties have been created in each of the years since 1981 in England.

Mrs. Roe: The information is not available in the form requested. The number of assured tenancy lettings of newly built property on 1 April each year since 1983 was:

	Number
1983	44
1984	224
1985	405
1986	609
1987	2,993

The assured tenancy scheme was extended in January 1987 to include newly refurbished property. By 1 April 1987, five refurbished dwellings had been let under assured tenancies. A survey to establish the number of assured tenancies at 1 April 1988 is currently taking place.

Council House Sales

Mr. Soley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the value of discounts to tenants acquiring council housing under the right to buy *(a)* in England and *(b)* in each region, in each year from 1981 to 1987.

Mrs. Roe: The available information is given below.

Total value of discounts on sales by English local authorities (£ million)

	1980-81	*1981-82*	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	*1984-85*	*1985-86*	*1986-87*
DOE Regions							
Northern excluding Cumbria	[1]1·5	[1]78·4	101·1	52·9	33·3	33·1	35·8
Yorkshire and Humberside	18·8	64·7	121·1	57·7	46·2	50·3	57·9
East Midlands	24·1	85·4	118·9	63·4	48·6	54·5	68·0
Eastern	70·0	134·3	170·1	146·6	155·1	156·5	194·4
Greater London	90·1	126·7	197·5	156·2	192·7	220·6	261·6
South East	93·7	150·1	170·8	183·5	182·9	179·7	218·1

	1980-81	*1981-82*	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	*1984-85*	*1985-86*	*1986-87*
South West	31·4	92·7	108·2	86·5	82·2	79·3	97·0
West Midlands	42·1	80·3	149·6	104·3	70·5	63·1	70·9
North West including Cumbria	[1]44·2	[1]95·4	162·0	93·1	57·7	65·4	67·0
England	415·9	908·0	1299·2	944·4	869·1	902·5	1070·7

[1] DOE housing regions in 1980-81 and 1981-82 included Cumbria in the northern region

Mr. Soley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish a table showing the total number and value of homes sold by local authorities *(a)* in England and *(b)* in each region (i) under the right to buy and (ii) otherwise, in each of the years from 1979 to 1987.

Mrs. Roe: The available information is given below: values of dwellings sold under the right to buy are not collected.

Local authorities in England: sales of dwellings 1980-81—1986-87
Numbers sold and values net of discount

DOE regions	*1980-81*	*1981-82*	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	*1984-85*	*1985-86*	*1986-87*
Northern region							
Right to buy sales	400	13,200	19,300	8,400	4,900	4,300	4,600
Sitting tenant sales	700	13,200	19,300	8,400	4,900	4,300	4,600
Sitting tenant values £ million	5·4	95·2	139·4	68·5	41·8	36·9	40·1
Non sitting tenant sales	200	600	300	200	300	400	200
Non sitting tenant values £ million	2·1	3·9	3·0	1·5	2·8	3·8	3·9
Yorkshire and Humberside							
Right to buy sales	200	11,300	19,800	9,000	6,600	6,600	6,800
Sitting tenant sales	4,800	12,300	20,300	9,400	6,900	6,800	7,000
Sitting tenant values £ million	28·6	89·6	152·5	76·0	57·4	56·8	62·8
Non sitting tenant sales	100	300	100	200	300	200	200
Non sitting tenant values £ million	0·9	5·9	0·5	1·6	2·1	1·4	1·5
East Midlands							
Right to buy sales	400	13,200	19,300	9,800	6,500	6,800	7,600
Sitting tenant sales	4,400	13,900	19,500	10,000	6,700	6,900	7,600
Sitting tenant values £ million	30·5	104·7	152·0	85·3	59·4	62·0	77·3
Non sitting tenant sales	300	200	400	300	200	300	200
Non sitting tenant values £ million	2·2	1·6	2·2	1·9	2·3	3·4	3·2
Eastern							
Right to buy sales	200	12,400	16,600	13,900	12,300	11,500	11,700
Sitting tenant sales	9,900	16,200	19,200	15,500	13,900	12,200	13,000
Sitting tenant values £ million	98·0	180·7	226·3	195·0	188·1	174·4	218·2
Non sitting tenant sales	400	200	400	300	400	200	300
Non sitting tenant values £ million	4·6	2·3	5·1	4·1	6·4	4·2	7·6
Greater London							
Right to buy sales	300	6,800	17,300	12,700	11,400	10,800	12,300
Sitting tenants sales	11,500	10,200	18,600	13,800	13,400	12,300	12,800
Sitting tenants values £ million	137·0	150·5	226·3	215·0	220·4	232·1	269·0
Non sitting tenant sales	3,800	3,500	1,800	1,300	1,300	1,900	1,000
Non sitting tenant values £ million	65·0	68·4	40·2	27·8	28·8	42·5	34·4
South East							
Right to buy sales	300	13,800	15,700	15,200	12,600	10,800	11,200
Sitting tenant sales	10,500	17,100	18,200	17,800	15,200	12,500	13,300
Sitting tenant values £ million	126·5	200·9	230·7	242·8	221·1	196·7	240·0
Non sitting tenant sales	900	200	300	400	400	500	700
Non sitting tenant values £ million	15·3	3·8	5·1	5·3	6·8	7·2	12·7
South West							
Right to buy sales	200	11,500	13,500	9,900	7,400	7,200	7,300
Sitting tenant sales	4,500	12,500	14,000	10,500	8,600	7,400	8,000
Sitting tenant values (£ million)	40·1	124·0	144·1	115·5	98·9	88·9	106·6
Non sitting tenant sales	200	100	200	400	200	300	200
Non sitting tenant values (£ million)	1·5	2·2	2·4	5·7	3·9	6·0	4·3
West Midlands							
Right to buy sales	100	10,900	21,600	14,200	8,800	6,900	8,300
Sitting tenant sales	7,900	11,500	21,900	14,500	9,100	7,000	8,400
Sitting tenant values (£ million)	59·2	94·9	190·3	130·3	83·0	68·1	78·6
Non sitting tenant sales	700	200	600	1,300	900	300	100
Non sitting tenant values (£ million)	5·8	2·4	7·0	13·0	8·1	2·7	1·3
North West							
Right to buy sales	200	12,100	24,000	13,200	7,000	7,300	6,800
Sitting tenant sales	7,200	15,400	25,500	14,200	7,900	8,100	7,800
Sitting tenant values (£ million)	52·1	123·8	199·3	116·0	69·8	66·8	7·1

DOE regions	*1980-81*	*1981-82*	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	*1984-85*	*1985-86*	*1986-87*
Non sitting tenant sales	100	600	700	3,800	700	700	600
Non sitting tenant values (£ million)	1·5	6·3	5·6	11·0	6·7	7·1	5·1
England							
Right to buy sales	2,300	105,200	167,100	106,300	77,500	72,100	76,700
Sitting tenant sales	61,400	122,300	176,500	114,100	86,600	77,600	82,700
Sitting tenant values (£ million)	572·4	1,164·2	1,700·9	1,244·4	1,039·8	982·9	1,163·2
Non sitting tenant sales	6,800	5,900	4,700	7,900	4,800	4,700	3,500
Non sitting tenant values (£ million)	99·2	92·5	71·1	72·0	67·8	78·2	73·8

Notes:

[1] Sitting tenant sales include right to buy sales

[2] DOE regions in 1980-81 and 1981-82 included Cumbria in the Northern Region.

House Purchase

Mr. Soley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish a table showing the average incomes of first-time house buyers and the average prices of houses in *(a)* England and *(b)* each region, in each of the years from 1979 to 1987.

Mrs. Roe: The average income of first-time house buyers and the average price of houses in England in each year from 1979 to 1987, based on a survey of building society mortgages, were as follows:

	Average income of first time house buyers £	*Average price of houses* £
1979	6,276	20,068
1980	7,760	23,957
1981	8,268	24,590
1982	8,599	24,019
1983	8,924	27,040
1984	9,803	29,881
1985	10,553	31,984
1986	11,846	37,591
1987	12,680	41,961

Figures for each region from 1979 to 1986 appear in table 10.11 (a) of "Housing Construction and Statistics 1976-1986", a copy of which is available in the Library. Corresponding figures for 1987 are as follows:

	Average income of first time house buyers £	*Average price of houses* £
Northern	10,185	27,275
Yorkshire and Humberside	10,107	27,747
East Midlands	10,854	31,808
East Anglia	12,306	42,681
Greater London	18,801	66,024
South East	15,208	57,387
South West	12,275	44,728
West Midlands	10,657	32,657
North West	10,454	29,527

Incomes (Statistics)

Mr. Soley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what is his latest estimate of the average annual income of *(a)* home owners who own their own home outright, *(b)* owner-occupiers buying their homes with a mortgage, *(c)* council tenants, *(d)* housing association tenants and *(e)* tenants of private landlords;

(2) if he will publish a table giving the most recent information available on the gross average household income of local authority tenants, housing association tenants, private tenants and owner occupiers, with and without mortgages *(a)* for households in employment, *(b)* for pensioner households and *(c)* for other households.

Mrs. Roe: The most recent estimates of gross average household income are from the 1986 family expenditure survey. The estimates for England are shown in the table.

Table: average gross household income 1986

England — *£ per week*

Tenure	*Household in employment*	*Pensioner household*	*Other household*	*All*
Own outright	285	61	175	189
Buying with mortgage	339	88	213	326
Local Authority	200	55	106	122
Housing Association	209	52	94	116
Private renter	238	55	115	175

Council Houses

Mr. Soley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the average cost of a newly built council dwelling in England in 1987, and what were *(a)* the annual debt charges for the average dwelling and *(b)* the average rent charged for new dwellings completed.

Mrs. Roe: Figures for the overall costs of providing a council house in 1987 are not available, but the average construction cost, excluding land costs, site works and estate costs, of a council dwelling in 1987 is provisionally estimated at £22,000. No figure is available for the annual debt charges for the average new council dwelling. According to information provided by local authorities to the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy, the average rent in April 1987 charged for new council dwellings completed in 1986-87 was £19·20 a week.

Housing Revenue Accounts

Mr. Soley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish a table showing the total cost of subsidies to local authority housing revenue accounts for each year from 1967-68, at 1987 prices *(a)* from the Exchequer and *(b)* from the general rate fund.

Mrs. Roe: The annual cost of housing subsidy and of rate fund contributions for the years 1971-72 onwards (at prevailing prices) can be found in the White Papers "The Government's Expenditure Plans", starting in 1976-77.

Bed-and-Breakfast Accommodation

Mr. Soley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the most recent estimate of the number of homeless households occupying bed-and-breakfast accommodation who have been placed there by local authorities; and what is *(a)* the average weekly cost of the accommodation and *(b)* the estimated total annual cost.

Mrs. Roe: Latest estimates of the number of households in bed-and-breakfast accommodation appear in table 4(a) of "Local authorities' action under the homeless provisions of the 1985 Housing Act: England. Results for the first quarter of 1988. Supplementary Tables", which is in the Library.

For estimates of the average costs per household day I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by my hon. Friend the Minister for Housing and Planning to the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) on 21 January at column *826*.

The estimated total expenditure on bed-and-breakfast accommodation by English local authorities in 1986-87 is £97 million gross and £75 million net.

Local Authority Rents

Mr. Soley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what have been the average annual rents for local authority dwellings for each year since 1967, shown at 1987 prices.

Mrs. Roe: Estimates of financial year average unrebated rents for English local authorities, revalued to 1987 prices using the retail prices index, are as follows:

	£ per annum
1967-68	579
1968-69	600
1969-70	620
1970-71	644
1971-72	636
1972-73	658
1973-74	774
1974-75	697
1975-76	631
1976-77	629
1977-78	627
1978-79	612
1979-80	581
1980-81	630
1981-82	796
1982-83	875
1983-84	864
1984-85	867
1985-86	865
1986-87	884
1987-88	895

Home Ownership

Mr. Soley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what have been the average annual prices of dwellings purchased by owner-occupiers for each year since 1967, shown at 1987 prices, by region.

Mrs. Roe: The figures requested, based on building society mortgage completions, are only available since 1969 and are shown in the table.

Annual average prices[1] of dwellings from 1969-87 at 1987 prices[2]

	Northern	*Yorkshire and Humberside*	*East Midlands*	*East Anglia*	*Greater London*	*South East*	*South West*	*West Midlands*	*North West*
1969	21,733	20,106	22,183	25,150	36,250	33,892	26,308	25,442	22,950
1970	21,678	19,985	21,810	24,829	37,846	34,222	26,831	24,692	23,009
1971	22,055	20,216	22,060	24,964	39,883	36,602	27,959	24,753	22,582
1972	25,391	22,891	26,367	32,981	52,129	46,504	36,452	29,238	26,850
1973	31,876	30,350	35,217	42,345	62,114	56,598	46,727	37,728	33,691
1974	31,286	30,711	34,053	40,741	55,046	51,671	43,001	37,984	32,938
1975	28,632	27,013	29,789	34,379	44,488	43,731	36,073	32,405	29,139
1976	26,748	25,576	27,242	30,323	39,832	39,785	33,273	29,737	26,868
1977	26,004	23,683	25,107	26,894	36,986	36,370	29,940	27,672	25,452
1978	26,604	24,677	26,127	28,489	39,078	38,579	31,620	29,252	27,351

[1] Prices of buildings society mortgage completions

[2] Prices adjusted to 1987 levels by Retail Prices Index movements

	1979	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*
Northern	27,777	26,998	25,349	22,673	24,031	25,829	24,544	25,348	27,275
Yorkshire and Humberside	26,985	26,966	26,167	22,810	25,028	25,546	25,139	26,675	27,747
East Midlands	28,484	28,855	26,525	24,450	26,423	27,855	27,510	29,671	31,808
East Anglia	33,205	34,770	31,424	29,307	30,987	32,334	34,104	37,565	42,681
Greater London	46,393	47,209	41,913	38,534	41,556	44,960	47,720	57,152	66,024
South East	44,382	45,478	40,847	37,234	40,505	42,661	43,611	50,569	57,387
South West	36,862	38,558	34,565	32,012	33,590	34,980	35,491	40,144	44,728
West Midlands	33,263	33,024	29,646	26,338	27,479	28,555	27,850	29,623	32,657
North West	30,401	30,629	28,009	26,027	27,390	27,893	27,065	28,650	29,527

[1] Prices of building society mortgage completions.

[2] Prices adjusted to 1987 levels by Retail Price Index movements.

Housing Statistics

Mr. Soley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish a table showing for each year since 1967, using the 1967 level as 100, the average annual percentage rise in *(a)* average local authority rent, *(b)* average house prices, *(c)* retail prices and *(d)* average earnings for people in full-time employment.

Mrs. Roe: The average annual percentage rise in average local authority rents, average house prices, retail prices and average earnings for people in full-time employment are given in the table.

Year	*Local Authority unrebated rents at April — England Annual percentage increaese*	*Average house prices[1] England Annual percentage increase*	*Retail prices index United Kingdom Annual percentage increase*	*Average earnings[2] Annual percentage increase*
1968	11	n/a	4	7
1969	9	n/a	5	9
1970	12	6	6	10
1971	9	13	9	10
1972	11	35	7	12
1973	25	37	9	14
1974	10	8	16	14
1975	10	5	24	28
1976	15	8	17	18
1977	16	7	16	10
1978	6	16	8	13
1979	10	30	13	14
1980	20	22	18	23
1981	48	5	12	13
1982	18	2	9	10
1983	4	12	5	9
1984	5	10	5	7
1985	6	9	6	8
1986	5	15	3	8
1987	5	17	4	8

[1] Building Society Mortgage Completions.

[2] Males in Full-time Occupations: 1968-1974 Great Britain, 1975-1987 England.

n/a = Not Available.

Mr. Soley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish a table showing the average local authority rent level, the average housing association rent level and average mortgage repayments as a percentage of average earnings for each year since 1967.

Mrs. Roe: The information requested is given in the table.

Rent level and mortgage repayments as percentage of average earnings[1] England

	Local authority unrebated rents	*Housing association registered rents[2]*	*Average mortgage repayments[3]*
1967	7	—	n/a
1968	7	—	n/a
1969	7	—	17
1970	8	—	18
1971	8	—	19
1972	8	—	21
1973	8	12	24
1974	8	13	24
1975	7	12	20
1976	7	11	19
1977	7	11	19
1978	7	11	18
1979	6	11	21
1980	6	10	23
1981	8	10	22
1982	9	10	21
1983	8	10	19
1984	8	10	21
1985	8	10	23
1986	8	10	23
1987	8	10	23

[1] Average earnings are of males in full-time occupations: 1968-1974 Great Britain, 1975-1987 England.

[2] Housing Association rents were not registered before 1973 Service charges, if any, are included.

[3] Based on mortgage advances made by building societies. Repayments are net of tax relief.

n/a—not available.

Mr. Maurice Tucker

Mr. Soley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment on what terms and conditions Mr. Maurice Tucker, a civil servant at his Department is seconded indefinitely to Thamesmead Town Ltd., to act as company secretary and a non executive director; and at what cost to the Exchequer this secondment is made.

Mr. Ridley: Mr. Maurice Tucker was seconded to Thamesmead Town on 1 December 1986 and returns to the Department on 31 December 1988. While on secondment, Mr. Tucker remains a civil servant and is paid the salary applicable to his grade—grade 7. The company has leased a car for his use during the secondment. From 1 December 1986 to 26 July 1987, before Thamesmead Town was fully operational, Mr. Tucker was paid by the

Department as a grade 7 Officer. Since 27 July 1987, his salary costs have been reimbursed to the Department by Thamesmead Town.

Canary Wharf

Ms. Gordon: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will state the nature of the proposals made to the London Docklands development corporation by various interested developers for the Canary wharf site, other than the first Canary Wharf Development Company until the signing of the option agreement with the latter company in May 1985.

Mr. Trippier: Prior to the signing of the option agreement, two existing buildings on Canary wharf had been occupied. Three other proposals had been made, two of which were office schemes which have since proceeded on other sites. The third was for an hotel, negotiations for which scheme were terminated.

Ms. Gordon: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will state the nature of the land use proposal made by developers of the site of Canary wharf, other than the first Canary Wharf Development Company, at the time when the interest in the main development was taken over by Olympia and York, stating the number of proposals concerned and the likely employment consequences for the site of those alternative possibilities.

Mr. Trippier: When Olympia and York took over the Canary wharf scheme there were no other proposals for the site.

Ms. Gordon: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will state any expenditure or financial obligation entered into or discharged by the London Docklands development corporation with any developer, other than the first Canary Wharf Development Company, in respect of commitments or agreements made during May 1985; and if he will state their nature and amount.

Mr. Trippier: There were none.

London Docklands Development Corporation

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will tabulate in the *Official Report* details of each chief executive of the London Docklands development corporation and all principal officers directly responsible to him from 1 April 1987 to date, including all acting and temporary appointments, and for each post or appointments, as relevant, the principal duties and responsibilities, the period over which the appointment was held and the reasons for the post being vacant.

Mr. Trippier: The LDDC's staffing and organisation are matters for the board.

Local Authorities (Company Interests)

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much was paid to Coopers and Lybrand for its specialist advice commissioned in connection with the consultation paper on local authorities' interests in companies.

Mr. Ridley: Thirteen thousand, eight hundred pounds plus VAT.

Sport (Disabled Persons)

Mr. Pendry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if, in the light of the fact that the British Sports Association for the Disabled was not on the list of persons and bodies consulted about the paper "Competition in the Management of Local Authority Sport and Recreation Facilities", what provisions he is now making for the disabled to take part in the consultation process.

Mr. Moynihan: The list of consultees attached to the Consultation Paper were those to whom the document was sent on publication in September 1987. Included on that list were the Central Council of Physical Recreation, as the umbrella body for governing bodies of sport, and the Sports Council. Subsequently, on 2 October 1987 copies of the paper were sent to over 60 individual governing bodies including the British Sports Association for the Disabled (BSAD). If we decide to proceed with competition in the management of local authority sport and leisure facilities we shall be undertaking further consultation on the necessary order before it is laid in Parliament. The BSAD would then be consulted again.

Blue Dolphin Fish Restaurants Ltd.

Mr. Speller: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received about the implications for the operation and effectiveness of part II of the Landlord and Tenant Act 1954 of certain leases granted to Blue Dolphin fish and chip shops in north Devon and other parts of the United Kingdom by Blue Dolphin Fish Restaurants Ltd.; what response he has made to those representations; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Roe: My hon. Friend's representations have been received, but no others. The terms of a commercial lease are a matter for free negotiation between prospective landlord and tenant, preferably with the aid of professional advice. Our 1985 review of part II of the Landlord and Tenant Act 1954 concluded that there were no pressing reasons to amend the legislation which was generally working well. If a party to a lease has reason go suppose that the other party is acting outside the general law the appropriate action is through the courts.

Rating Reform

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if, further to his reply to the hon. Member for Copeland of 13 May, *Official Report*, column *267*, he will now publish full community charge exemplifications for 1988-89.

Mr. Ridley: I did so on 23 June 1988.

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if it is still intended that community service volunteers who live-in with disabled people to enable them to live at home will have to pay the community charge.

Mr. Howard *[holding answer 24 June 1988]*: A Government amendment to the Local Government Finance Bill, which would exempt voluntary care workers from the personal community charge, was tabled on 24 June.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

All-night Sittings (Costs)

30. **Sir Fergus Montgomery:** To ask the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed, representing the House of Commons Commission, what was the cost in overtime payments to staff of the House as a result of the all-night sitting during the Housing Bill on Tuesday 14 and Wednesday 15 June.

Mr. Beith: It is too soon after the event for all applications for overtime worked as a result of that all-night sitting to have been received. Moreover, this information is not normally available centrally in the form requested because responsibility for overtime lies not with the Fees Office but with individual Heads of Department. Authorised submissions to the Fees Office for payment of overtime, whilst specifying the duration of work, do not indicate the period covered. In the case of the exceptionally long sitting on 14 June, however, I have asked the Fees Office to provide me with as much information as it is able to put together, and I will write to the hon. Member in due course.

Written Answers to Questions

Tuesday 28 June 1988

HOME DEPARTMENT

Licensing Act 1964

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will seek to repeal sections 66 and 67 of the Licensing Act 1964.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We have at present no plans to do so.

Criminal Injuries Compensation Scheme

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many claims are received annually under the criminal injuries compensation scheme; how many of these claims are successful; and what is the average length of time for processing such claims.

Mr. John Patten: The latest annual report of the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board (Cm. 265), a copy of which is in the Library, shows that in the year 1986-87 the board received 42,301 applications and resolved 29,605 in the main applications made in earlier years, 21,925 by monetary award. The board does not calculate the average length of time taken to deal with applications, but the report shows the percentage of cases resolved within certain periods: half of those resolved in 1986-87 were resolved within a year of application.

Jurors

Mr. Wilkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to provide support and protection to jurors who are subjected to intimidation during and following trials, in the light of the recent incidents at the trials of football hooligans.

Mr. John Patten: Protection of jurors is an operational matter for chief officers of police. They are aware of the dangers, and if necessary seek the authority of the trial judge to provide police protection to prevent interference. Acts calculated to prejudice the administration of justice are punishable as contempt of court, or may amount to attempts to pervert the course of justice. We are satisfied that the police and judges have the necessary powers.

Neighbourhood Watch Schemes

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many neighbourhood watch schemes were operating in Waveney in *(a)* 1983-84 and *(b)* 1987-88; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: I understand from the chief constable of Suffolk that there were no neighbourhood watch schemes in Waveney in 1983-84, the first scheme having been established there in October 1986. This was also the first scheme to be established in Suffolk. By the end of March 1988 there were 87 schemes in Waveney, and the total has now risen to 100, an increase I greatly welcome.

Magistrates (Travelling Allowances)

Mr. John M. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to review magistrates' travelling allowances.

Mr. John Patten: The allowances are reviewed each year, and are varied in line with those payable to local authority members. The basis for the payment of these and other allowances is under consideration, and I have discussed the issue with the chairman of the Magistrates Association, Mr. John Hosking.

Passports

Sir Hector Monro: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department in which countries it will be possible to read the machine-readable page in the new British European Community passports.

Mr. Renton *[holding answer 21 June 1988]:* All the information contained on the machine-readable page of the new British passport in the European Community common format will be readable by the human eye as well as by optical character recognition equipment. I understand that the United States of America has begun to install passport-reading equipment at ports of entry, and other countries are expected to follow suit. The United Kingdom immigration service is using passport-reading equipment in a pilot project at Dover. It is not intended to machine-read the passports of United Kingdom nationals routinely at United Kingdom immigration controls, but the capability to do so will exist.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Export Promotion

Mr. Cran: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will report on the progress being made by his Department's central policy unit in its review of export promotion; and when he expects the review to be completed.

Mr. Alan Clark: An internal review of export promotion by the Department's central unit has been completed.

Companies Registration Offices

Mr. Gould: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will give the costs and revenues for each of the services provided by the companies registration offices and indicate the effect on them of the proposed fee increases.

Mr. Maude: Fee income received by the companies registration offices is applied to meeting the costs of a system of regulating companies and developing the law relating to them.

In 1987-88, the costs of CRO search services were £8·5 million against fee income of £4 million. The costs of incorporating companies and registering documents at CRO amounted to £12·6 million. The balance of fee income, £23 million, was applied to these costs and to those of running other parts of the system. These include companies investigation work and the branches of the Department's companies division which are concerned with the development of company law.

Our forecasts indicate that the average annual income over the next public expenditure survey period, without the increase in fees, would amount to just over £30 million. Total costs, however, are forecast on the same basis to be in excess of £36 million. The shortfall of around £6 million is the amount which is expected to be covered by the increase in search and related fees and needed to balance income and expenditure.

Company Liquidations

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what investigations have been carried out on behalf of or by his Department since 1979 into companies which have gone into receivership or liquidation, or under any other legislative power of administrative procedure, listing, in each case, whether any of the companies or associated companies was registered in Jersey, Guernsey or the Isle of Man.

Mr. Maude: This information is not readily available and the cost of the necessary research could not be justified. If the hon. Member will write to me about his specific concerns, I will see what relevant information can be given.

Research Establishments

Mr. Ingram: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will list those organisations consulted by his Department in the recent review of the four Department of Trade and Industry research establishments.

Mr. Butcher: Officials consulted a wide range of customers and potential customers of the research establishments. They spoke to a number of the Department's external advisors on research and development. They contacted organisations in the United Kingdom which themselves carry out research to find out how their work was commissioned and organised. Officials also sought information from a number of Her Majesty's diplomatic posts overseas on research in those countries.

Skin Lighteners

Mr. Madden: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will seek with his EEC counterparts a ban by the EEC on the manufacture, sale and export of all skin lightening soaps and creams; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Butcher: We shall inform the Commission of the EC that we have banned exports from the United Kingdom of soap containing mercury salts, and that we are suggesting that exports from the United Kingdom of skin-lightening creams should meet the same conditions as are required for sale within the EC. It will be for the Commission, in consultation with member states, to consider what action should be taken by the EC collectively.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will arrange for health warnings to be displayed on all skin-lightening soaps and creams sold in, and exported from, the United Kingdom, and if he will list the brand names of such products and the British companies by which they are manufactured.

Mr. Butcher: We are stopping the export from the United Kingdom to the Third world of soap containing mercury salts. Skin-lightening creams containing hydroquinone with a maximum concentration of 2 per cent. may be sold within the EC, provided certain warnings are clearly displayed. We shall ask industry in the United Kingdom to limit the hydroquinone content to 2 per cent. and to put the same warnings on these products when they are exported outside the EC.

Financial Services Act 1986

Mr. Cran: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what estimate he has as to how many firms requiring to be licensed under the provisions of the Financial Services Act 1986, are trading without licences; and what action has been taken to ensure that unlicensed firms comply with their statutory duty.

Mr. Maude: Section 3 of the Financial Services Act prohibits any person from carrying on investment business unless authorised or exempted under the Act. The relevant provisions were commenced on 29 April and it is too early to make a meaningful estimate of the extent of unauthorised investment business. However, the publicity which the new requirement has received, the substantial penalties which can be incurred if this section is contravened and the resources which the SIB, which is responsible for taking the lead in enforcing this provision, are allocating to following up complaints, mean that I do not expect widespread non-compliance.

Mr. Cran: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster on how many occasions inspectors have been appointed under section 106 of the Financial Services Act 1986.

Mr. Maude: Eleven authorities have been given by my Department under section 106 of the Financial Services Act. The power to give such authorisation is also exercisable by the Securities and Investments Board. Questions about the SIB's exercise of its powers are a matter for the board.

Barlow Clowes

Mr. Cran: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster on what date his Department was first notified by the National Association of Security Dealers and Investment Managers of its concern over the operation of the Barlow Clowes partnership; and what was the precise nature of those concerns.

Mr. Maude: While the facts of my Department's handling of the Barlow Clowes case are under investigation I do not believe that it would be appropriate to answer specific questions relating to the case.

Defence Goods (Exports)

Mr. Page: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster whether he has introduced any new arrangements in respect of large contracts for export of defence goods insured by the Export Credits Guarantee Department.

Mr. Alan Clark: While most contracts for defence goods will continue to be accommodated within ECGD's normal arrangements, the current procedures under which

ECDG provides cover under section 2 of the Export Guarantees and Overseas Investment Act 1978 have not proved entirely suitable for handling certain large defence contracts. These are often very large in relation to the limits set by ECGD to control its exposure on individual overseas countries and, in addition to economic factors, involve special strategic and political considerations.

I have, therefore, authorised new arrangements to be introduced in connection with such contracts. Initially a ceiling of £1 billion has been set for business underwritten in this category. All cases will be subject to approval by Ministers. Where in future ECGD's normal limits for individual countries cannot easily accommodate specific contracts, cover will, where appropriate, be made available under these new arrangements outside the country limit, but within the overall £1 billion ceiling. In all other respects, ECGD's normal underwriting criteria, as well as its financial objective, will apply to business entered into under these arrangements.

The arrangements which will be made under section 2 of the Export Guarantees Act 1978 will conform with previous assurances given to the House that ECGD will not support unduly hazardous risks. The repayment record in the defence sector has, in the past, generally been a satisfactory one.

The outturn of guarantees given under these arrangements will be separately recorded in ECGD's trading accounts by way of a note. These changes will enable ECGD more effectively to support business in a highly competitive environment where keen prices and fast decisions on credit are playing an increasingly important part in winning orders.

Council of Ministers

Mr. Page: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement on the outcome of the European Council of Industry Ministers' meeting on 24 June.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The Council marked the very welcome end of the European Coal and Steel Community steel production quota system, which had been in place under article 58 of the treaty of Paris since 1980. The quota system will come to an end on 30 June.

The quota system was introduced at a time of crisis in the European steel industry, but it is clearly no longer suitable for current market conditions. The quota system has prevented the British steel industry from fully exploiting its competitive position in the European market, and the outcome of the Council will therefore be of significant benefit to both United Kingdom consumers and steel producers.

The Council also agreed on the importance of maintaining strict rules on the granting of state aid for steel companies, and on the need for social measures to accompany restructuring.

I am placing a copy of the full conclusions of the Council in the Library of the House.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Water Pollution

Mr. Onslow: To ask the Attorney-General what recent steps the Lord Chancellor has taken, in his capacity as chairman of the Magistrates Association, to review policy in sentencing those responsible for causing water pollution through farming operations; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: The Lord Chancellor does not review the policy in sentencing of those responsible for causing water pollution through farming operations. However, as indicated in a previous answer to my hon. Friend, *Official Report*, 26 October 1987, column *14*, the Lord Chancellor, as president of the Magistrates Association, on occasion expresses his personal views on the approach to sentencing for certain offences. When speaking to the Buckinghamshire magistrates on 18 April 1986, Lord Chancellor Hailsham drew attention to the need to impose in this category of offence fines high enough to establish that this type of illegal act can be seen not to pay.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

GCSE

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) what representations have been made to him regarding *(a)* the issue by the various examination boards of written notices of corrections to the sample on the actual General Certificate of Secondary Education examination papers, and *(b)* the extent to which those notices were available to schools in time for the mock or actual General Certificate of Secondary Education examinations;

(2) what representations have been made to him about misprints and factual mistakes in *(a)* the sample General Certificate of Secondary Education examination papers and *(b)* the actual General Certificate of Secondary Education examination papers which were issued to schools;

(3) what representations have been made to him regarding *(a)* failure and *(b)* delay by the various examination boards in England regarding queries from schools on the General Certificate of Secondary Education examination syllabus and papers.

Mrs. Rumbold: My right hon. Friend and I have received some 50 letters since July 1987 about alleged administrative failures on the part of the independent examination boards and examining groups. The Secondary Examinations Council and the examining groups are collaborating to review the experience of the first GCSE examinations this summer and to make any necessary administrative improvements quickly.

Health Education Authority AIDS Pack

Mr. David Young: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science on what *(a)* health and *(b)* other grounds the Health Education Authority's pack on AIDS and HIV was vetoed; and on what criteria such publications are rejected.

Mr. Dunn: The HEA pack has not been vetoed. The Government suggested certain changes—all of which have been accepted—to reflect developing medical knowledge on HIV and AIDS, to see that teachers and school governors were fully aware of the legal context before mounting teaching programmes, and to ensure the educational suitability of the material, especially for younger pupils.

City Technology Colleges

Mrs. Rosie Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science on what basis pupils will be selected to attend city technology colleges.

Mrs. Rumbold: CTCs will cater for students of widely differing abilities. Selection will be based on aptitude, commitment and the ability to benefit from what the college has to offer.

Mrs. Rosie Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what powers the governors of city technology colleges will have in the development of the curriculum within their schools.

Mrs. Rumbold: The overall shape and balance of the curriculum will be determined by the governors after consultation with the principal, but they will be required as a condition of grant to implement the substance of the national curriculum.

Mrs. Rosie Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether parents will be represented on the governing bodies of city technology colleges; and how far industry will be represented when colleges are funded by private capital.

Mrs. Rumbold: The scheme of government for each city technology college, which will need to be approved by my right hon. Friend, will provide for representatives of the sponsors, of parents and of individuals from the local community who are committed to the good government of the college, to serve on the governing body. The latter may also include members of the local business and industrial community.

Mrs. Rosie Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if it will be possible for pupils at city technology colleges to study arts and humanities at A-level.

Mrs. Rumbold: The shape and balance of the city technology college curriculum post-16 will be determined by the college governors in consultation with the principal. It is anticipated that arts and humanities subjects will be available in the post-16 curriculum, although the emphasis overall, and for individual students, will inevitably remain on science and technology.

Mrs. Rosie Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what provision will be made for pupils with special needs who attend city technology colleges.

Mrs. Rumbold: City technology colleges will admit students of differing abilities, including some with special educational needs. We expect that CTCs will develop appropriate provision to meet these needs. The building and refurbishment of the premises of the first two CTCs, at Kingshurst and Nottingham, will include adaptations to meet the particular requirements of physically handicapped students.

PRIME MINISTER

Angola

Q161. **Mr. Hunter:** To ask the Prime Minister what is her assessment of recent diplomatic initiatives to reach a settlement in Angola and of the current situation in Angola.

Mr. Wakeham: I have been asked to reply.

We welcome current negotiations for peaceful solutions in Angola and Namibia. We support all efforts to secure the withdrawal of Cuban and South African forces and national reconciliation in Angola and to implement the United Nations plan for Namibian independence. We believe that these are essential steps to restore stability in the region.

Rover Group

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Prime Minister whether, pursuant to her reply to the hon. Member for Coventry, South-East on 23 June, her letter to Jacques Delors concerning the proposed takeover of the Rover Group will be covered by the 30-year rule; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Wakeham: I have been asked to reply.

Records will continue to be dealt with in the normal way in accordance with the provisions of the Public Records Acts.

Engagements

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 28 June.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 28 June.

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 28 June.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 28 June.

Mr. Sumberg: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 28 June.

Mr. Skinner: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 28 June.

Mr. Wakeham: I have been asked to reply.

My right hon. Friend is in Hanover for a meeting of the European Council.

ENERGY

Electricity Consumption

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is, for each year since 1974, the average domestic consumption of electricity *(a)* per head and *(b)* per household in the United Kingdom; and what are the comparable figures for France, the Netherlands, the Federal Republic of Germany, Italy and Denmark.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Average domestic consumption of electricity per head in the United Kingdom, France, the Netherlands, the Federal Republic of Germany, Italy and Denmark for 1975 to 1986 is shown in the table. The table also includes average domestic consumption of electricity per household in the United Kingdom for the same years, and in the other countries for those years for which estimates of the number of households are available.

Average Consumption of Electricity

Year	*Kilowatt hours per household*	*Kilowatt hours per head of population*					
	United Kingdom	*United Kingdom*	*France*	*Netherlands*	*Federal Republic of Germany*	*Italy*	*Denmark*
1975	4,552	1,593	724	910	1,097	499	1,320
1976	4,321	1,521	815	981	1,172	535	1,321
1977	4,338	1,535	895	984	1,225	564	1,356
1978	4,290	1,535	1,011	1,009	1,317	606	1,450
1979	4,461	1,603	1,088	1,070	1,357	643	1,501
1980	4,221	1,537	1,145	1,105	1,389	667	1,428
1981	4,119	1,507	1,187	1,084	1,409	688	1,416
1982	3,999	1,470	1,240	1,040	1,428	725	1,450
1983	3,969	1,472	1,375	1,065	1,468	722	1,457
1984	3,976	1,486	1,453	1,099	1,537	761	1,526
1985	4,141	1,562	1,561	1,109	1,572	781	1,635
1986	4,267	1,620	1,628	1,118	1,599	799	1,709
			Kilowatt hours per household				
1981	4,119			3,022		2,085	3,502
1982	3,999		3,444		3,473		

Sources: Eurostat: Energy Statistical Yearbooks. Eurostat: Basic Statistics of the Community.

CEGB

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he next plans to meet the chairman of the Central Electricity Generating Board; and what subject will be discussed.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he next intends meeting the chairman of the Central Electricity Generating Board to discuss the privatisation of the industry; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: My right hon. Friend and I meet the chairman of the CEGB from time to time to discuss various matters relating to the privatisation of the electricity supply industry.

Electricity Privatisation

Mr. Dykes: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on the latest developments in his Department's preparations for the privatisation of the electricity supply industry.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Detailed work on preparing the industry for privatisation is continuing.

Anti-radiation Tablets

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy for what reason anti-radiation potassium iodate tablets have recently been issued to people living and working near the Berkeley nuclear power station; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: No potassium iodate tablets have been issued to people living and working near Berkeley nuclear power station. Current arrangements provide for the distribution of tablets by the Gloucestershire constabulary in the unlikely event of an accident having significant offsite radiological effects.

Plutonium

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is his policy towards the international transport and commerce in nuclear explosive materials such as plutonium or highly enriched uranium.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The United Kingdom's policy on the export of nuclear materials remains as set out in the statement by the then Foreign Secretary, James Callaghan on 31 March 1976 at columns *514-16*. All movements of nuclear materials are made in compliance with the regulations of the International Atomic Energy Agency.

Sizewell B

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will publish the full calculations carried out by his Department's economists and statisticians referred to in his decision letter of 12 March 1987 to the chairman of the Central Electricity Board regarding the board's applications to construct Sizewell B, with particular regard to calculations and their background bases referred to in paragraphs 3.6 and 4.4 of that letter.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave him on 11 May 1988 at columns *111-12*.

SCOTLAND

Jurors (Vetting)

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what information he has as to the total numbers of jurors who have been vetted against police records, the number that have failed selection because of the vetting procedure and the reasons why they failed.

Lord James Douglas Hamilton: None has been so vetted.

Community Programme

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list those community benefit schemes under the community programme in the Glasgow and Clydebank area which *(a)* do and *(b)* do not meet the requirements of the programme; and if he will make funds available to enable those schemes listed under *(b)* to continue.

Mr. Lang: The Training Commission is currently considering applications from organisations to participate in employment training. It is too early to say how many of the existing community programme schemes will continue under the new programme. I hope that those bodies which have operated successfully under the community programme and have yet to apply will consider adapting to the requirements of employment training.

Scottish Health Service Planning Council

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the current members of the Scottish Health Service planning council.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The current members of the Scottish Health Service planning council are as follows:

Chairman

Dr. W. Keith Davidson CBE

Members representing Health Boards

Mr. J. D. Ryan CBE	Argyll and Clyde
Mr. W. S. Fyfe OBE	Ayrshire and Arran
Mr. J. Gibb OBE	Borders
Mr. J. McIntyre	Dumfries and Galloway
Mrs. A. H. Ferguson	Fife
Mr. L. J. M. Hynd OBE	Forth Valley
Mr. C. W. Ellis	Grampian
Dr. T. J. Thomson CBE	Greater Glasgow
Mr. J. McWilliam OBE	Highland
Mrs. B. M. Gunn OBE	Lanarkshire
Mr. R. B. Weatherstone TD	Lothian
Mr. J. D. M. Robertson OBE	Orkney
Mrs. F. B. Grains	Shetland
Mr. D. B. Grant TD	Tayside
Mrs. M. A. Macmillan	Western Isles

Members representing Universities

Professor D. Ogston	Aberdeen
Professor P. D. Griffiths	Dundee
Professor R. D. Kendell	Edinburgh
Professor D. Campbell CBE	Glasgow

Members appointed by the Secretary of State

Mr. D. MacQuaker	Chairman, CSA
Mr. W. K. Reid CB	Scottish Office
Dr. I. S. Macdonald CB	Scottish Office
Mrs. Y. Moores	Scottish Office
Mr. N. K. Colquhoun	Scottish Office
Professor R. D. Weir OBE	Scottish Office
Miss P. A. Cox	Scottish Office

Scottish Bus Group

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what steps he is taking to ensure that all employees will have adequate opportunities to participate in buy-outs of Scottish Bus Group companies.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My right hon. and learned Friend has already told the House that assistance will be given in the form of help with advice and consultancy to management and employees wishing to seek to acquire their employing undertakings. Steps will be taken to ensure that all employees are informed about the opportunities available.

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many Scottish Bus Group companies one purchaser will be allowed to acquire on privatisation.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The detailed basis on which bids for companies will be considered has yet to be decided but in any event will take account of the objective of introducing greater competition into the Scottish bus market.

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what safeguards there will be to prevent the regrouping of several Scottish Bus group companies under single ownership, after privatisation.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: After privatisation Scottish Bus Group companies will be in the same position as all other private sector bus companies in the United Kingdom and any proposals for mergers between companies will be a matter, where appropriate, for the Office of Fair Trading to consider in the light of the mergers provisions of the Fair Trading Act 1973 and to advise my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry as appropriate.

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what steps he is taking to ensure that Scottish Bus Group companies do not become foreign-owned on privatisation;

(2) what safeguards there will be on privatisation of the Scottish Bus Group companies to ensure that ownership does not fall into non-Scottish hands.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I am aware of the substantial interest that has already been shown by management and employees in the Scottish Bus Group in acquiring the constituent companies. We shall encourage such buy-outs, as a means of promoting local control.

Registered Establishments (Scotland) Act 1987

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what progress is being made towards the implementation of the Registered Establishments (Scotland) Act 1987; and when a date for the completion of implementation will be reached.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Consultations are in progress on the upper limits on fees to be charged by local authorities in connection with registration and inspection. Subject to the outcome, I hope to introduce orders dealing with maximum fees and the commencement of the Act at an early date.

Fish Farming

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what provisions there are to monitor or regulate the environmental effects of pesticides used for the treatment of salmon lice which are licensed under the Medicines Act 1968; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The possible impact on the safety of species other than the target species is taken into account when considering any application under the Medicines Act 1968, where it is proper to do so. Adverse reactions to the use of licensed veterinary medicines are routinely monitored and considered so that, where necessary, appropriate action could be taken.

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what provisions are made routinely to monitor the chemicals, used by fish farmers in the flesh of salmon; who is responsible for such monitoring; where the results of such monitoring are published or available for scrutiny by members of the public; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Responsibility for ensuring that food for sale to the public is wholesome rests with district and island councils under the terms of the Food and Drugs (Scotland) Act 1956. So far as I am aware, no routine monitoring of salmon for chemicals is carried out by local authorities but research work in this area is being carried out at both the Torry research station and marine laboratory. A survey is also being undertaken by the working party on veterinary residues in animal products, a sub-group of the interdepartmental steering group on food surveillance charged by Ministers with the function of keeping food contamination problems under review, assessing the needs for analytical surveys of food and, where appropriate, making arrangements for these surveys to be carried out. The report by the working party on veterinary residues in animal products will be published in due course.

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what extra resources are being made available by the river purification boards so that they can perform their statutory duties under the Control of Pollution Act 1974 in relation to the growth of the marine fish farming industry.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The river purification boards are responsible for determining the priorities for action in their areas and for setting the levels of their expenditure accordingly.

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has received any recent representations regarding the decision of the Clyde River Purification Board not to issue consents for fish farms in its area; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: No such representations have been received. I shall, however, write to the hon. Member about this matter and arrange to place a copy of the letter in the Library.

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list in the *Official Report* the number of consents for fish farms issued by each of the river purification boards in each of the past five years.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: This information is not held centrally.

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the statutory provisions on the control of pollution from marine fish farms; if he has any plans to seek to amend this legislation; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Provisions for preventing and controlling water pollution from any source are contained in the Rivers (Prevention of Pollution) (Scotland) Acts 1951 and 1965, part II of the Control of Pollution Act 1974 and part III of the Food and Environment Protection Act 1985. The provisions of part II of the Control of Pollution Act 1974 are under review.

Ministers (Substitutes)

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the occasions in the last year when someone other than another Minister, hon. Member or civil servant has substituted for a Minister at an invitation issued to him or another Minister.

Mr. Rifkind: The information requested is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Ministers (Engagements)

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the engagements of Scottish Office Ministers on 21 April.

Mr. Rifkind: I attended Cabinet in the morning of 21 April and attended several ministerial meetings later in the day. In the evening I was principal guest at a dinner for the Institute of Civil Engineers.

My hon. Friend the Minister of State (Commons) attended both the morning and evening sessions of the Committee on the British Steel Bill and held meetings with ministerial colleagues and officials.

My noble Friend the Minister of State (Lords) met the chairman of the Women's Farming Union. Later he attended the Third Reading of the Public Utility Transfers and Water Charges Bill.

My hon. Friend the Minister with responsibility for Home Affairs and the Environment attended the School Boards (Scotland) Bill Committee and later held a meeting with ministerial colleagues and officials.

My hon. Friend the Minister with responsibility for Education and Health attended the School Boards (Scotland) Bill Committee and later held a meeting with ministerial colleagues.

Business Success Conference

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether the Scottish Information Office issued a press notice about the expected attendance of the Minister of State, the hon. Member for Galloway and Upper Nithsdale (Mr. Lang), at the business success conference at the Scottish money show on 21 April.

Mr. Rifkind: No.

Employment Training

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on his meeting with the Scottish Council of Voluntary Organisations on 22 June to discuss employment training; and what proposals he has for action.

Mr. Lang: I met a delegation including representatives from the Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations. We discussed the effect of the change to employment training on the voluntary sector and on community care projects. I invited the voluntary sector to continue to consider adapting its various projects so that they might take advantage of funding under employment training.

Fishing Industry

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he intends to publish the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries (Scotland) discussion document on the Scottish fishing fleet's capacity and on possible changes in the pressure stock licensing system; and what facilities he proposes to offer for negotiation with relevant organisations, and in particular the Scottish Fishermen's Federation and the Sea Fish Industry Authority.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: We would expect to publish the consultation documents from the Fisheries Departments on capacity and licensing early in July. We will naturally be consulting the main bodies concerned and these will include the Scottish Fishermen's Federation and the Sea Fish Industry Authority.

Schools (Discipline)

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he intends to instigate an investigation, similar to the Elton investigation in England and Wales, into discipline in Scottish schools.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: No. We commissioned the Scottish Council for Research in Education in October to carry out a major study aimed at identifying effective practical strategies for maintaining discipline in schools and classrooms. We do not consider that a further independent inquiry in Scotland at this time is warranted; but we shall study the Elton report, when it is received, for any implications it may have for Scotland.

Forestry

Mr. Graham: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what advice he took, prior to the announcement of his approval for further planting by the Forestry Commission in Caithness and Sutherland, on the environmental effects of this planting other than from the Nature Conservancy Council; on what grounds he overruled the Nature Conservancy Council's advice; and whether he will place in the Library maps showing the areas approved.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: In addition to advice from the Nature Conservancy Council, my right hon. and learned Friend had the benefit of the views of the Scottish Development's ecological adviser and the Forestry Commission's wildlife and conservation officer, who had inspected the five sites concerned. His decision to allow planting to take place on 1,059 hectares out of the total area of 2,485 hectares was a carefully balanced one which took account not only of nature conservation needs but also of the desirability of the Forestry Commission maintaining its planting programme and thus providing continued employment for its local work force.

I shall arrange for maps showing the areas to be planted and those to be left unplanted to be placed in the Library as soon as possible.

Cervical Cancer

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the health boards in which the cytology laboratories post directly to women the results of cervical smear tests that are *(a)* positive and *(b)* negative.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Both laboratories in Tayside health board send the results of positive and negative cervical smear tests directly to women. The laboratories in the following boards send results to the source of the smear, whether general medical practitioner, well-woman clinic or other clinic:

Health board
Argyll and Clyde
Ayrshire and Arran
Dumfries and Galloway
Fife
Forth Valley
Grampian
Greater Glasgow
Highland
Lanarkshire
Lothian

In these areas it is the responsibility of the clinician or practitioner to make the result of the test available to the women.

Sheltered Homes

Mr. Maxton: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many sheltered homes are located within the grounds of hospitals in Scotland; and of these how many are *(a)* entered in the rating roll as separate domestic hereditaments and *(b)* treated for rating purposes as a part of the hospital.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information held by the Scottish Home and Health Department indicates that there are no sheltered homes on hospital land owned by my right hon. and learned Friend.

Water Supplies (Radioactivity Monitoring)

Mr. Bill Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what routine monitoring of public water supplies for radioactivity has been done in Scotland since the Chernobyl accident; and if he will make a full statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: A programme of routine monitoring was begun in February 1987. A total of 98 samples from 42 public water supply sources throughout Scotland has been analysed over a period of 14 months, some supplies being sampled at regular monthly intervals and others less frequently. In every case the levels of radioactivity found were within the guideline values recommended by the World Health Organisation, below which water can be considered potable without further radiological examination. The analyses also covered numerous individual radionuclides and only three samples showed isolated values slightly above the limit of detection. These did not recur in later samples. A further monitoring programme is now in progress.

East Kilbride Development Corporation

Mr. Ingram: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland on how many occasions in the last 12 months the Minister of State, the hon. Member for Galloway and Upper Nithsdale (Mr. Lang), met officials of the East Kilbride development corporation; and what was discussed on each of those occasions.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 24 June 1988]:* I have visited East Kilbride on a considerable number of occasions in the last 12 months and invariably met development corporation officials on these visits, when we discussed a range of issues. Discussions have mainly focused on the continuing success of the development corporation in attracting new industries and employment.

WALES

Penfedw Farm Riding School, Swansea

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he is now in a position to announce his decision on the public planning inquiry held on 12 January at Penllergaer regarding Penfedw Farm riding school, Rhydypandy, Morriston, Swansea.

Mr. Grist: No. My right hon. Friend is aware of the need to reach speedy decisions on all planning matters which come before him. I hope that it will be possible to make progress on this complex enforcement notice appeal in the near future.

Welsh Language

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales to what extent the cultural effects, and in particular the possible effect on the Welsh language, are a material factor in his determination of a planning application.

Mr. Grist: I have nothing to add to the reply I gave the hon. Gentleman on 24 November 1987 at column *112*.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if his Department has undertaken any study as to the effect of holiday housing developments on the Welsh language in the surrounding localities; and if he has any evidence indicating the causes of any decline in Welsh language speakers.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The Department has not undertaken any specific research, but is aware that the Welsh language is affected by many factors.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will take steps to ensure the use of Welsh on all appropriate Cadw publicity material, in particular for letter headings.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: It is already policy that Cadw publicity material should use Welsh where appropriate and practical. In particular, Cadw's letterheadings are already bilingual.

Disabled People

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list *(a)* the number of disabled unemployed people and *(b)* the number of places available on assessment and rehabilitation courses for unemployed, disabled people in Wales.

Mr. Grist: At 8 April 1988, there were 4,216 unemployed people in Wales whose prospects of finding and/or keeping jobs were recorded as restricted by health or disability; of these, 1,901 had elected to register as a disabled person under the Disabled Persons Employment Act 1944. Between 1 April 1988 and 31 March 1989 the Training Commission proposes to make 1,816 assessment course places and 860 rehabilitation course places available in Wales.

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what were the total grants to the Council of Museums in Wales for every year since 1978-79 up to and including that planned for 1988-89.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Grants to the Council of Museums in Wales were as follows:

	Grants
1978-79	50,000
1979-80	54,000
1980-81	77,000
1981-82	126,533
1982-83	145,742
1983-84	150,000
1984-85	218,000
1985-86	230,000
1986-87	280,000
1987-88	292,382
1988-89	305,000

Head Teachers (Vacancies)

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give the total, and list the schools, of vacant head teacher posts; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: No statistics are collected centrally of vacant head teacher posts.

Education Reform

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he is taking steps to ensure that head teachers and governors are adequately trained for their expanded duties under the Education Reform Bill; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: In 1989-90 the Government propose to extend the national priority areas for head teachers' management training to include training to implement local education authority schemes of financial delegation to schools. The Government also propose that education support grant should be made available for the training of governors. Grant is expected to be available to support expenditure of £420,000 in 1989-90 to enable LEAs to develop their training strategies and materials for school and college governors.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales to what extent he proposes to impose tests in Wales at the age of seven years; if the results will be published; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The Secretaries of State for Wales and for Education and Science have decided, in the light of the favourable reception to the recommendations of the task group on assessment and testing, and after subsequent consultations, to adopt the main principles, including the setting of attainment targets for seven-year olds, and for performance in relation to those targets to be assessed and reported on. In Wales, pupils receiving instruction in the medium of Welsh will be assessed in Welsh.

It is not intended that individual's results will be published, but aggregated results at the ages of 11, 14 and 16 should be, so that the wider public can make informed judgments about attainment in a school or LEA.

Departmental Employees (Aberystwyth)

Mr. Geraint Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he has any plans to transfer employees from the Welsh Office agriculture department, Aberystwyth, Ceredigion, to the Cardiff office: and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker: My Department proposes to transfer one middle management post from the agriculture office, Aberystwyth to Cardiff and to delete two more junior posts from the staff complement at Aberystwyth. No redundancies would be involved. In parallel, the head of division post in Aberystwyth is being substantively filled, and I envisage a substantial departmental presence in the area for the foreseeable future.

Agricultural Department (Staff)

Mr. Geraint Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many people are currently employed at the Welsh Office Agricultural Department in Aberystwyth Ceredigion; and what were the corresponding figures for 1974, 1978, 1982, and 1987.

Mr. Peter Walker *[holding answer 27 June 1988]:* My Department assumed responsibility for agriculture in Wales in 1978, since when the number of Welsh Office staff in post at Aberystwyth and Trawsgoed at the other dates requested was as follows:

Year	*Number*
1 June 1978	150
1 June 1982	127
1 June 1987	101
1 June 1988	95

A reduction of 55 since 1978. Over the same period the staffing of the Welsh Office Agriculture Department as a whole reduced by 204.

Local Authority Capital Expenditure

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the underspend on local authority capital expenditure returns for 1987-88.

Mr. Grist *[holding answer 23 June 1988]:* Capital provision was not underspent.

THE ARTS

Equal Opportunities

Mr. Janner: To ask the Minister for the Arts how many and what percentage of officers in each grade and overall in his Department are women and from ethnic minorities, respectively.

Mr. Luce: The number, and percentage of women officers in each grade, and overall, in the Department are given in the table:

	Number of women in grade	*Percentage*
Grade 2	—	—
Grade 5	1	25
Grade 6	1	100
Grade 7	3	27
Senior Executive Officer	1	50
Higher Executive Officer	5	56
Executive Officer	5	56
Administration Trainee	1	100
Administrative Officer	3	30
Administrative Assistant	2	100
Senior Personal Secretary	1	100
Personal Secretary	3·5	100
Departmental Total	26·5	49

Note: Part-time staff counted as 0·5.

According to the questionnaires on ethnic origin completed by staff in post on 1 October 1987, none of the Office's then staff (total 54·5) was a member of the ethnic minorities.

Arts Council

Mr. Jack: To ask the Minister for the Arts by how much the Arts Council grant has increased in real terms since 1979.

Mr. Luce: The grant has increased from £61·476 million in 1979-80 to £150 million in 1988-89, including a sum in part replacement for arts funding by the metropolitan counties. This represents an increase of some 33 per cent. in real terms.

NATIONAL FINANCE

EC (Payments)

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what were the United Kingdom's net payments to the EEC in 1987; and what were the net figures for the first quarter of 1988 at an annualised rate.

Mr. Brooke: The United Kingdom's net contribution to the Community budget in 1987 was £1,713 million. The provisional figure for the first quarter of 1988 at an annual rate was £1,683 million.

VAT (New Construction)

Mr. Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make it his policy to introduce value added tax on new construction at a rate equal to the current rate of stamp duty.

Mr. Lilley: No. The hon. Member's proposal would not be lawful under the sixth VAT directive. I refer him to my statement on 21 June at column 957.

Civil Service Unions

Mr. John M. Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the current state of relations between the Crown employer and the Civil Service trades unions.

Mr. Brooke: Pay settlements for 1988 have recently been reached with the two largest Civil Service unions, the CPSA and NUCPS, and discussions have begun with both unions on longer-term arrangements for settling pay, with a view to reaching agreement by the end of this year. Formal agreements on long-term pay arrangements have already been concluded with other Civil Service unions. Discussions and negotiations with the unions continue in accordance with normal arrangements on a range of other matters.

Charities (Payroll Deduction Scheme)

Mr. Graham: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) how many employees have opted to make charitable donations through the payroll deduction scheme;

(2) if he will make a statement on the progress of the payroll deduction scheme for tax-free donations to charity since April 1987.

Mr. Brooke: Since the scheme started in 1987, a total of 17 charity agencies have been approved to run it and more than 2,700 individual schemes have been set up. By April 1988, some 40,000 employees had joined. The number of employers and employees taking part in the scheme is increasing all the time.

Profit-related Pay

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what steps he is taking to monitor the progress of profit-related pay.

Mr. Brooke: The Inland Revenue reports to me on particular points as they arise. I receive statistical and monthly reports from the Revenue. These show that to the end of May, 694 schemes covering 103,000 employees had been registered by the profit-related pay office in Cumbernauld. This is satisfactory progress. Now that PRP is becoming established, I have decided to supplement these reports with a study which I have commissioned from IFF Research Limited. The terms of reference for the study are being placed in the House Library. This will be an early stage of a continuing programme of monitoring. It will seek information about the way employers view and use PRP.

Value Added Tax

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what estimate he has made of the impact on the insurance industry of the value added tax extensions proposed by the European Economic Community Commission in its case before the European Court under the sixth directive; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 21 June 1988]:* I refer my hon. Friend to my statement on the European Court's judgment on 21 June at columns *957-58*. The measures which I announced to mitigate the effects of the judgment mean that the increase in the VAT borne by the insurance sector should be in the region of £75 million in a full year at 1988-89 prices. Without this mitigation the increase would have been about £200 million.

Personal Incomes

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will give for each of the top *(a)* 1 per cent., *(b)* 5 per cent., *(c)* 10 per cent. and *(d)* the remaining 90 per cent. of taxpayers (i) the total amount of income before tax and (ii) the total amount of income after tax for each of the years 1978-79 to 1987-88.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[pursuant to his reply, 12 April 1988, c. 66]:* I regret that the tables provided with the answer I gave to the hon. Member on 12 April 1988 at columns *65-68* contained factual errors. The correct figures are in the following tables.

Estimates are given in the tables for 1978-79 and 1983-84 to 1987-88. Information for other years could be provided only at disproportionate cost. All estimates are based on information reported to tax offices and collected through the annual surveys of personal incomes. For years before 1985-86, estimates exclude employees' contributions to occupational pension schemes and some investment income on which tax is deducted at source.

Shares of income taxpayers' total income before tax

	Top 1 per cent.		*Top 5 per cent.*		*Top 10 per cent.*		*Remaining 90 per cent.*		*All taxpayers*	
Financial Year	*Amount £ billion*	*share per cent.*	*Amount £ billion*	*share per cent.*	*Amount £ billion*	*share per cent.*	*Amount £ billion*	*share per cent.*	*Amount £ billion*	*share per cent.*
1978-79	5·1	5	15·0	15	24·3	24	78·5	76	102·8	100
1983-84	9·7	6	28·3	16	45·0	26	128·7	74	173·7	100
1984-85	10·9	6	31·4	17	49·6	26	139·2	74	188·8	100
[1]1985-86	13·6	6	36·4	17	56·7	27	156·4	73	213·1	100
[1]1986-87	14·6	6	39·4	17	61·4	27	157·5	73	228·9	100
[1]1987-88	16·1	7	43·3	17	67·4	27	181·6	73	249·0	100

Shares of income taxpayers' total income after tax

	Top 1 per cent.		*Top 5 per cent.*		*Top 10 per cent.*		*Remaining 90 per cent.*		*All taxpayers*	
Financial Year	*Amount £ billion*	*share per cent.*	*Amount £ billion*	*share per cent.*	*Amount £ billion*	*share per cent.*	*Amount £ billion*	*share per cent.*	*Amount £ billion*	*share per cent.*
1978-79	2·7	3	10·1	12	17·3	21	65·2	79	82·6	100
1983-84	5·9	4	19·8	14	32·8	23	107·5	77	140·3	100
1984-85	6·7	4	22·0	14	36·2	24	117·1	76	153·4	100
[1]1985-86	8·1	5	25·2	15	41·2	24	132·3	76	173·6	100
[1]1986-87	8·7	5	27·3	15	44·8	24	142·1	76	187·0	100
[1]1987-88	9·5	5	30·0	15	49·6	24	155·4	76	204·9	100

[1] Provisional; includes estimates of occupational pension contributions and investment income not reported to tax offices.

EMPLOYMENT

Workfare

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what consideration has been given to the introduction of a workfare scheme, along the lines of those introduced in the United States of America; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has no plans to introduce a workfare scheme. With the continuing fall in unemployment and some 70,000 unfilled jobs vacancies in the economy, the priority must be to ensure that unemployed people have the appropriate skills to take up the jobs which are available to them.

Unemployment Training

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is his best estimate of the net cost of the employment training scheme taking into account the cost of benefits which would otherwise have to have been paid.

Mr. Nicholls: In the seven months of the current financial year in which employment training is to operate, the estimated expenditure of the programme is £491 million. Of this, the estimated cost of training allowances, including premiums over and above benefit levels, is £228 million. Expenditure in a full year will of course be substantially more.

Community Programme

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he has held discussions with trade unions or others with a view to making participation on the community programme compulsory; whether he intends to increase the financial inducements of participation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: The community programme will be replaced by employment training from 5 September. There are no plans to change the financial arrangements relating to the programme before then or to make it compulsory. There have been no discussions with trade unions or others on these matters recently.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what measures he has taken to encourage the participation of voluntary organisations in the community programme; and whether he will seek means of further encouraging such participation.

Mr. Nicholls: The community programme will be replaced by the new adult training programme, employment training, from 5 September 1988. The voluntary sector has played an important part in the success of the community programme and I hope that most existing managing agents and sponsors will move forward into employment training.

Elderly Unemployed People

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what schemes currently exist to provide jobs for unemployed people over 50 years of age; and whether he will bring forward proposals to increase the help available for this age group.

Mr. Nicholls: The community programme provides temporary jobs for unemployed people, including people over 50 years of age. From 5 September, a new training programme, employment training, will replace the community programme and other programmes for unemployed adults. Employment training, which will also be open to people over 50 years of age, will offer high-quality training to meet individual needs and to help all participants compete more effectively for the increasing number of jobs now becoming available. In addition, the Department and the Training Commission have a wide range of services and programmes which are available to people aged over 50.

Construction Sites

Mr. Martlew: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many prosecutions have resulted from the Health and Safety Executive's campaigns on construction sites in 1988.

Mr. Nicholls: The information requested is not available and could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

Small Firms

Mr. Greg Knight: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what plans he has to encourage the spread of information concerning the opportunities provided by venture capital through the small firms service; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Cope: Small firms service counsellors are always willing to advise their clients on venture capital, on which a number of counsellors have specialist expertise. Counsellors keep up to date with developments in this field and bring them to the attention of clients seeking funds.

Travel Time Payments

Mr. Skinner: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he will consider introducing legislation to provide travel time payments to workers who have long distances to travel back and forth to their workplace; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: No. To do so would put an unacceptable burden on employers and discourage the creation of new jobs. This is a matter for employers and employees to settle on a voluntary basis.

Mineworkers (Health)

Mr. Skinner: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will now instruct the Health and Safety Executive to undertake research regarding the health damage caused by humidity levels and high temperatures to mineworkers working at great depth; and if he will consider introducing legislation to safeguard men working under such conditions.

Mr. Nicholls: A research project on working in hot conditions in mining has already been undertaken on behalf of HSE by the Institute of Occupational Medicine. A report will be published later this year and its conclusions will be taken into account in the course of the revision of existing mining legislation. Section 55(3) of the Mines and Quarries Act 1954 currently requires that

> "the manager of a mine shall have regard . . . to securing . . . the maintenance in the mine of working conditions that are reasonable so far as regards the temperature and humidity of the atmosphere."

Mines and Quarries

Mr. Skinner: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment, pursuant to the answer of 27 May, *Official Report*, column *392*, when he expects to be in a position to lay before Parliament the first sets of regulations designed to replace the Mines and Quarries Act 1954; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State expects to receive very soon from the Health and

Safety Commission the first two sets of regulations which they have approved in the programme to renew the safety legislation relating to mines and quarries. They deal respectively with safety of exit from mines and the use of explosives at quarries. He hopes to bring them before Parliament shortly thereafter.

Youth Training Scheme

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will state the number of YTS places designated for September; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Cope: The Training Commission plans to have some 345,000 places available for the 269,000 young people who they expect to begin their YTS training between April and September this year.

Disabled People

Sir Michael McNair-Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many persons are currently working in his Department; how many were recruited in the current year; and what percentage of both totals relate to people with disabilities.

Mr. Lee: The staff in post as at 7 June 1988 were 61,605. Included in this figure are 1,525 registered disabled staff, equivalent to 2·48 per cent. of all staff. The number recruited between 1 January 1988 and 31 May 1988 was 453, of whom 10 were registered disabled people—2·2 per cent.

EC Labour and Social Affairs Council

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the European Community Labour and Social Affairs Council held in Luxembourg on 9 June.

Mr. Cope: I represented the United Kingdom at the Council. The Council adopted a directive on the proscription of four named carcinogens and reached a common position, by qualified majority, on draft directives on the protection of workers from risks related to exposure to benzene at work and on the protection of workers from the risks related to exposure to chemical, physical and biological agents at work. The United Kingdom supported these proposals.

The Council agreed a timetable, proposed by the current presidency and the next two presidencies, Greece and Spain (the "troika") for further work on proposals for health and safety at work.

Progress reports on the draft directives on the protection of workers from risks related to exposure to carcinogens at work and on equal treatment for men and women in social security were considered.

There was a general discussion about the direction of future progress on the draft framework directive on health and safety in the workplace and on the associated draft workplace safety directive.

Safety at Work

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many prosecutions were made under the Health and Safety at Work Act etc. 1974 as a result of investigations undertaken in each region by the Health and Safety Executive for each year from 1980 to 1987.

Mr. Nicholls: *[holding answer 27 June 1988]:* The table shows the available information for the whole of Great Britain:

Number of Informations Laid by Health and Safety Executive Inspectorates[1]

Year	*All*	*Factory and Agriculture Inspectorates*
1980	..	2,624
1981	..	1,892
1982	..	2,342
1983	2,238	2,230
1984	2,207	2,196
1985	2,313	2,196
1986 Quarter 1[2]	541	535
1986-87[2][3]	2,175	2,140
1987-88	Not yet available	

[1] Includes informations laid in prosecution cases taken under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974, associated regulations and other relevant acts such as, the Factories Act 1961, the Explosives Act 1923 etc.

[2] From 1986 statistics have been prepared on the basis of a 12 month period running from 1 April to 31 March.

[3] Provisional.

A regional breakdown of informations laid is available for the factory and agricultural inspectorates only but will take more time to produce. I will write to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Elderly People

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the number of day centre places for elderly people in Northern Ireland, the number of home helps, the number of meals provided to the elderly and the number of residents together with the expenditure after allowing for general inflation and expenditure after allowing for personal social services inflation for each year from 1976-77.

Mr. Needham: Day centres are used by various client groups and it is not possible to identify separately the number of places for the elderly nor the expenditure incurred thereon. The other information requested is as follows:

	1976-77 £	*1977-78* £	*1978-79* £	*1979-80* £	*1980-81* £	*1981-82* £	*1982-83* £	*1983-84* £	*1984-85* £	*1985-86* £	*1986-87* £
Home Helps											
Total expenditure adjusted (gross) by:											
1. General inflation	15,929,151	16,849,213	16,493,319	17,589,476	17,437,008	19,121,166	19,111,228	19,077,871	18,693,439	19,420,215	18,845,131
2. Personal social services inflation	15,945,229	17,527,042	17,531,547	18,525,685	18,109,760	19,405,982	19,411,458	19,238,643	18,922,634	19,722,556	18,845,131
Number of home helps	11,758	12,537	12,971	13,285	13,163	14,146	14,272	14,187	13,771	13,430	12,727
(Whole time equivalents)	—	3,244	3,167	3,189	3,076	3,216	3,364	3,304	3,186	3,213	3,080
Elderly persons receiving home help service	..	16,260	17,161	19,282	18,220	21,600	23,270	23,650	23,929	25,399	25,592

	1976-77 £	*1977-78* £	*1978-79* £	*1979-80* £	*1980-81* £	*1981-82* £	*1982-83* £	*1983-84* £	*1984-85* £	*1985-86* £	*1986-87* £
Meals Service											
Total expenditure adjusted (gross) by:											
1. General inflation	664,566	846,173	839,595	890,844	925,189	867,354	773,727	781,749	789,460	730,051	684,940
2. Personal social services inflation	665,236	880,213	892,447	938,260	960,885	880,273	785,882	788,338	799,139	741,416	684,940
Number of elderly persons receiving meals	[1]	[1]	[1]	[1]	2,737	2,378	2,474	2,483	2,544	2,411	2,551

[1] Not known.

NHS

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will give day case rates for National Health Service acute sector hospitals in Northern Ireland and for each area board, expressed as a rate per 10,000 population, for the years 1983, 1984, 1985 and 1986.

Mr. Needham: The information requested is as follows:

	1983	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*
Northern Ireland	77	93	103	134
Eastern Board	111	132	146	169
Northern Board	53	78	88	109
Southern Board	59	51	58	142
Western Board	48	64	68	78

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will give the new out-patient rates for National Health Service acute sector hospitals in Northern Ireland and for each area board, expressed as new out-patient attendances per 10,000 resident population.

Mr. Needham: The information requested is as follows:

	1983	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*
Northern Ireland	4,424	4,627	4,727	4,806
Eastern Board	6,058	6,309	6,469	6,387
Northern Board	2,856	3,065	3,120	3,327
Southern Board	3,508	3,607	3,740	3,897
Western Board	3,664	3,871	3,860	4,064

Compensation Payments

Mr. Patrick Thompson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he intends to bring into force the provisions of section 12 of the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act 1987, concerning compensation payments under the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act 1978; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Tom King: I have made an order bringing section 12 into force on 1 July 1988. This has the effect of introducing time limits for the bringing of applications for compensation for actions done under the 1978 Act. The time limit will be four months but is extensible to 12 months in individual cases sanctioned by myself or, on appeal, by the county court.

Irish Language

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what percentage of the total teacher training population in Northern Ireland study Irish/Celtic as part of their teacher training course.

Dr. Mawhinney: Approximately three per cent.

Arthur Andersen and Co.

Mr. Tim Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on progress with his claim for damages against Arthur Andersen and Co., formerly auditors of De Lorean Motor Cars Ltd.

Mr. Viggers *[holding answer 21 June 1988]:* On 15 February 1985 the Department of Economic Development filed a complaint against Arthur Andersen and Co. in the United States federal court, southern district of New York. On 10 May 1985 Arthur Andersen filed a memorandum in support of a motion to dismiss the complaint. In its decision and order dated 8 March 1988 the court accepted jurisdiction of the Department's complaint. Subsequently, a request by Arthur Andersen for interlocutory appeal against the decision of the court was denied. The court has not yet set a trial date.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

South Georgia

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has any plans to install a fishing zone around South Georgia.

Mr. Eggar: There are currently no plans to do so. Fishing around South Georgia is subject to the conservation provisions of the convention for the conservation of Antarctic marine living resources.

Foreign Ministers Council

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he next expects to meet his colleagues in the European Community Council of Foreign Ministers; and what subjects he expects to discuss.

Mrs. Chalker: The next Foreign Affairs Council will be held in Brussels on 25-26 July. At present, the agenda includes the renegotiation of the Lomé convention; progress in the negotiations with Czechoslovakia on trade industrial products; the appointment of judges to the European Court of Justice; and the establishment of the court of first instance.

There may also be discussion of issues arising at the Hanover European Council.

Human Rights (USSR)

Mr. David Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the recent talks in Moscow between his officials and the Soviet Foreign Ministry on human rights.

Mr. Mellor: The first round of official level talks on human rights, held on 23-24 June in Moscow, was useful and forward-looking. The British side raised a wide range of human rights issues including family reunification; individual human rights cases; freedom of conscience and religious belief, emigration, psychiatric abuse, legal reform an the CSCE process. The Soviet side raised a number of issues of concern to them about British legislation and practice. Both sides agreed that a regular dialogue on human rights should be established. Individual cases will be followed up as appropriate.

Romania

Mr. David Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, if he will make a statement on relations with Romania.

Mr. Mellor: United Kingdom-Romanian relations are cool. The main bilateral problem is the Romanian authorities' unwillingness to deal satisfactorily with marriage cases involving British citizens.

Romania's poor human rights record and her disappointing and unhelpful attitude at the CSCE follow-up meeting in Vienna are the other main factors inhibiting an improvement in bilateral relations.

Sharpeville Six

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has any plans to make any further representations to the South African Government in regard to the threatened execution of the Sharpeville Six.

Mrs. Chalker: Further appeals on behalf of the Sharpeville Six were made by Foreign Ministers of the Twelve on 14 June, by the Security Council on 17 June, and by the Heads of Government at the Toronto summit on 20 June. We have also raised the issue again direct with the South African Government.

Mandela Concert

Dr. Reid: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what further representations he has received from the South African Government about the BBC's decision to transmit the recent Wembley concert for Nelson Mandela; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: The South African ambassador raised the matter with us shortly before the concert took place. The BBC has full editorial responsibility for the programmes it broadcasts.

Iran

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the current state of Her Majesty's Government's relations with Iran.

Mr. Mellor: We are well aware of the strategic, political and economic importance of Iran. We have followed closely the events in Iran since the Islamic revolution in 1979. We respect the right of the Iranian people to have the form of government of their choosing. We remain critical of the Iranian Government's record on human rights and respect for other international conventions. For example, two British citizens, Roger Cooper and Nicolas Nicola, have been detained in Tehran, without trial and without consular access, in breach of the Vienna convention on consular relations. In addition, Iran continues to make unlawful attacks on unarmed merchant vessels, including British ships in the Gulf.

Furthermore, violations of diplomatic immunity such as the detention of a British diplomat, Mr. Chaplin in May 1987 represent deliberate flouting of the Vienna convention on diplomatic relations. We did not seek the deterioration in relations which took place from May 1987. We stand ready to build a more constructive and businesslike relationship with Iran. However, as I told the House in response to a question from the hon. Member for East Lothian, (Mr. Home Robertson) on 1 July 1987, constructive dialogue can only prosper on a basis of reciprocity and provided we receive credible assurances on the security of British diplomats in Tehran.

Anguilla (Wild Dogs)

Mr. Bernie Grant: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had with the governor of Anguilla regarding the control of wild dogs on the island; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: We have had no discussions on this subject. The control of pests on Anguilla, including wild dogs, is a matter for the Anguilla Government whom, we understand, are already carrying out programmes to control the numbers of wild dogs on the island.

Western European Union

Mr. Speed: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will state his policy priorities during his forthcoming year of presidency of the Western European Union Council of Ministers.

Mr. Mellor: We shall have four main priorities for our presidency of the WEU. They are:

- — to elaborate the commitments in the WEU platform in order to make practical contributions to the common defence;
- — to use the WEU as a forum for frank discussion of key European security issues;
- — to develop the WEU as a forum for co-ordinating European approaches to out of area issues;
- — to secure a satisfactory outcome to the enlargement negotiations with Spain and Portugal.

Disarmament

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will make it his policy to implement the suggestions made by Prime Minister Carlsson of Sweden at the United Nations special session on disarmament, concerning the world naval arms build-up.

Mr. Mellor: We are fully supportive of arms control measures that genuinely enhance stability and improve security, but we shall continue to resist proposals that would have the effect of constraining freedom of action on the high seas, an area in which the Alliance has a particular interest given the need, which the Warsaw pact does not have, to reinforce Europe by sea in times of crisis. Moreover, given the legal, definitional and other problems involved, it is difficult to see how a viable regime covering the movement of naval vessels could be constructed.

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether, following the progress made in inspection of land-based missiles, agreed between the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation and the Warsaw pact, he will make it his policy to pursue similar agreements for sea-based missiles.

Mr. Mellor: There is no agreement between NATO and the Warsaw pact on the inspection of land-based missiles. The bilateral United States/Soviet agreement on INF missiles contained verification provisions covering the elimination of ground-launched missiles of intermediate range and the United States and the Soviet Union are currently considering verification arrangements for sea-launched nuclear missiles in the START negotiations.

Mr. Gerald Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement following the third United Nations special session on disarmament, 31 May to 25 June.

Mr. Mellor: The special session which ended on 26 June provided an important opportunity for the consideration of arms control issues. We regret that it was not able to agree a final document. The United Kingdom delegation played a full part in the debate and negotiations and put forward a number of specific proposals. The United Kingdom position was outlined in a memorandum dated 23 May which was printed and distributed as a United Nations document.

In my right hon. and learned Friend's speech to the special session on 7 June he pressed for wider accession to the 1925 Geneva protocol, which bans the use of chemical weapons in war, and proposed measures to enable immediate investigation of CW use and international action against violators. We shall pursue these proposals in the appropriate fora.

As my right hon. and learned Friend also made clear in his speech, we have a full and practical arms control agenda in the nuclear, conventional and chemical fields. Despite the disappointing outcome at the special session we shall press ahead with this work with the aim of achieving balanced and verifiable agreements which are consistent with the maintenance of the United Kingdom's security.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Research and Development

Mr. Steel: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on how his Department calculates agricultural research and development funding; and how such calculations are made in other European Community countries.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The figures given by my Department in the annual review of Government-funded R and D are composed of the payments made to external contractors and the full costs of in-house research and development calculated to include salaries, superannuation, national insurance, materials, equipment, accommodation and other overheads. I understand that figures on central Government funding provided to the statistical office of the European Communities by other member states are on a comparable basis.

Departmental Staff

Ms. Quin: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will give for each standard planning region of England *(a)* the number of employees of his Department, *(b)* the amount spent on wages and salaries and *(c)* the proportion of total expenditure in each region by his Department which is represented by personnel costs.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The number of staff (including temporary staff) employed by my Department in each standard planning region of England on 1 June 1988 was as follows:—

	Number
Northern	439
Yorkshire and Humberside	640
North West	333
East Midlands	345
West Midlands	917
East Anglia	1,565
South East	4,659
South West	1,157

Pay costs for some 81 per cent. of staff in my Department are decentralised partly to the regional organisation and partly to line management commands on a national or HQ basis. A breakdown of expenditure on the basis requested is not available.

Equal Opportunities

Mr. Janner: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he has carried out monitoring exercises in accordance with the codes of the Commission for Racial Equality and of the Equal Opportunities Commission, respectively.

Mr. Donald Thompson: My Department has completed the ethnic origin surveys of staff in post. In respect both of ethnic minorities and women we are monitoring our recruitment exercises and shall start to monitor promotions and allocation to duties this year.

Mr. Janner: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he has taken any positive action in accordance with the code of the Commission for Racial Equality.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Language training is made available in my Department for staff from ethnic minorities where the need arises. We have also contributed to the Cabinet Office (OMCS) training review which will identify areas where developmental or skills training could be arranged for black and Asian staff. As regards recruitment, we have advertised staff vacancies in inner city job centres. Further steps will be considered in the light of the results of our monitoring of recruitment and promotion.

Mr. Janner: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he has appointed an equal opportunities officer.

Mr. Donald Thompson: My Department has had an equal opportunities officer since 1984.

Mr. Janner: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will take steps to further consider equal opportunities for black employees, in accordance with the code of the Commission for Racial Equality.

Mr. Donald Thompson: My Department has completed the ethnic origin surveys of staff in post. Last year we began monitoring the progress of ethnic minorities through all stages of recruitment competitions that we run. The monitoring of promotions and allocation to duties will be starting this year. Further steps will be considered in the light of the results which emerge.

Mr. Janner: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many and what percentage of women and black people, respectively, are employed in each grade of his Department.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Information by grade level equivalents in groups follows:

Staff in post and responses to ethnic surveys as at 1 May 1988

Grade level equivalents[1]

	Staff in post		*Respondents by 1 May 1988*[2]			
	Women	*Women as a percentage of all staff*	*All replies*	*All replies as a percentage of all staff*	*Ethnic minorities*	*Ethnic minorities as a percentage of all replies*
Grades 1-7	63	6·7	807	85·8	6	0·7
Senior and Higher Executive Officers (SEO and HEO)	532	18·5	2,218	77·3	23	1·0
Executive Officers (EO)	723	40·4	1,204	67·3	32	2·7
Administrative Officers (AO) and below	3,037	71·1	2,824	66·0	178	6·3
Industrials	105	17·9	407	69·5	[3]	—
Total	4,460	42·6	7,460	71·3	239	3·2

[1] Administrative grades and their equivalents; part-timers counted as whole units.

[2] The figures for respondents do not yet include a number of staff recruited by the Civil Service Commission.

[3] Less than 5

Waste Imports

Mr. Butler: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what assessment he has made of the danger to the United Kingdom pig industry posed by the accidental import of *(a)* swine vesicular disease and *(b)* Aujeszky's disease from infected organic material contained in United States domestic waste proposed to be dumped in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Swine vesicular disease has never been recorded in the United States of America. Aujeszky's disease does occur in the United States, but is not transmitted in meat.

Minister for the Marine (Ireland)

Mr. Onslow: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he next expects to meet the Irish Minister for the Marine.

Mr. Gummer: I met the Irish Minister for the Marine at the Fisheries Council in Luxembourg on 23 June. I took the opportunity to discuss with him the report of his Government's salmon review group and he undertook to keep me fully informed of developments relating to the recommendations contained in the report.

Fish (Chemicals)

Dr. Godman: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what provisions are made routinely to monitor the chemicals, used by fish farmers in the flesh of fish; who is responsible for such monitoring; where the results of such monitoring are published or available for scrutiny by members of the public; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The steering group on food surveillance in my Department is responsible for monitoring the food supply and they have carried out a pilot survey of farmed trout, the results of which have been published in its food surveillance paper No. 22 (a copy of which is in the Library of the House) and in the scientific literature. As part of its forward programme the steering group on food surveillance has in hand further surveys of farmed salmon and trout, to be carried out jointly by the Department's food science laboratory and Torry research station.

Water Pollution

Mr. Onslow: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what recent action he has taken to warn farmers in England and Wales about the danger of water pollution from farming operations, and the penalties involved; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: On 6 June, I announced the publication of the 1987 report on water pollution from farm waste in England and Wales—and at the same time urged farmers to take a really tough line in getting to grips with this problem. Members of the Agricultural Development and Advisory Service routinely point out to farmers the damage that pollution can cause to the environment. They also offer free advice on what steps should be taken to minimise the risk of pollution.

Milk and Dairies Regulations

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether the scrutiny of the arrangements for the enforcement of the Milk and Dairies Regulations in England and Wales has yet been completed.

Mr. MacGregor: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales and I have now received the examining officer's report. I am placing a copy in the Library of the House and I am arranging for publication. This will facilitate consultation with interested parties on the report's recommendations.

Cereal Seed

Mr. Nicholas Baker: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what arrangements have been made for exempting certified cereal seed from the cereal co-responsibility levy.

Mr. MacGregor: Certified cereals seed is exempt from the cereals co-responsibility levy, but levy will be payable on a proportion of cereals delivered under a contract for seed certification to reflect the fact that not all the grain so delivered will ultimately be certified and sold as seed. For the 1988-89 cereals marketing year (1 July-30 June) this proportion will be 16 per cent. for all types of cereals.

A minimum level of certification will also be set. If the percentage of the total quantity of cereals delivered to a seed merchant under seeds contracts that is finally certified and sold as seed falls below this level, co-responsibility levy will be payable on all cereals for which the merchant is unable to provide proof of certification and sale on seed. For 1988-89 the minimum level of certification will be 75 per cent.

Regulations will shortly be laid before Parliament implementing these arrangements.

Rhizomania

Mr. Paice: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what action he is taking in the light of the discovery of rhizomania in soil imported from Holland to prevent an outbreak in the United Kingdom sugar beet crop; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. MacGregor *[holding answer 27 June 1988]:* Since the rhizomania virus was discovered in the wrapped root base of Acers imported from the Netherlands I have been in close contact with the National Farmers' Union and the Dutch Minister of Agriculture over measures to prevent recurrence of this incident. the Ministry's plant health inspectoreate has already taken steps to trace as many of the plants in the same consignmment as it can where there might be a risk of further infection for analysis by MAFF's plant health laboratory. My officials are also seeking information from the Dutch plant health authorities as to any other consignments of similar material sent to the United Kingdom from the Dutch nursery where the Acers originated.

TRANSPORT

BREL (Pensions)

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what guarantees will be available to employees of British Rail Engineering Ltd. in respect of their full pension entitlement in the event of the privatisation of British Rail Engineering Ltd.

Mr. David Mitchell: British Rail intends that employees of BREL will have the choice of preserving the accrued benefits which they have earned in the British Rail pension scheme, or of transferring those benefits to any new scheme set up by the new owner of BREL

Office Equipment (Cars)

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received about the road safety implications of the use of facsimile machines and mobile computers in cars; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: None.

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he has any plans to introduce legislation to regulate the use and position of office equipment in cars; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: We have no plans to do so. Existing legislation already places the responsibility on drivers to have proper control of their vehicles at all times.

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will instigate an inquiry into the possible dangers to road safety posed by the use of facsimile machines and mobile photocopiers in cars; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: We have no plans to do so. We are not aware that the use of such machines is particularly widespread or causes a road safety problem.

Road Schemes (Compulsory Purchases)

Mr. John Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what steps are taken to avoid hardship to home-owners when property is acquired compulsorily for road schemes.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The Department carefully examines potential and actual hardship cases resulting from compulsory purchase. It always helps out where it can. For example, with the agreement of the vendor, the Department will arrange early discussions with the district valuer if these could be helpful. Again, the local housing authority is alerted and has a duty to accommodate a displaced person where alternative accommodation is not otherwise available. Eviction is very rare.

When a compulsory purchase order is published in draft those with a legal interest have a right to object. Where the compulsory purchase order is later made, the Department serves a notice to treat on those whose property is required. The notice invites them to negotiate for the sale of their interest. The district valuer negotiates on behalf of the Department and assesses compensation on the basis of value, disregarding the road scheme. The Department then serves notice to enter, as it usually needs possession of the land before it could complete conveyancing. On entry to the land the Department offers the displaced vendor 90 per cent. of the estimated compensation, the balance being paid on completion.

The attention of inquirers is drawn to the information about compulsory purchase provided in the booklets on the land compensation code. Copies of these are always readily available from the Department.

Seafreight Freeway

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what hazardous goods were being carried by the Seafreight Freeway Channel ferry when it caught fire on 23 May.

Mr. David Mitchell: Seventy-nine drums of flammable liquid, one tank containing 22,100 kg of lacquer and two cartons of aerosols were declared under the Merchant Shipping (Dangerous Goods) Regulations as being dangerous goods.

M20

Mr. Speed: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he can now give details for the letting of the first of two major contracts for the construction of the M20 motorway between Hollingbourne and Ashford, Kent.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Following the review referred to in my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Hornchurch (Mr. Squire), on 20 June, at column *455*, the date for return of tenders has been extended to 5 September. We plan to let the first contract later this year.

Transport and Road Research Laboratory

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list in the *Official Report* the number of people employed by the Transport and Road Research Laboratory on safety matters for each of the last five years, the amount of research spending at constant prices for those years and the proportion of such expenditure devoted to road safety improvement; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The number of people employed by the Transport and Road Research Laboratory on safety matters for each of the last five years is as follows:

	Staff years
1983-84	79
1984-85	86
1985-86	109
1986-87	117
1987-88	112

The amount of research spending for the same period was:

	Safety Costs		*TRRL Costs*		
	Cash	*1987-88 prices*	*Cash*	*1987-88 prices*	
	£ million	*£ million*	*£ million*	*£ million*	*Per cent.*
1983-84	4·4	5·2	19·5	23·1	22·5
1984-85	5·3	6·9	20·6	23·1	25·5
1985-86	6·6	7·1	21·0	22·4	31·7
1986-87	6·0	6·2	20·6	21·3	29·1
1987-88	6·7	6·7	21·2	21·2	31·6

In the first year following the recommendation of the interdepartmental group on road safety to transfer funds from road safety publicity to research, £100,000 was transferred and spent on investigations into behavioural aspects of motor cyclist safety and motor cycle design. This is already contributing to policy making in the Department. In the current year the transfer is to be £600,000. Among new projects are major exercises to relate the design of road junctions to observations of the way safety depends on dimensions; the educational "Demonstration of Good (Educational) Practice"; work on retraining and rehabilitation of offenders proposed in the report of the North committee on traffic law and and further studies of behavioural approaches to traffic safety. Further transfers are being considered.

Orange Badge Scheme

Mr. Hannam: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he plans to introduce the revised orange badge scheme for disabled parking.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: We hope to make an announcement as soon as possible.

Plutonium

Mr. Graham: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) whether Glasgow airport will be required to make its facilities available should there be an emergency involving an aircraft carrying plutonium waste shortly after take-off from Prestwick airport;

(2) whether Strathclyde regional council will be consulted on any steps that may be needed to ensure that the roads leading to the Prestwick airport and the town of Prestwick itself, meet the requirement of the United States-Japan nuclear co-operation agreement for the safe shipment of plutonium from Europe to Japan;

(3) if Prestwick airport will need to be made militarily secure, in order to receive plutonium transports from Sellafield on their way to Japan.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: No decision has yet been reached to use Prestwick airport for the transport of plutonium to Japan in the mid-1990s.

Before any such decision is taken, all necessary safety and security aspects will be carefully considered.

Motorways

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the traffic density on British motorways; and what are the comparable figures in Germany, France and Italy.

Mr. Peter Bottomley *[pursuant to his reply, 16 June 1988, c. 257-8]:* I made a mistake in my answer. The 1985 figures for each country are correct. The 1987 figure for Great Britain should be 44,400 vehicles per day, not 40,800 as quoted. I apologise for the error.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Rents (London)

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what information he has as to the average weekly rent charged in hostel-type accommodation in London for a single person.

Mr. Portillo: I regret that this information is not available.

Twenty-one Hour Rule

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services under what circumstances 18 and 19-year-old unemployment benefit or income support claimants may study part-time under the 21-hour rule and retain their entitlement to benefit; and in what way will this differ from the entitlement of claimants aged 20 years and over to study part-time under the rule.

Mr. Portillo: The 21-hour rule provision contained in the Income Support (General) Regulations 1987 applies only to claimants of income support. The general condition of the provision are that:

- the course at an educational establishment is not more than 21 hours a week; and
- the person is prepared to terminate the course immediately a suitable vacancy is available; and
- the person has received a qualifying benefit (income support, sickness benefit or unemployment benefit) or been on a YTS course for three months immediately before starting the course.

There is no difference in entitlement for claimants aged 20 years and over.

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what criteria are used to determine the levels of non-advanced part-time educational courses that unemployment benefit and income support claimants may participate in under the terms of the 21-hour rule.

Mr. Portillo: An educational course is assessed as non-advanced if it is of a standard below that of a course of advanced education as defined in regulation 61 of the Income Support (General) Regulation 1987.

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what qualifying period employment training leavers who re-enter unemployment will have to fulfil before entry onto a part-time educational course under the provisions of the 21-hour rule; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: People who have been on a training course and receiving a qualifying benefit (unemployment benefit, income support or sickness benefit) for the previous three months before starting a course of part-time study will continue to receive income support provided they are prepared to give up the course of study immediately a suitable vacancy is available to them.

Terminal Care

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services whether, in the light of the recommendations made in the discussion document entitled "No Second Chance" produced for the Trent regional health authority on the development of terminal care services, he will give consideration to providing resources for the establishment of a regional centre for palliative care for the terminally ill in Leicestershire.

Mrs. Currie: I understand that the Trent regional health authority recently decided in principle to proceed with the planning of a regional centre for palliative care. It is for the region to decide whether and how such a centre should be funded from within its overall allocation and where it should be located. I suggest the hon. Member contacts the chairman of Trent regional health authority for any further information.

Family Credit

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how much of the extra £220 million spending on family credit is accounted for by the notional element allocated for the payment of school meals.

Mr. Portillo: The net cost (after allowing for the cost of free school meals which would otherwise arise) of including cash in the children's rates in family credit in place of free school meals is around £45 million.

Housing Benefit

Mr. Beith: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he will list the national and regional newspapers in which advertisements have been placed advising pensioners how to apply for transitional payments in respect of housing benefit increases, and the dates on which these advertisements appeared.

Mr. Portillo: Advertisments advising the public on housing benefit capital rule changes and transitional payment arrangements have appeared in the following papers:

Paper	*Issue*
Sunday Post	29 May 1988
Sunday Express	29 May 1988
Daily Express	23 May, 30 May 1988
Daily Telegraph	24 May, 31 May 1988
Sunday Telegraph	29 May 1988
Daily Mirror	23 May 1988
The People	29 May 1988
Sunday Mirror	29 May 1988
Daily Mail	23 May, 30 May 1988
News of the World	29 May 1988
Sun	26 May 1988
Today	25 May 1988
Daily Record	31 May 1988

Midwifery (Camberwell)

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services to what extent the midwifery staffing for Camberwell health authority is below establishment; and what steps are being taken to deal with the shortage of such staff.

Mrs. Currie: This information is not held centrally and I would suggest that the hon. Member write direct to the chairman of Camberwell health authority, for the information he seeks.

Grandparents

Mr. Ray Powell: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many grandparents are looking after grandchildren who had been taken into the care of social services departments.

Mrs. Currie: I regret that this information is not available centrally. However, it is estimated that at 31 March 1986 there were 4,600 children in care of local authorities boarded out with a relative or friend or already living in the relative's household when boarded out there by the local authority.

Bronchitis and Emphysema

Mr. Skinner: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what further research his Department proposes to carry out in respect of notifying bronchitis and emphysema as prescribed diseases; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: For research of this nature the Department looks principally to the Medical Research Council which is the main agency through which Government promote medical and related biological research, and which receives its grant-in-aid from the Department of Education and Science. At their recent annual stocktaking meeting with the Medical Research Council, officials raised the question of further research in this field. I understand that the Medical Research Council will be considering this matter.

Pensions

Sir David Price: To ask the Secretary of State for Social services if he will list his reasons for not equalising the age of eligibility between men and women for the basic state retirement pension.

Mr. Scott: Changes to pension age for either sex would have economic and social consequences and potentially large costs or savings. We are not prepared to put forward specific proposals for change until all of the factors involved have been fully evaluated. However, equal treatment between men and women would be a major (though not the only) objective in any change to present pension age arrangements.

Deaf People (Social Workers)

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services on what date the study on social workers with the deaf was completed by his inspectorate; when it is to be published; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: The report has now been completed and it will be published this week. A seminar to discuss the report's conclusions has been arranged for 12 July.

Ethical Committees

Mr. Amos: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) pursuant to the reply of 14 June, *Official Report*, column *179*, if he will now make it his policy to hold centrally details of the membership of local ethical committees;

(2) pursuant to the reply of 14 June, *Official Report*, column *179*, if he will now make it his policy to hold centrally the names of all individuals involved in the use of foetal tissue for transplant purposes.

Mr. Newton: We have no plans to do so.

Foetal Tissue

Mr. Amos: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services, pursuant to the reply of 14 June, *Official Report*, column *179*, what information he has concerning the reasons given by the nursing home which supplied foetal tissue for transplant purposes for its failure to keep any records as to the precise information given to the mothers of the babies involved.

Mr. Newton: There is no requirement for nursing homes to keep this information.

Mr. Amos: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services, pursuant to the reply of 14 June, *Official Report*, column *179*, what percentage of all aborted foetuses from the nursing home to which he refers are subsequently used for transplant purposes or other medical procedures.

Mr. Newton: From inquiries made of the nursing home in question I understand that approximately 6 per cent. of aborted foetuses are supplied for medical research under arrangements approved by the Department.

Mr. Amos: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services, pursuant to the reply of 14 June, *Official Report*, column *179*, what information he has concerning the total number of aborted foetuses which were used for transplant purposes, other medical procedures, for scientific research or otherwise used in the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Newton: I regret that this information is not available centrally.

Mr. Amos: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement giving details of any authoritative published work of which he is aware that suggests that benefits might accrue to sufferers of Parkinson's disease by the injection into their brains of foetal tissue, and which was published prior to the performing of the operations to which reference was made in answer of 14 June *Official Report*, column *179*.

Mr. Newton: I understand that this technique has not been fully written up in this country. However, recent publications in the field are listed in an article entitled "Embryos and Parkinson's Disease", *The Lancet*, 14 May 1988 and subsequent correspondence.

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement giving the details of the mechanism by which evidence and comment can be submitted to the committee of inquiry into the use of foetal tissue in transplant operations.

Mr. Newton: This is for the committee to review the guidance on the research use of foetuses and foetal material, which is to have its first meeting shortly, to decide. I will draw the committee's attention to the interest of my hon. Friend.

Information Technology

Mr. Warren: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the composition of the senior information technology strategy committee in his Department; and how many times in the past year its meetings have been attended by Ministers.

Mr. Moore: The most senior committee in the Department is the departmental information strategy steering committee, composed of the principal establishments and finance officer in the chair, the director of social security operations, the director of NHS planning and information technology and the director of CCTA.

This committee of officials is supported by other information systems strategy steering committees, including one for the operational strategy for social security and another for the information systems strategy for the National Health Service. The chairmen of these committees consult Ministers as appropriate.

Mr. Warren: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many of the staff of his Department at grades 1, 2 and 3 have attended courses or training on information technology awareness or management in the last 12 months.

Mr. Moore: In the 12 months up to 23 June 1988 one person at grade 1, three people at grade 2 and six people at grade 3 have attended courses or training on information technology awareness or information technology management.

Psychiatric Hospitals (West Midlands)

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what steps he intends to take to speed up the closure of old psychiatric hospitals in the west midlands and improve the local comprehensive services.

Mrs. Currie: The Department has no intention of asking health authorities to speed up the closure of old psychiatric hospitals. This is the consequence of improving community care facilities in the area. Responsibility for developing comprehensive locally based services for mentally ill people in west midlands rests with the regional and district health authorities. It is for them to judge the pace at which change can be effected and especially the point at which new services are sufficient to enable existing institutions to be closed. We keep progress under careful review via the short-term planning and review systems. At the last review the region was asked to report in detail on progress for discussion at the next ministerial review.

Cosmetics

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what evidence has been submitted on the damage to health caused by the use of skin-lightening soaps and creams sold in the United Kingdom or exported by British companies abroad.

Mrs. Currie: I assume the hon. Member is referring to soaps and creams containing either mercury salts or hydroquinone. No evidence has been submitted on the damage to health from the use of these products. However, the chronic and acute health effects from inorganic mercury which can be absorbed through the skin is well documented in the scientific literature. This includes evidence of harm in children in the 1950s when mercury was using in teething powders, dusting powders and ointments. Severe kidney damage and effects on the central nervous system have been reported in humans and experimental animals, and reproductive effects in the latter.

Hydroquinone has been shown to produce skin irritation, particularly at concentrations above 2 per cent. It has low acute toxicity, and has not given any evidence of carcinogenicity in animal studies.

Both these products are controlled by EC cosmetics directives implemented in the United Kingdom by the Cosmetics Products (Safety) Regulations 1984. The sale of soaps and creams containing mercury is prohibited. Creams for use in lightening discrete areas of the skin many be sold containing up to 2 per cent. hydroquinone. The packaging must contain the following warnings:

> "Not to be used by children under 12 years old, avoid eye contact, apply to small areas only, stop using if irritation occurs."

Also, the presence of hydroquinone must be stated.

The EC does not at present control export of cosmetics containing mercury to non-EC countries. However, a prohibition order under the Consumer Protection Act 1987 was served by the Department of Trade and Industry on a company in the United Kingdom which was exporting mercury soaps.

Single Payments

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many single payment applications were made to each local Department of Health and Social Security office in Bradford between 1 January and the date when the scheme ended; how much money was paid out between those dates; how many applications are still pending; how much money has been paid since the closing date for receipt of single payment applications, to date; when he expects all outstanding applications to be determined; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: The Department has three local offices in Bradford: Bradford east, south and west. Information is not available in the precise form requested. However details of the number of single payment decisions and expenditure between January and April 1988 and the number of outstanding cases on 31 May are given in the table:

Single Payment Decisions 13 January-8 April	*Single Payment Expenditure 13 January-8 April £*	*Single Payment Cases Outstanding On 31 May*
Bradford (East)		
3,102	166,455	597
Bradford (South)		
3,818	171,205	68
Bradford (West)		
3,332	173,685	318

Between 11 April and 31 May expenditure amounted to:

	Number £
Bradford, East	65,956
Bradford, South	42,279
Bradford, West	78,884

Note: Data on Single Payments decisions and expenditure are provisional and subject to amendment.

Every effort is being made to clear all oustanding claims as soon as possible.

Benefits

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will consider further whether he can take steps to enable him to gather information on how many people have applied to each local office in Bradford for a grant since 11 April but were instead offered a loan.

Mr. Portillo: This information is not produced by local office social fund microcomputers and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost, from a clerical scrutiny of each application received since 11 April.

Young People (Benefits)

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many 16 and 17-year-olds in *(a)* each regional authority in Scotland and *(b)* Britain were in receipt of (i) income support and housing benefit, (ii) housing benefit only and (iii) board and lodgings payments for each year since 1984.

Mr. Portillo *[pursuant to his reply, 14 June 1988, c. 178]:* The numbers of 16 and 17-year-olds in receipt of housing benefit only are not available. The numbers in receipt of supplementatry benefit who are householders or receiving board and lodging payments in each of the years 1984, 1986 and 1987[1] are as follows:

	1984		*1986*		*1987*	
	House-holders[2]	*Boarders*	*House-holders*[2]	*Boarders*	*House-holders*[2]	*Boarders*
Scotland[3]	1,000	2,000	1,000	1,000	2,000	1,000
Great Britain	9,000	12,000	11,000	9,000	14,000	7,000

Source: Annual Statistical Enquiries, 1984, 1986, 1987. All figures rounded to the nearest thousand.

[1] Figures for 1985 are not available.

[2] A householder normally received both supplemantery benefit and housing benefit.

[3] Figures in respect of individual regional authorities are not available.

Single Parents

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what is the number of single parents with children under five years who have been on supplementary benefit or income support for six months or longer;

(2) what is the number of single parents with children in full-time education who have been on supplementary benefit or income support for six months or longer.

Mr. Portillo *[holding answer 10 June 1988]:* On 6 May 1987, the latest date for which information is available, 286,000 single parents with children under five years of age and 377,000 with children in full-time education, had been receiving supplementary benefit for six months or longer.

It is assumed that all children aged five years and over are in full-time education.

Source: 1987 annual statistical inquiry.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many single parents are registered as unemployed; of those, how many have children under five years; and how many have children in full-time education.

Mr. Portillo *[holding answer 20 June 1988]:* The information is not available in the form requested. However on 6 May 1987, the latest date for which figures are available, 3,000 single parents registered as unemployed and getting supplementary benefit had children under the age of 5; and 16,000 had children in full-time education.[1]

[1] It is assumed that all children aged five years and over are in full-time education.

Source: 1987 annual statistical inquiry.

Incomes

Mr. Squire: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will identify the percentage contribution of family income supplement to the incomes of those below various percentiles of the income distribution in 1981, 1983 and 1985, in the same manner as table G in "Households Below Average Income: A Statistical Analysis".

Mr. Portillo *[holding answer 22 June 1988]:* The information requested cannot be provided on a statistically reliable basis.

SE Thames RHA (Empty Property)

Miss Widdecombe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the annual maintenance cost of all unoccupied property owned by South East Thames regional health authority and its constituent districts.

Mrs. Currie *[holding answer 23 June 1988]:* Property which is unoccupied because it has been declared surplus by the health authority ceases to be maintained. Information about the minimum maintenance required for security purposes or to meet statutory requirements is not held centrally.

Miss Widdecombe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the value of all empty and unused property in the South East Thames regional health authority.

Mrs. Currie *[holding answer 23 June 1988]:* Health authorities provide an annual projection of land sales which showed that in the year 1987-88 South East Thames regional health authority was proposing to dispose of property whose estimated value was £35·9 million. The value realised at the time of sale will depend on the market. Information about the value of all empty and unused property in a regional health authority is not held centrally.

Care for the Elderly Research (University of Wales)

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services why his Department has withdrawn funding from the care for the elderly research team at the university of Wales college of medicine.

Mr. Grist: I have been asked to reply.

I have decided that the contract for the research team for the care for the elderly at university of Wales college of medicine should not be renewed as more cost-effective arrangements could be made.

This decision followed a review of the team's work led by the DHSS chief scientist assisted by a team of external academic assessors.

I intend that there should be no reduction in the amount spent on research into the problems of the elderly.

ENVIRONMENT

Rate Support Grant

Mr. Pike: to ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the total rate support grant paid to local authorities in (i) the north-west, (ii) Lancashire, (iii) Cheshire, (iv) Greater Manchester and (v) Merseyside, in each year from 1978-79 to the latest year for which figures are available; and if he will express that figure in each instance as a percentage of the local government expenditure on the same basis and giving the figures in cash terms and on a comparative value basis.

Mr. Chope: The information is as follows:

Table 1: Rate Support Grant *£ million (cash terms)*

Year	*North west*	*Lancashire*	*Cheshire*	*Greater Manchester*	*Merseyside*
1978-79	1,063	218	117	458	270
1979-80	1,198	252	128	516	302
1980-81	1,413	293	154	607	360
1981-82	1,517	326	171	642	378
1982-83	1,492	331	161	627	372
1983-84	1,520	339	163	640	378
1984-85	1,532	346	164	648	374
1985-86	1,573	351	146	665	411
1986-87	1,531	358	130	660	384
1987-88	1,630	383	145	684	418
1988-89	1,711	397	138	722	454

Table 2: Rate support grant £ million (at constant (1978-79) prices)

Year	*North West*	*Lancashire*	*Cheshire*	*Greater Manchester*	*Merseyside*
1978-79	1,063	218	117	458	270
1979-80	1,025	215	110	442	258
1980-81	1,020	211	111	438	260
1981-82	996	214	112	422	248
1982-83	914	203	99	384	228
1983-84	890	199	95	374	221
1984-85	859	194	92	363	210
1985-86	832	186	78	352	217
1986-87	785	183	66	338	197
1987-88	795	187	71	334	204
1988-89	799	186	64	337	212

Table 3

Rate Support Grant as a percentage of local authorities' total expenditure

Year	*North West*	*Lancashire*	*Cheshire*	*Greater Manchester*	*Merseyside*
1981-82	57·4	67·0	45·6	57·1	57·5
1982-83	52·6	61·8	45·8	50·9	52·0
1983-84	52·0	60·9	42·7	51·5	51·1
1984-85	51·9	60·6	42·9	51·6	50·1
1985-86	51·0	58·0	36·8	51·1	52·7
1986-87	44·7	54·1	29·3	46·2	42·8
1987-88	44·0	52·9	31·4	43·5	43·9
1988-89	43·3	50·1	27·2	43·5	46·0

Notes to tables:

1. Rate Support Grant comprised Needs, Resources and Domestic elements in the years 1978/79-1980/81, and Block Grant and Domestic Rate Relief Grant in the following years. The grant figures are final for the years 1978/79-1984/85 and latest available estimates for 1985/86 and later years.

2. In table 2, Rate Support Grant figures have been converted to 1978/79 prices using the GDP deflator.

3. 'Total Expenditure' used in calculating the percentages in table 3 is the measure of expenditure used in the calculation of authorities' entitlements to Block Grant (except in 1981/82, where 1982/83 definitions of Total Expenditure have been used to produce the percentages on a consistent basis for 1981/82 and later years. Total Expenditure so defined is not available prior to 1981/82.

Cemeteries (Sale)

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will establish a public inquiry into the sale of three cemeteries by Westminster city council.

Mr. Chope: No.

Rating Reform

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what special arrangement he proposes to make in respect of community centres and similar buildings with regard to the community charge.

Mr. Howard: Community centres, like other non-domestic properties, will be subject to the uniform national non-domestic rate. Those which are run by charitable trustees will, however, benefit from 50 per cent. mandatory rate relief; and almost all, apart from those run directly by local authorities, will be eligible for up to 100 per cent. relief at the discretion of the borough or district council.

Stockton-on-Tees

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) how much funding has been made available to the borough of Stockton-on-Tees for all functions or projects under the responsibility of his Department in the current financial year;

(2) how much Government funding has been made available to the borough of Stockton-on-Tees through each department in the current financial year.

Mr. Trippier: On current estimates, funding by the Department of the Environment to Stockton-on-Tees for the current financial year totals 9,213,279. Funding from other Departments is a matter for the Ministers.

USAF District Works Offices

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the locations of the nine dedicated United States air force district works offices that contain Property Services Agency staff.

Mr. Chope: The locations of the nine Property Services Agency district works offices dedicated to United States Air Force work are as follows, with their sub-offices shown in brackets.

RAF Alconbury (RAF Molesworth and RAF Upwood)
RAF Bentwaters (RAF Woodbridge)
RAF Chicksands (High Wycombe Air Station (Daws Hill))
RAF Fairford (RAF Kemble)
RAF Greenham Common (RAF Welford)
RAF Lakenheath (RAF Sculthorpe and RAF Feltwell)
RAF Mildenhall
RAF Upper Heyford (RAF Bicester and RAF Croughton)
RAF Wethersfield

Whitby Against Nuclear Dumping

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has recently received from the organisation Whitby Against Nuclear Dumping.

Mr. Moynihan: The Department has received no recent representations from the organisation Whitby Against Nuclear Dumping. One representation was received in October last year.

Sport and Leisure Facilities

Mr. Pendry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike) of 28 March, *Official Report*, column *311*, regarding the introduction of competition into the management of local authority sports and leisure facilities, he is now able to make a statement on the responses to the consultation paper regarding the possible application of the competition provisions of part I of the Local Government Act to sport and leisure facility management.

Mr. Moynihan: We shall be making an announcement shortly.

National Rivers Authority

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to the answer given to the hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill on 20 June, when he expects to be able to make a statement on the location of the headquarters of the National Rivers Authority.

Mr. Moynihan: This is one of the matters on which the Government expect to receive advice from the National Rivers Authority advisory committee over the coming months.

DEFENCE

Defence Export Services Organisation

12. **Mr. Ted Garrett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the duties of the Defence Export Services Organisation's assistant regional marketing directors 2a, 2c and 4b with regard to sales of defence equipment and services to Syria, Libya and the Communist bloc countries, respectively.

63. **Mr. Andrew F. Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the duties of the Defence Export Services Organisation's assistant regional marketing directors 2a, 2c and 4b with regard to sales of defence equipment and services to Syria, Libya and the Communist bloc countries, respectively.

100. **Mr. Patchett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the duties of the Defence Export Services Organisation's assistant regional marketing directors 2a, 2c and 4b with regard to sales of defence equipment and services to Syria, Libya and the Communist bloc countries respectively.

Mr. Sainsbury: Assistant regional marketing directors are allocated ranges of countries to concentrate on. The Government have imposed an embargo on new defence exports to Libya and Syria, and defence sales to the Warsaw Pact are not promoted. Assistant regional marketing directors are not therefore assisting British companies to market their products in these countries, but are advising companies of the restrictions which apply.

56. **Mr. Hind:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a further statement on the Defence Export Services Organisation's performance in export markets between June 1983 and June 1988.

Mr. Sainsbury: As the Defence White Paper makes clear, the role of the Defence Export Services Organisation is to help United Kingdom defence manufacturers market and sell their products overseas. The DESO has made a valuable contribution to the increasing success of British defence companies in the defence export market over the period since June 1983.

Strategic Defence Initiative

14. **Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his latest information on the technical feasibility of the strategic defence initiative.

79. **Ms. Armstrong:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his latest information on the technical feasibility of the strategic defence initiative.

86. **Mr. Bradley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his latest information on the technical feasibility of the strategic defence initiative.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his latest information on the technical feasibility of the strategic defence initiative.

Mr. Sainsbury: This is a matter for the United States Government. The United Kingdom Government support the SDI research programme, and the involvement of United Kingdom entities in it. The programme's aim remains to determine the feasibility of ballistic missile defences.

Arms Trade

18. **Mr. Martlew:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will outline the steps he is taking to ensure that Her Majesty's Government are accountable to Parliament for their arms trade policy.

84. **Mr. Battle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will outline the steps he is taking to ensure that Her Majesty's Government are accountable to Parliament for their arms trade policy.

110. **Mr. McCartney:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will outline the steps he is taking to ensure that Her Majesty's Government are accountable to Parliament for their arms trade policy.

Mr. Sainsbury: Her Majesty's Government are accountable to Parliament for all their policies, including those relating to the arms trade.

40. **Mr. Vaz:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will outline the steps his Department is taking to ensure that British arms exports are not facilitating the continuation of wars.

81. **Mr. Flannery:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will outline the steps his Department is taking to ensure that British arms exports are not facilitating the continuation of wars.

91. **Mr. Galbraith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will outline the steps his Department is taking to ensure that British arms exports are not facilitating the continuation of wars.

Mr. Sainsbury: Before any licence is granted for the export of defence equipment most careful consideration is given to all relevant political, security and operational factors, including the effect the supply might have on a local conflict.

57. **Mrs. Fyfe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence why the Government will not disclose any information on specific arms export contracts.

96. **Mr. Ronnie Campbell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence why the Government will not disclose any information on specific arms export contracts.

Mr. Sainsbury: It has been the policy of successive Governments that information on specific arms export contracts is not normally disclosed because it is a commercially confidential matter between the supplier and the overseas purchaser.

Royal Dockyard, Devonport

19. **Mr. Stott:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what representations he has received about the proposed redundancies announced at the royal dockyard at Devonport.

34. **Mr. Henderson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what representations he has received about the proposed redundancies announced at the royal dockyard at Devonport.

44. **Mr. McWilliam:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what representations he has received about the proposed redundancies announced at the royal dockyard at Devonport.

50. **Mr. Clelland:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what representations he has received about the proposed redundancies announced at the royal dockyard at Devonport.

Mr. Sainsbury: Since the announcement by Devonport Management Limited, we have received a number of letters.

Defence Policy

20. **Mr. Sumberg:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what provision his Department makes for explaining Her Majesty's Government's defence policy to the public.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The Ministry of Defence's provison for explaining Government defence policy to the public includes the annual publication, to accompany the defence estimates, of a White Paper and booklet on British defence policy. We also produce booklets, leaflets and videos for public distribution explaining aspects of our defence policy, as well as sponsoring presentation teams, which give public briefings, and a touring exhibition on Britain and NATO. In addition, we give regular briefings on defence matters to journalists, academics and other interested parties.

Nuclear Missiles

21. **Mr. Turner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he now expects to be in a position to announce specific decisions on the development and acquisition of new short-range nuclear and nuclear-capable missiles.

70. **Ms. Short:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he now expects to be in a position to announce specific decisions in the development and acquisition of new short-range nuclear and nuclear-capable missiles.

Mr. Ian Stewart: I refer the hon. Members to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Sunderland, South (Mr. Mullin) on 21 June at column *496*.

47. **Mr. Nicholas Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the current programme to update Britain's nuclear weapons.

Mr. Ian Stewart: Work is proceeding on schedule with the modernisation of Britain's strategic nuclear deterrent through Trident. In addition, we are looking at options to replace the freefall bomb, which currently provides this country's sub-strategic nuclear capability; however, no procurement decisions in this area have yet been taken. Modernisation is vital to ensure the continuing effectiveness and survivability of our weapons; it will of course remain the Government's policy to maintain only the minimum forces necessary for credible deterrence.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what consideration has been given to the implications for the long-term future of the policy of Her Majesty's Government in regard to United Kingdom armed forces, in particular the Royal Navy, not to confirm or deny the presence of nuclear weapons in force deployments, of the requirements of intrusive verification techniques as part of arms control agreements.

Mr. Ian Stewart: There are no arms control agreements either in force or in prospect which would cause us to change the policy neither to confirm nor deny the presence of nuclear weapons in United Kingdom force deployments.

Estimates

22. **Mr. Harry Barnes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what representations he has received about the "Statement on the Defence Estimates 1988."

36. **Mr. Duffy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what representations he has received about the "Statement on the Defence Estimates 1988."

71. **Mr. Wareing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what recent representations he has received in respect of the defence estimates White Paper.

80. **Mr. Parry:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what representations he has received about the "Statement on the Defence Estimates 1988".

90. **Dr. Moonie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what representations he has received about the "Statement on the Defence Estimates 1988".

93. **Mrs. Virginia Bottomley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what representations he has received on the "Statement on the Defence Estimates 1988".

Mr. Ian Stewart: No formal representations have been received, but a number of hon. Members and others have commented favourably on the presentation and content of the "Statement on the Defence Estimates 1988".

Weapons Procurement

24. **Mr. Ian Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what further progress is being made with the French Goverment on a joint approach to weapons procurement.

Mr. Sainsbury: Co-operation between the British and French Governments is progressing well. Building on the successful collaborative programmes that the United Kingdom and France have undertaken together, both countries are developing closer links. Both countries now publish regular contracts bulletins, the sequence of equipment conferences will continue with a conference on air systems in November and there are regular and increasing contacts between procurement staffs at all levels.

Trident

23. **Mr. McFall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence which action he proposes to take in the light of the conclusions of the Defence Committee in its recent report on the progress of the Trident programme, with particular reference to the allegedly inaccurate evidence given to the Committee by his Department.

107. **Mr. McKelvey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what action he proposes to take, in the light of the Conclusion, of the Defence Select Committee in its recent report on the progress of the Trident programme, with particular reference to the allegedly inaccurate evidence given to the Committee by his Department.

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what action he proposes to take, in the light of the conclusions of the Defence Committee in its recent report on the progress of the Trident programme, with particular reference to the allegedly inaccurate evidence given to the Committee by his Department.

Mr. Younger: I refer the hon. Members to the answer I gave earlier today to the hon. Member for Bootle (Mr. Roberts).

53. **Mr. Franks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether construction of the first Trident submarine SSBN 05 by VSEL Barrow remains on schedule.

Mr. Sainsbury: There is currently a very slight delay caused by the industrial situation at VSEL. However, it is not expected that this will delay the overall programme.

76. **Mr. Madden:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the total cumulative expenditure to date at 1988-89 prices on the Trident project.

Mr. Younger: Expenditure on the United Kingdom Trident programme to the end of March was some £1,590 million. A revised estimate at 1988-89 prices will be announced early next year.

105. **Mr. McAllion:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he has any plans to accelerate the date for the new Trident system to be operational; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: The in-service date of Trident remains the mid-1990s.

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what representations he has received about the effectiveness of the Trident programme.

Mr. Younger: No representations have been received recently about the effectiveness of the Trident programme.

Cruise Missiles

25. **Mr. Terry Lewis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make it his policy not to acquire for British forces any warheads previously removed from cruise missiles under the terms of the intermediate nuclear forces treaty; and if he will make a statement.

27. **Mrs. Mahon:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make it his policy not to acquire for British forces any warheads previously removed from cruise missiles under the terms of the intermediate nuclear forces treaty; and if he will make a statement.

103. **Mr. Bill Michie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make it his policy not to acquire for British forces any warheads previously removed from cruise missiles under the terms of the intermediate nuclear forces treaty; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ian Stewart: I refer the hon. Members to the reply I gave earlier today to the hon. Member for Bristol, South (Ms. Primarolo).

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what studies, involving how many departmental staff or consultant scientists to his Department, are presently undertaken by his Department into outstanding verification problems for sea-launched, submarine-launched and air-launched cruise missiles in advance of any arms control agreement involving such missile systems.

Mr. Ian Stewart: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) on 10 February, at column 242. My Department keeps all aspects of nuclear arms control verification under review, but the United Kingdom does not deploy sea-launched, submarine-launched or air-launched cruise missiles, nor are we involved in any negotiations which would lead to arms control agreements involving such missiles.

Military Stores

29. **Mr. Grocott:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the current total value of military equipment held in his Department's stores; and what resources his Department devotes to safeguarding these stocks against fire.

61. **Mr. Allen Adams:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the current total value of military equipment held in his Department's stores; and what resources his Department devotes to safeguarding these stores against fire.

64. **Mr. Dunnachie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the current total value of military equipment held in his Department's stores; and what resources his Department devotes to safeguarding these stores against fire.

Mr. Freeman: The most recent estimate of the value of stocks held in major stores depots is approximately £10 billion. Fire prevention measures include: dispersal and segregation of stocks; provision of fire control equipment, such as fire mains and hydrants; automatic fire detection and suppression systems; and our own fire brigades where appropriate.

Northern Ireland

26. **Sir Michael McNair-Wilson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the present number of service personnel currently serving in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Freeman: As at 31 March 1988, the most recent available figure, 17,130 service men and women were serving in the security forces in Northern Ireland.

52. **Sir John Biggs-Davison:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement about the present role of the armed forces in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The role of the armed forces in Northern Ireland is to provide support to the Royal Ulster Constabulary in the fight against terrorism. Nine Regular battalions, one Royal Marine Commando and nine battalions of the Ulster Defence Regiment, together with specialist support from other units such as the Royal Engineers, are currently deployed in the Province. Elements of the Royal Navy and Royal Air Force also make an important contribution.

Chemical Weapons

28. **Mr. James Lamond:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what further discussions have taken place with

the Soviet authorities about the implications of the recent visit by Soviet scientists to the Porton Down establishment for future exchanges of this kind in relation to chemical weapons.

75. **Mr. Hinchliffe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what further discussions have taken place with the Soviet authorities about the implications of the recent visit by Soviet scientists to the Porton Down establishment for future exchanges of this kind in relation to chemical weapons.

82. **Dr. Reid:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what further discussions have taken place with the Soviet authorities about the implications of the recent visit by Soviet scientists to the Porton Down establishment for future exchanges of this kind in relation to chemical weapons.

Mr. Ian Stewart: I refer the hon. Members to my reply to the hon. Member for Houghton and Washington (Mr. Boyes) on 21 June, at column 495-96.

Procurement Policy

30. **Mr. Fearn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he has any further plans to improve the cost-effectiveness of procurement within his Department; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: Efforts to improve the cost-effectiveness of procurement will continue unabated. We shall continue to stress the importance of competition and a more commercial approach to contracting, as well as maintaining our efforts to develop a fully professional approach to project management.

Nuclear Weapons Testing (Compensation)

31. **Mr. Cousins:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what representations he has received seeking the establishment of a compensation fund to assist service men who claim that their health was adversely affected by their participation in nuclear weapons testing in the 1950s.

67. **Mr. Skinner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what representations he has received seeking the establishment of a compensation fund to assist servicemen who claim that their health was adversely affected by their participation in nuclear weapons testing in the 1950s.

Mr. Frank Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what representations he has received seeking the establishment of a compensation fund to assist service men who claim that their health was adversely affected by their participation in nuclear weapons testing in the 1950s.

Mr. Sainsbury: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave earlier today to the hon. Member for Sunderland, North (Mr. Clay).

AIDS

32. **Mr. Hunter:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he has any plans to change his policy with regard to the monitoring and surveillance of HIV infection and AIDS in the armed forces; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: There are currently no plans to change the MOD policy on monitoring and surveillance of HIV infection and AIDS in the armed forces, which accords with the Government policy on employment. Within the services those who consider themselves to have been at risk are encouraged to undergo voluntary screening and to seek immediate confidential advice from their unit medical officers.

NATO (Expenditure)

33. **Mr. Cohen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what recent discussions have taken place within the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation about possible changes in the relative share of the Alliance's military expenditure borne by the United States of America on the one hand and the remaining allies on the other.

39. **Ms. Walley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what recent discussions have taken place within the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation about possible changes in the relative share of the Alliance's military expenditure borne by the United States of America on the one hand and the remaining allies on the other.

60. **Mr. Wall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what recent discussions have taken place within the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation about possible changes in the relative share of the Alliance's military expenditure borne by the United States of America on the one hand and the remaining allies on the other.

Mr. George Younger: At the meeting of the defence planning committee last month Ministers confirmed their determination to play their part in improving our collective defence and in ensuring that each of us contributes in the most effective and equitable fashion.

British Army Equipment Exhibition

35. **Mr. Corbyn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are the purposes for which the public money used to set up the British Army equipment exhibition will be spent; and if any of it will be reimbursed by those organisations taking part.

92. **Mr. Buckley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will state the purposes for which the public money used to set up the British Army equipment exhibition will be spent; and if any of it will be reimbursed by those organisations taking part.

95. **Mr. Pendry:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will state the purposes for which the public money used to set up the British Army equipment exhibition will be spent; and if any of it will be reimbursed by those organisations taking part.

Mr. Sainsbury: The money spent on setting up the British Army equipment exhibition covers tentage, construction, hotel accommodation and catering for overseas official visitors, transport and so on. These costs will, as on all previous occasions, be fully recovered from the participating companies.

49. **Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what representations he has received seeking the withdrawal of invitations to attend the British Army equipment exhibition from 26 June to 1 July issued to any country with a record of human rights abuses.

99. **Mr. Bernie Grant:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what representations he has received seeking the

withdrawal of invitations to attend the British Army equipment exhibition from 26 June to 1 July issued to any country with a record of human rights abuses.

Mr. Sainsbury: I refer the hon. Members to the reply I gave earlier today to the hon. Member for Eccles (Miss Lestor).

65. **Mr. Illsley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence why it is the Government's policy not to disclose who is invited to the British Army equipment exhibition.

106. **Mr. Wilson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence why it is the Government's policy not to disclose who is invited to the British Army equipment exhibition.

Mr. Sainsbury: I refer the hon. Members to the reply I gave earlier to the hon. Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley).

109. **Mr. Ashton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether all overseas delegations will be allowed to see all the exhibits on display at the British Army equipment exhibition.

Mr. Sainsbury: I refer the right hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Brent, South (Mr. Boateng) on 23 June 1988.

Glenmoriston Estate, Inverness-shire

37. **Mr. Kennedy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he is yet in a position to assess the defence implications of the proposed sale of Glenmoriston estate, Inverness-shire; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: I have nothing to add, at this stage, to the reply I gave the hon. Member on 25 May 1988, at column 159.

Overseas Students (Military Training)

38. **Mrs. Peacock:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many overseas students at United Kingdom military training establishments entered in courses in 1987.

Mr. Freeman: The number of overseas students who attended courses at United Kingdom military training establishments in financial year 1986-87 was 5,480.

Air Cadets (Motor Gliders)

41. **Mr. Bill Walker:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he has any plans to replace the Air Cadets' venture motor gliders with modern, less noisy, motor gliders which will be less expensive to maintain; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: We are aware of the problems with the air cadets' venture motor gliders and a review is currently under way with a view to determining the best way to rectify the problem.

Forces' Allowances

42. **Mr. Ian Bruce:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the implementation of the recently announced forces' allowances.

Mr. Freeman: The changes in armed forces allowances, which my right hon. Friend announced on 9 May, are to be introduced from 1 October 1988. Appropriate rules and regulations to give effect to the changes are currently being written.

SSN and SSBN

43. **Mr. Douglas:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the number of SSN and SSBNs which are expected to be de-commissioned in the next 10 years.

Mr. Sainsbury: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Woolwich (Mr. Cartwright) on 13 April 1988, at column 137.

NATO-Warsaw Pact

45. **Mr. Sackville:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what further studies are planned concerning the imbalance of conventional armaments between the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation and the Warsaw pact.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The international staff of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation are currently engaged in an exercise to update the 1984 NATO force comparisons booklet outlining the balance of Warsaw pact and NATO forces in Europe. My Department continually updates its own estimates of conventional forces in Europe and unclassified figures indicating the broad numerical balance are published annually in the "Statement on the Defence Estimates".

Security Vehicle AMAC 1

46. **Mr. Caborn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he proposes to allow Allivance International to exhibit the internal security vehicle formerly known as the AMAC 1 at the British Army equipment exhibition.

58. **Mr. Steinberg:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he proposes to allow Allivance International to exhibit the internal security vehicle formerly known as the AMAC 1 at the British Army equipment exhibition.

89. **Mr. Haynes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he proposes to allow Allivance International to exhibit the internal security vehicle formerly known as the AMAC 1 at the British Army equipment exhibition.

Mr. Sainsbury: The AMAC internal security vehicle manufactured by Allivance International, to which I believe the question refers, is not being exhibited at the British Army equipment exhibition.

Arms Export Industry (Employment)

48. **Mr. Eastham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether his Department is proposing to initiate any studies into the possibilities for the conversion of military industry to civilian production to offset any fall in employment in the arms export industry.

54. **Mr. John Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether his Department is proposing to initiate any studies into the possibilities for the conversion of military industry to civilian production to offset any fall in employment in the arms export industry.

104. **Mr. Galloway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether his Department is proposing to initiate

any studies into the possibilities for the conversion of military industry to civilian production to offset any fall in employment in the arms export industry.

Mr. Sainsbury: No. Fluctuations in employment in the defence industry are a commercial matter for the companies concerned. But, as this year's "Statement on the Defence Estimates" says, the general upward trend of United Kingdom defence exports has continued, and contracts signed in 1987 are expected to reach £3·5 billion, a sign of the competitiveness of United Kingdom industry in world markets.

Sites of Special Scientific Interest

51. **Mr. Morley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he last met the Nature Conservancy Council to discuss sites of special scientific interest within Ministry of Defence land and training areas.

Mr. Freeman: I have not met the Nature Conservancy Council to discuss sites of special scientific interest on Ministry of Defence land. The Ministry of Defence conservation officer and PSA estate surveyors hold regular meetings with NCC officials representing the headquarters of Great Britain, England, Scotland and Wales. In addition, local NCC representatives attend MOD conservation group meetings to advise MOD officers on the management of the 179 sites of special scientific interest on MOD land.

The MOD and the NCC signed a mutual declaration of intent in January 1988 to establish a formal code of practice for SSSI management.

RAF Upper Heyford.

55. **Mr. Baldry:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he next expects to visit RAF Upper Heyford.

Mr. Freeman: I hope to visit RAF Upper Heyford shortly.

Air-Sea Rescue

59. **Mr. Speller:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the estimated cost of the search and rescue helicopter service in the south-west of England and south Wales; how many helicopters are involved; what is the approximate division of work time between supporting Her Majesty's forces and assistance to civilians; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Moray (Mrs. Ewing) on 18 February 1988, at column 741, giving the full costs of the military search and rescue service in financial year 1987-88 as approximately £57·7 million. It is not possible to make a reasonably accurate attribution of these costs to individual stations or areas.

There are eight search and rescue helicopters stationed in south-west England and south Wales, two at each of the Naval air stations at Portland and Culdrose and two each at RAFs Chivenor and Brawdy. The division of work time between military and civilian call outs varies from year to year, but nationally over the last fve years some 90 per cent. of those rescued by military helicopters have been civilians.

77. **Mrs. Margaret Ewing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what were the total numbers of air-sea rescue operations carried out by Royal Air Force air-sea rescue services during the last year; and what was the ratio of military to civilian rescues in the incidents involved.

Mr. Freeman: In the year ended 31 March 1988 elements of the Royal Air Force search and rescue service (comprising helicopters, fixed-wing aircraft and mountain rescue teams) responded to 1,384 call-outs, concerning 1,086 incidents in the United Kingdom and surrounding waters. 98 military personnel and 786 civilians were rescued, giving a ratio of 1:8.

RAF Pilots

62. **Mr. Cook:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement concerning the training of Royal Air Force pilots.

Mr. Freeman: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) on 9 June 1988, at column 663.

British Forces (Germany)

66. **Mr. Shersby:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what representation he has received seeking measures to secure the employment of more dependants of British forces stationed in the Federal Republic of Germany in the light of the conclusions of Report No. 236 of the National Audit Office published in January; and what response he has made.

Mr. Freeman: My right hon. Friend has received some representations covering a wide range of issues concerning dependants, including the scope for more employment of dependants in British forces Germany. These have been answered individually and in full. It is the MOD's policy to employ as many dependants as possible with the British forces in Germany.

NATO (Strategy)

Mr. Allen McKay: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation last reviewed the relationship within its overall strategy between conventional and nuclear weapons; and what role Her Majesty's Government played in that process.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation last reviewed the relationship within its overall strategy between conventional and nuclear weapons; and what role Her Majesty's Government played in that process.

Mr. Younger: I refer the hon. Members to the reply I gave earlier today to the hon. Members for Leeds, Central (Mr. Fatchett) and for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Heffer).

French Minister

60. **Mr. Devlin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he last met his French counterpart; and what matters were discussed.

Mr. Younger: I last met my French counterpart at the opening of the D-Day Memorial museum at Caen on 6 June. We discussed a number of matters of mutual interest.

Tucano

72. **Mr. Boyes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what recent assessment he has made of the relative effectiveness of the Short Tucano in relation to the British Aerospace PC-9.

Mr. Sainsbury: None.

98. **Mr. Rogers:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he plans to cancel the order for the Short Tucano aircraft so as to order the BAE PC-9.

Mr. Sainsbury: No.

British Prisoners of War (Murder)

73. **Mr. Rooker:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he expects to complete his review of the papers regarding the murder of British prisoners of war near Wormhoudt in May 1940.

Mr. Freeman: The review of the papers regarding the murder of British prisoners of war near Wormhoudt in May 1940 is being conducted as a matter of urgency. I shall give the hon. Gentleman a more detailed reply later today.

Nuclear Submarines (Sales)

74. **Sir John Farr:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he is yet able to make an announcement about the proposed sale of nuclear-powered submarines to Canada.

Mr. Sainsbury: No.

Sandhurst

78. **Mr. Holt:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will take steps to relocate the royal military academy, Sandhurst, to the north of England; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: There is no plan to relocate the royal military academy, Sandhurst to the north of England. The academy is ideally and conveniently situated; the buildings and accommodation form part of a heritage which could not readily be re-located. However, as and when relocations are considered, the north of England is always given due priority.

Type 23 Frigates

83. **Mr. Nicholas Brown:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many type 23 frigates he expects to be in service by the end of the current year.

Mr. Sainsbury: None, but the first of class (HMS Norfolk) is planned for acceptance next year.

Low Flying

85. **Mr. Foulkes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what response he has received to his proposals to extend the areas in which very low flying exercises will take place.

Mr. Freeman: The United Kingdom low-flying system is continuously under review as efforts are made to spread activity more widely and evenly, thereby reducing disturbance in busier areas and contributing to overall safety. The changes about which I wrote recently to a number of hon. Members all have this aim in view.

87. **Mr. French:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement regarding his policy on low-flying aircraft over Quedgeley and Hardwicke in Gloucestershire.

Mr. Freeman: Since 1 December 1987 the residential development at Quedgeley and Hardwicke has been incorporated within the avoidance area afforded to Gloucester city. Aircrew will accordingly make every effort to avoid overflying this area wherever possible.

Mr. Canavan: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the average weekly number of low-flying military aircraft using airspace in the Scottish Highlands.

Mr. Freeman: The information requested is not available, but the average weekly number of low-flying military aircraft movements using airspace in the Scottish Highlands in 1987 was 324.

West German Minister

88. **Mr. Wray:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he last met his West German counterpart; and what matters were discussed.

Mr. Younger: I last had formal discussions with my West German counterpart at the defence planning committee meeting in Brussels on 26 and 27 May. We discussed a number of matters of mutual interest.

Merchant Ships

94. **Mr. Wallace:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what recent discussions his Department has had with the General Council of British Shipping regarding the availability of merchant ships for defence purposes.

Mr. Ian Stewart: My Department has frequent discussions with the General Council of British Shipping on this subject.

European Fighter Aircraft

97. **Ms. Mowlam:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when a decsion will be made on the European fighter aircraft radar.

Mr. Sainsbury: I have nothing to add to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers) on 17 March, at column 626.

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many jobs will be created in the north-west as a result of the decision to take part in the development of the European fighter aircraft; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: As my right hon. Friend said in his statement on 25 April, at column 21, we estimate that the decision to embark on full development of the European fighter aircraft will give direct long-term employment to between 3,000 and 4,000 people in the United Kingdom. It is not possible to provide a breakdown of this estimate by region, but a significant proportion would be employed at British Aerospace, Warton.

Ethnic Monitoring

101. **Mr. Brazier:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he expects to publish the results of the first year's survey into applications by persons of ethnic origin to join the services.

Mr. Freeman: A provisional analysis covering those who applied to join the services in 1987-88 will be available in summary form towards the end of this calendar year.

RAF Stations (Noise Insulation)

102. **Dr. Twinn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many Royal Air Force stations are now covered by noise insulation grant schemes.

Mr. Freeman: Noise insulation grant schemes have so far been introduced at 11 Royal Air Force stations around the country. These are as follows:

RAF Upper Heyford
RAF Alconbury
RAF Honington
RAF Marham
RAF Leeming
RAF Cottesmore
RAF Coningsby
RAF Lossiemouth
RAF Kinloss
RAF Leuchars
RAF Stornoway

Chieftain Tank

108. **Mr. Kirkhope:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he has reached a decision concerning the replacement for the Chieftain tank; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: I have nothing to add to the reply I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Bridlington (Mr. Townend) on 12 January 1988, at column 200.

Westland

111. **Mr. Colvin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he last visited Westland plc; and what matters relating to defence procurement were discussed.

Mr. Sainsbury: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence visited Westland plc on 7 April 1987 for the EH101 helicopter roll-out ceremony. A range of issues concerning defence projects in which Westland is involved were discussed.

Removal Contracts

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what representations he has received concerning his Department's policy with regard to placing contracts for removals at its establishments; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: Since the introduction of the service contract scheme for furniture removal there have been a number of representations from companies which have either not been invited to tender for the work or who have felt that the scheme is aimed at the larger companies. It is not possible to invite every furniture removal company to tender because of the very large number involved but I am satisfied that those included gave a reasonable spread of firm by size and geographical location.

Any company can apply to tender provided they meet the financial and operational criteria for entry to the approved list. Contracts have been awarded to large and small companies on the basis of their ability to carry out the work and have not been restricted to members of the British Association of Removers.

Arms Register

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on his policy towards the establishment of an arms register.

Mr. Sainsbury: The Government have no plans to establish a national arms register.

HMS Hermes

Mr. Allason: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he will announce his decision on when HMS Hermes is to be replaced.

Mr. Sainsbury: HMS Hermes has already been replaced in her ASW and AAW carrier roles by an Invincible class aircraft carrier. These ships have a secondary amphibious support role, but we are also addressing the case for dedicated helicopter lift in support amphibious operations. At a presentation given to industry earlier this month, my Department outlined the possible requirement for an aviation support ship. Companies have been asked to express their interest in competing for this ship. I envisage issuing formal invitations to tender later this year.

Territorial Army Volunteer Reserve

Mr. John M. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence on what criteria his policy for the location of Territorial Army Volunteer Reserve barracks is based.

Mr. Freeman: The principal criteria for the location of Territorial Army centres are that they are well placed for the recruitment and retention of volunteers and they are therefore mainly based in urban areas close to the reservists' homes and places of work and are easily accessible by public transport. The Territorial Army centres must also meet the military requirements of permitting access by military vehicles and be large enough to be capable of providing indoor training, storage spaces, administrative accommodation and adequate parking and garaging.

INF Treaty

Mr. Stern: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the working of mutual inspection arrangements under the INF treaty.

Mr. Ian Stewart: Five types of inspection are permitted under the INF treaty. The first of these will be the baseline inspections to verify data exchanged under the treaty, and which will be undertaken during July and August this year. Thereafter there will be short notice (16 hours) inspections at INF related facilities. Twenty such inspections may be carried out annually by each of the parties to the treaty for three years, by which time all treaty limited items must be eleminated; 15 in each of the next five years and 10 in each of the five years thereafter. No more than half his allocation of short notice inspections may be carried out in any one country. As missiles are withdrawn so each party will be entitled to conduct elimination inspections at the designated facilities to ensure that treaty limited items are destroyed in accordance with agreed procedures. The fourth type of inspection will occur when an INF related facility is declared no longer to contain treaty limited items. The other party may then conduct a "close-out" inspection to be assured that all such items have indeed been withdrawn. Finally, each party is entitled to establish a perimeter and portal monitoring system to inspect containers entering and leaving one missile production facility on the other's territory.

Of these inspections, baseline, short notice and "close-out" inspections will take place in the United Kingdom at RAF Greenham Common and RAF Molesworth with the full knowledge, consent and co-operation of the Government. Inspection activity will be co-ordinated by the United States On Site Inspection Agency based in Washington. The United Kingdom will play a full part in the conduct of inspections at RAF Greenham Common and RAF Molesworth and will escort Soviet inspectors throughout their stay. National sovereignty will be observed and maintained at all times. Precise details of inspection arrangements may be found in the inspection protocol to the INF treaty; in the basing country agreement between the United Kingdom, other NATO basing countries and the United States; and in the exchange of notes between the United Kingdom and the Soviet Union, copies of which are in the Library.

Contracts

Mr. Greg Knight: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how he achieves value for money on non-competitive contracts.

Mr. Sainsbury: We seek to place work by competition wherever it is practical and sensible. Where work has to be placed without the benefit of competition we negotiate taut contract terms and conditions and make maximum use of incentive pricing under the government profit formula. We also encourage the greatest practicable line of competition for sub-contracts.

Irish Regiments

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many of the four Irish regiments in the Regular Army have served in Northern Ireland during the past 10 years.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The last so-called "Irish named" regiment to serve in Northern Ireland was the Queens Royal Irish Hussars, which deployed a squadron to Northern Ireland in 1982. The 5th Royal Inniskilling Dragoon Guards served in Northern Ireland in 1981. These have been the only deployments of formed units in the last 10 years. However, individual members of all four Irish named regiments have regularly served in Northern Ireland during the period.

Royal Ordnance plc (Agreement)

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) why he has not hitherto been prepared to implement the heads of agreement signed between his Department and British Aerospace in April 1987 concerning the establishment of an agreement with Royal Ordnance plc for the supply of explosives, propellants and related products;

(2) whether it remains his policy to invest £12 million in assisting Royal Ordnance plc with its productivity improvement programme, as envisaged in the heads of agreement for the supply of explosives, propellants and related products signed in April 1987.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on progress on negotiations between his Department and Royal Ordnance plc over an EP(REP) agreement to supply explosives and propellants.

Mr. Anthony Coombs: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he anticipates completing the explosives and propellants and related end product agreement with Royal Ordnance; and if he will make a statement on the progress of negotiations.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the position regarding the award to Royal Ordnance of an EP(REP) agreement.

Mr. Sainsbury: Discussions with the company are still continuing and I am not yet in a position to make a statement on their outcome.

Naval Damage (Compensation)

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are the arrangements for dealing with claims from fishermen for compensation for damage to their boats or equipment by United Kingdom naval vessels; and whether the letter from Miss T. A. Buckingham to Callum Freeborn of 25 May represented any change in policy or procedure on this matter.

Mr. Ian Stewart: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) on 20 May, at column 611. The cases referred to in the letter to which the hon. Member refers were dealt with in accordance with these procedures.

Nuclear Disarmament

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what contribution his Department is making to the achievement of multilateral naval nuclear disarmament.

Mr. Ian Stewart: My Department contributes to the formation of United Kingdom policies on the whole range of arms control issues. Among NATO's current priorities in arms control is a 50 per cent. reduction in United States and Soviet strategic nuclear arsenals in the negotiations on which submarine-launched ballistic missiles and submarine-launched cruise missiles are involved.

Ministerial Meetings

Mr. Adley: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence which of his counterparts in other countries he has met recently; and with whom he has discussed, as appropriate to his office, matters of national security.

Mr. Younger: I met ministerial colleagues at the recent defence planning committee meeting in Brussels. I have also recently met the Australian and Malaysian Defence Ministers and the new French Defence Minister.

Written Answers to Questions

Wednesday 29 June 1988

PRIME MINISTER

Interest Rates

Mr. Doran: To ask the Prime Minister what is the additional administrative cost to *(a)* the Treasury, and *(b)* other Government Departments of each half per cent. change in interest rates.

The Prime Minister: Little or none; and certainly too small to be identified within the administrative expenditure of Government Departments.

Daya Bay Nuclear Plant

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Prime Minister if she has received any recent representations in opposition to the Daya Bay nuclear plant being built with United Kingdom assistance.

The Prime Minister: No.

Nuclear-free Asia-Pacific

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Prime Minister if she has received any information from the Governor-General in Hong Kong over the outcome of the conference for a nuclear-free Asia-Pacific held in Hong Kong on 8-12 June.

The Prime Minister: No.

Scientific and Medical Research

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Prime Minister whether Her Majesty's Government propose to seek international co-operation in undertaking the scientific and medical research recommended in the second report of the Committee on Medical Aspects of Radiation in the Environment, COMARE; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: Ministers and officials have regular discussions with their counterparts in other governmental and international agencies. The EC radiation research programme in particular already supports relevant work in this field. The COMARE report has been drawn to the attention of relevant international organisations and its recommendations on research will be fed into future discussions of research needs and priorities.

Sir John Harvey Jones

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Prime Minister what approach Her Majesty's Government made to Sir John Harvey Jones about his possible chairmanship of the proposed Universities Funding Council; which Department made the approach; for what reasons Sir John was not appointed to the post; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science on 26 May, at column *238*, announced the appointment of Lord Chilver to be the first chairman of the Universities Funding Council. It is not the practice to comment further on public appointments of this kind.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Hong Kong

Dr. Marek: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he plans to increase the numbers of refugees accepted for settlement by the United Kingdom following the Chief Secretary of Hong Kong's statement on 15 June that Hong Kong is in greater need of resettlement places now than at any time in the last eight years.

Mr. Hurd: I have nothing to add to the reply given to the hon. Member on 26 April at column *86*.

Visas

Mr. Dicks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the criteria used to decide whether to permit foreign nationals needing a visa to enter the United Kingdom to arrive at a port of entry without one and subsequently to gain entry.

Mr. Hurd: Except where a standard waiver applies to transit passengers, the normal course would be to refuse admission to those requiring a valid visa and not possessing one. However, each case is considered on its merits, and such a passenger may be admitted if there are particularly compassionate or compelling circumstances.

Mr. Dicks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many foreign nationals needing visas to enter the United Kingdom have been permitted to arrive at a port of entry without one and have been granted entry to the United Kingdom during the past year; and if he will list their country of origin.

Mr. Hurd: No separate total is kept of such arrivals, and the information requested could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Pet Animals

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether the United Kingdom will sign the European convention for the protection of pet animals without any reservation on article 10 concerning surgical operations.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: This will be decided when our consultations are completed.

Immigration

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the average waiting time for interviews of sponsors living in the United Kingdom in relation to applications from relatives living in the Indian sub-continent after relatives have been interviewed abroad, for each of the offices that conduct such interviews.

Mr. Renton: I regret that the information requested is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Prisoner (Costs)

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what is the average weekly cost of keeping a male offender in *(a)* a dispersal prison, *(b)* a category B training prison, *(c)* a category C training prison, *(d)* an open adult prison, *(e)* a closed youth establishment, and *(f)* an open youth establishment;

(2) what is the average cost weekly cost of keeping a female offender in *(a)* a dispersal prison, *(b)* a category B training prison, *(c)* a category C training prison, *(d)* an open adult prison, *(e)* a closed youth establishment, and *(f)* an open youth establishment.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The average weekly costs are based on a financial year and in 1986-87, the latest year for which information is available, the average weekly costs were:

Establishment for males	*£*
Dispersal prisons	467
Category B training prisons	253
Category C training prisons	208
Open adult prisons	171
Closed youth establishments	278
Open youth establishments	332
All female establishments	343

The available information relating to the cost of keeping female prisoners does not distinguish between the different types of establishment.

Probation (Costs)

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what is the estimated annual cost of supervising an offender on probation;

(2) what is the estimated annual cost of a community service order supervising one offender.

Mr. John Patten: The information requested is published annually in "Probation Statistics, England and Wales" (table 12.3 of the latest issue, for 1986), copies of which are in the Library.

Magistrates' Courts (Staffing)

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of state for the Home Department if he will take steps to ensure that adequate levels of staffing are maintained in the magistrates court service.

Mr. John Patten: The numbers of court staff undergoing training to act as court clerks have been increased. As regards pay and conditions of service, I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to a question from the hon. Member for Wakefield (Mr. Hinchliffe) on 16 June at columns *194-95*.

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will give details of current court clerk vacancies within the magistrates court service.

Mr. John Patten: I understand that returns received from 95 of the 105 magistrates courts committees in England and Wales, in a survey conducted by the joint negotiating committee for magistrates courts staff, indicated that there were 76 vacancies for court clerks (including senior, principal and trainee court clerks) on 1 April 1988, the latest date for which information is available, as follows:

	Vacancies
Barking	2
Bedfordshire	2
Berkshire	3
Birmingham	1
Buckinghamshire	1
Cleveland	2
Coventry	1
Cumbria	1
Derbyshire	1
Dorset	1
East Sussex	1
Gloucestershire	1
Hampshire	1
Humberside	1
Isle of Wight	1
Kent	7
Kirklees	1
Lancashire	3
Leeds	1
Leicestershire	4
Lincolnshire	1
Liverpool	3
Merton	1
Newham	1
Norfolk	6
North Tyneside	1
North Yorkshire	1
Nottinghamshire	5
St. Helens	2
Sandwell	2
Sheffield	2
South Tyneside	1
Staffordshire	3
Stockport	2
Sunderland	1
West Sussex	4
Wigan	1
Wiltshire	1

In addition, I understand that the inner London magistrates courts service had 15 vacancies in comparable grades.

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list area by area the number of magistrates court days lost through staff shortages in the past 12 months.

Mr. John Patten: The information is not available centrally and could not be obtained without disproportionate cost.

Industrial Disputes (London)

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis as to the total costs of, and man-hours devoted to, the policing of major industrial disputes in London in the last three years; and what proportion of these costs has been recovered.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The News International dispute at Wapping was the only industrial dispute in the last three years which has required the maintenance of public order on a large scale.

I understand that the additional cost to the Metropolitan police of policing the dispute was about £5·75 million and involved over 1,280,000 police man-hours. None of the cost was recoverable.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

1992 Hot Line

Mr. Pike: To ask the Chancellor the Duchy of Lancaster what representations his Department has received regarding lack of response from his Department to phone calls to the 1992 hot line; what is the average time in responding to inquiries made; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maude: A number of callers have experienced delays in receiving a reply from the 1992 hot line. These, however, represent a tiny proportion of the total of over 50,000 calls since the hot line opened in March. the overwhelming proportion of callers receive a response within a few seconds.

Telephone Meters

Mr. Page: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster whether he will consider authorising the Director General of Telecommunications to designate standards for meters.

Mr. Butcher: My right hon. and noble Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, in exercise of his powers under section 24 of the Telecommunications Act 1984, has decided to authorise the Director General of Telecommunications to designate standards for meters for use within telecommunication systems.

This is a further extension of the Director General's powers in the area of standards designation and is in addition to his existing powers to designate standards for telecommunications apparatus.

Mr. Page: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what steps will be taken to reassure telephone users that the metering of calls is accurate.

Mr. Butcher: I can announce that I have received advice from the Director General of Telecommunications that I should appoint the British Approvals Board for Telecommunications (BABT) as an approval authority for the meters within the public telecommunication systems run by British Telecommunications plc or Mercury Communications Ltd.

My right hon. and noble Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry has considered this advice and is minded, subject to consultation with the public telecommunications operators concerned, to so appoint BABT under section 25 of the 1984 Telecommunications Act.

I welcome this proposed metering approval role for BABT and also the wider steps that the Director General of Telecommunications has in mind to safeguard users' interests in this area. These steps are covered in a parallel announcement by the Director General today, which I am sure will be received with interest by many consumers.

Barlow Clowes

Mr. Cran: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when he expects the report of the investigation into his Department's handling of matters relating to the Barlow Clowes Group to be completed and made available.

Mr. Maude *[pursuant to his reply, 23 June 1988, c. 647]:* Sir Godfray Le Quesne has assured me that he will report as soon as is consistent with the completion of a thoroughgoing inquiry. From what he has seen so far he confidently expects to report before Parliament reassembles in the autumn.

Subject to there being no legal impediment, either as to content or to timing, I would propose to publish the report as soon as practicable thereafter.

Radio Licence Fee (Clwyd)

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster why the radio licence fee of Clwyd fire brigade will increase from £25 per annum to £2,000 per annum in 1988-89, rising to a maximum of £5,000 per annum in 1991-92; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Butcher *[holding answer 23 June 1988]:* Until the recent increases, police and fire service requirements had been serviced by the regulatory authorities for nominal fees for more than 34 years. The radio investigation service devotes significant resources to preserving the integrity of radio communications for the emergency services. The increase in licence fees is designed to reduce the losses involved safeguarding the interests of these essential services. The level of future charges will depend on the type of service required and will take the views of users into account.

WALES

Teachers

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many new teachers in the primary and secondary sector he proposes to urge local education authorities to enrol to meet additional requirements; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: My right hon. Friend will expect local education authorities to staff their schools broadly within the framework of present planned resources. Firm estimates of demand arising from the new curriculum will depend on reports from the relevant subject working groups. There are likely to be additional demands in some subjects, but not necessarily an increase in numbers of teachers needed overall.

Foreign Languages

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what action he proposes to encourage the teaching of foreign languages in Wales; if he is satisfied with the current level; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer I gave the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile) on 24 June at columns *761-62*.

SCOTLAND

Motherwell Project

8. **Dr. Bray:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has for the expansion of the Motherwell project, in view of the present level of unemployment and the prospects for the Ravenscraig hot mill in 1989.

Mr. Lang: The number unemployed in Motherwell district has fallen by 25 per cent. since January 1987. My right hon. and learned Friend and I have nevertheless indicated to the Scottish Development Agency that we regard Lanarkshire as an area which continues to need its special attention, and I expect the agency to remain active there both through the Motherwell project and other initiatives.

Waiting List Initiative

19. **Mr. Hind:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the progress of his Department's National Health Service waiting list initiative.

20. **Mr. Jack:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the latest initiatives he has taken to reduce National Health Service hospital waiting lists in Scotland.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I am currently considering the allocation of the £3 million which I have set aside for the current year to reduce waiting lists and waiting times. Health boards have reacted enthusiastically to this initiative and over 180 projects have been submitted for assistance. I hope to make the first allocations to boards very shortly.

Livestock Farmers

21. **Sir Hector Monro:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what additional financial support he has given in the current year to livestock farmers.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Under current schemes £85·2 million has so far been paid this year to livestock farmers in Scotland. In addition, sheep producers will benefit this year from a £2·8 million back payment of sheep annual premium.

Rating Reform

22. **Mr. Kirkwood:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what discussions he has had with the Scottish Confederation of British Industry regarding the proposed new unified business rate.

Mr. Lang: My right hon. and learned Friend and I have discussed business rates reform with representatives of the CBI in Scotland on a number of occasions.

23. **Mr. Worthington:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland by what date he now anticipates that there will be in Scotland a business rate uniform with that in the rest of Great Britain.

Mr. Lang: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave him on 14 January at column *367*.

24. **Mrs. Ray Michie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the latest estimate of the number of students in Scotland who will qualify for the 80 per cent. community charge rebate.

Mr. Lang: The latest estimate of the number of students in Scotland who will qualify for the 80 per cent. reduction in community charge is approximately 96,000.

32. **Mr. Canavan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what recent communications he has had with poll tax registration officers on the progress of the poll tax registration process.

Mr. Lang: I refer the hon. Gentleman to my reply of 26 May at column *185*.

37. **Mr. Wallace:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he has yet made any assessment of the progress made in the compilation of community charge registers in Scotland.

Mr. Lang: I refer the hon. Gentleman to my reply of 25 May at column *307*.

Consultants (Discipline)

23. **Dr. Godman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has any plans to review the disciplinary powers available to health boards in relation to alleged clinical or other misconduct by consultants; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: A review of disciplinary procedures for senior hospital and community doctors and dentists was announced by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services on 12 March 1987.

UK Nirex Ltd.

26. **Mr. Salmond:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he next expects to meet Mr. John Baker of UK Nirex Ltd.; and what subjects he expects to discuss.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My right hon. and learned Friend met Mr. Baker on 14 June to discuss the progress UK Nirex Ltd. is making with its consultation exercise. He has no plans to meet him again in the near future.

Council House Sales

27. **Mr. Knox:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many council houses have been sold to sitting tenants in Scotland since May 1979.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The number of local authority houses reported to date as sold to sitting tenants between May 1979 and March 1988 is 83,600.

GPT, Kirkcaldy

28. **Dr. Moonie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what discussions he has had with the mangement of GPT concerning its operations in Kirkcaldy.

Mr. Lang: My right hon. and learned Friend has been keeping a close watch on developments at Kirkcaldy. I have met Mr. Richard Reynolds, GPT's managing director. In addition, the Scottish Development Agency is working with local management, helping to seek opportunities for alternative products or activities for the plant and its work force. My officials in the industry department are in close touch with the Scottish Development Agency.

Manufacturing Productivity

29. **Mr. Oppenheim:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what has been the increase in manufacturing productivity in Scotland between 1979 and the present.

Mr. Lang: Manufacturing productivity in Scotland increased by an average of 5·7 per cent. per annum between 1979 and 1987. This rate of growth was faster than that achieved by the United Kingdom, United States, West Germany, Japan, France, Canada and Italy.

Fish Farming

30. **Mr. Macdonald:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what recent representations he has received on fish farming development.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Representations have been received from the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities and other organisations about the procedures operated by the Crown Estate Commissioners in respect of marine fish farm developments. My right hon. and learned Friend is reviewing the operation of the consultation arrangements taking into account those representations.

In addition, a number of reports concerning the development of fish farming in Scotland have been received and are being considered.

NHS (Quality Control)

31. **Mr. McTaggart:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what steps he is taking to improve the quality of service to patients in the National Health Service in Scotland.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The Government have provided substantially more finance, capital investment and qualified staff for the Health Service in Scotland—all of which improve the quality of service. We have given priority to the services for those who have to stay in hospitals for long periods; and since an important element in quality is speedy treatment, we have made reduction in waiting times a priority. We shall also be publishing soon an important report on "Quality Assurance in Nursing" which will help health boards review their approach to quality issues in the nursing service.

Maternity and Neonatal Services, Grampian

33. **Mrs. Margaret Ewing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has now received the full submission from Grampian health board on the future of maternity and neonatal services in Grampian region.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: No.

Rate Income

34. **Mr. Douglas:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the proportion of local authority revenues in Scotland coming from commercial and business rates in 1988-89.

Mr. Lang: The estimated proportion of local authority revenues in Scotland met by commercial and business rates in 1988-89 is 29 per cent.

Electricity Industry (Privatisation)

35. **Mr. Millan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a further statement on his proposals for the privatisation of the electricity industry in Scotland.

Mr. Lang: I refer the right hon. Gentleman to the answer I gave earlier today to the hon. Member for Paisley, South (Mr. Buchan).

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what discussions he has had with, and what representations he has received from, major industrial users of electricity in Scotland in connection with his proposals for the future of the electricity industry in Scotland.

Mr. Lang: Representations from a range of organisations were received prior to the announcement of the Government's proposals on 2 March. The CBI (Scotland), the Scottish Council Development and Industry and the Chemical Industries Association have recently been invited to offer views on the regulatory aspects of our proposals.

Scottish Homes

36. **Mr. McAllion:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what further steps his Department has taken to establish Scottish Homes; and whether he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The process of preparing for the establishment of Scottish Homes is a continuous task for the Scottish Development Department, which involves a wide variety of preparatory activities. In addition, the Scottish Development Department has, with my agreement, appointed consultants to carry out two specialised commissions. These are to assist with the recruitment of a chief executive and to produce proposals in relation to the task of advising the board and chief executive of Scottish Homes on possible options for its organisational structure and on an implementation and development plan in relation to the action necessary to enable Scottish Homes to establish itself as fully operational.

Roads

38. **Mr. Maclennan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what recent discussions he has had on the quality of the road network in north Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The road network, and in particular the A9 trunk road, were discussed when my right hon. and learned Friend met Caithness chamber of commerce and Caithness district council last week.

Inshore Fishing

39. **Mr. Buchanan-Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he expects to complete his review of inshore fishing arrangements; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: At this stage, I cannot predict when the review will be completed. Comments on our recent consultation paper on the inshore fishing regime were requested by 3 June. A programme of consultation meetings at various locations around the coast is now under way. Thereafter time will be required for all concerned to consider and discuss the various new ideas which have been advanced. Our intention is to circulate a further consultation document setting out the Government's views on the best way forward.

Griffiths Report

40. **Mr. Tom Clarke:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received from *(a)*

voluntary organisations and *(b)* public bodies in respect of the Griffiths report and its relevance to Scottish social work activities.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Representations have been received so far from the Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations, the Independent Hospitals Association and Lothian regional council. Highland health board has indicated that it will be commenting on the report shortly.

Hospital Waiting Lists, Tayside

41. **Mr. Bill Walker:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what are the most recent figures of waiting lists for hospitals in Tayside.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Provisional figures show that on 30 September 1987, 5,851 people were awaiting in-patient treatment at NHS hospitals in Tayside.

Glasgow Royal Maternity Hospital

Mr. McTaggart: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what information he has on the number of non-resident patients admitted to the Glasgow royal maternity hospital in April, including who authorised any such admissions; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: This information is not available centrally.

Chronically Sick and Disabled People

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what steps he has taken to ensure *(a)* that all the relevant local authorities in Scotland are financially able to discharge in full their statutory duties under the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons (Scotland) Act, and *(b)* that their duties under the Act are being fully discharged by all local authorities.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I am satisfied that the terms of successive rate support grant settlements have been such as to enable local authorities to discharge their statutory duties. It is for individual authorities to ensure that they comply with obligations imposed by statute.

Prisoners (Escapes)

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many prisoners have escaped from Scottish prisons in the last 10 years for which information is available; and from which prisons they escaped.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information is set out in the table.

Number of prisoners who escaped

Prison	*1978*	*1979*	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*
Aberdeen	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Barlinnie	3	—	3	—	1	2	—	2	2	3	3
Cornton Vale	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—
Dumfries	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1
Dungavel	—	4	1	1	—	3	2	5	—	1	—
Edinburgh	—	—	—	3	—	3	1	2	1	2	1
Friarton	Young Offenders Institution					Detention Centre			—	2	—
Glenochil	Young Offenders Institution									—	2
Inverness	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—
Low Moss	1	1	3	—	3	5	4	13	—	—	—
Penninghame	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	1	1	2	—
Perth	—	3	2	1	3	—	1	2	—	4	1
Peterhead	—	—	—	—	5	—	—	1	—	—	—
Shotts	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	2
Total	4	8	9	5	12	14	9	26	5	14	10

An escape is defined as circumstances where any inmate, convicted or untried, leaves the precincts of an open or closed institution without authority, where this involves overcoming a physical security barrier, or breaking away from a close escort when outside the secure perimeter of a closed institution.

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many prisoners have escaped from police custody in the last 10 years for which information is available; and which police forces they escaped from.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I regret that this information is not available in the form requested. The table details the number of crimes of escape and rescue recorded by the police in Scotland by police force area. These figures include escaping from police custody or prison.

Crimes recorded by the police
Escape and rescue (including escaping from police custody or prison)

	Central	*Dumfries and Galloway*	*Fife*	*Grampian*	*Lothian and Borders*	*Northern*	*Strathclyde*	*Tayside*	*Scotland*
1978	14	0	7	13	2	27	249	35	347
1979	10	0	13	13	3	17	199	48	303
1980	22	1	8	15	15	22	209	73	365
1981	28	5	5	12	28	31	246	53	408
1982	20	11	11	21	29	26	334	42	494
1983	15	16	28	16	6	29	321	57	488
1984	34	6	13	35	85	31	385	54	643
1985	32	16	23	36	116	33	357	76	689

	Central	*Dumfries and Galloway*	*Fife*	*Grampian*	*Lothian and Borders*	*Northern*	*Strathclyde*	*Tayside*	*Scotland*
1986	27	12	16	36	105	35	295	50	576
1987	27	8	23	44	102	21	352	87	664

Legal Aid

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many applications for legal advice and assistance under the Scottish legal aid scheme have been granted in the last 10 years for which information is available.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information is as follows:

	Applications granted
1978-79	65,132
1979-80	81,546
1980-81	95,380
1981-82	111,469
1982-83	120,811
1983-84	131,173
1984-85	140,647
1985-86	154,748
1986-87	170,596
1987-88	[1]226,760

[1] Includes assistance by way of representation, which was introduced by the Legal Aid (Scotland) Act 1986.

Speed Limits

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many requests he has received from Fife regional council over the past five years for changing an existing speed limit; how many such requests have been granted; and how many have been refused.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The criteria for determining appropriate speed limits apply throughout Great Britain. They are set out in Scottish Development Department circular No. 18/80 and were issued after full consultation with various representative bodies, including the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities and the Association of Chief Police Officers (Scotland).

Four requests have been received from Fife regional council in the last five years. Two requests have been approved and two have been turned down. My right hon. and learned Friend has to be satisfied that the relevant criteria are fully met before he can grant approval for a change in speed limits.

Drug Squads

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many police forces in Scotland have drug squads; what is the establishment in each case; and in how many cases the squads are operating below establishment.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Specialist drug units operate in all eight police forces in Scotland. The complement of each drug unit is as follows:

	Complement
Central Scotland	2
Dumfries and Galloway	2
Fife	4
Grampian	9
Lothian and Borders	21
Northern	5
Strathclyde	34
Tayside	10
Total	87

None of these posts is currently vacant.

In addition, 21 officers attached to the Scottish crime squad are deployed in drug wings based in Glasgow and Edinburgh.

Schools (Staffing Review)

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give a date for the publication of the staffing review circular, in the light of the commitment in SE/40 that it would be published before the end of the current school year.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart) on 24 June at column *752*.

Maternity Services (Moray)

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many representations he has received from the people of Moray about the case for retaining local general practitioners' maternity units and for establishing a specialist obstetric unit in Elgin.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: My right hon. and learned Friend and I have received 98 representations from people in Moray about the future of maternity services provision there.

Radiation

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what steps have already been undertaken by his Department to implement the recommendations of the second report of the Committee on Medical Aspects of Radiation in the Environment, COMARE.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Recommendations 1, 2 and 4(d) of the second report relate specifically to Scotland: their implementation was covered in my reply of 8 June to my hon. Friend the Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker). United Kingdom Health Departments are collectively considering how to implement recommendations 3, 6, 7 and 8.

Peterhead Prison

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he intends to announce a decision on the future of Peterhead prison.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. Salmond) on 27 January at column *285*. My right hon. and learned Friend will announce a decision when he has completed his consideration of the complex factors involved.

Bathing Waters

Sir Hector Monro: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he will announce the publication date of the report on the quality of Scottish bathing waters mentioned in his written answer on 5 May, *Official Report*, column *536*.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The Scottish Development Department published today the report "Bathing Waters in Scotland, Results of Monitoring: 1986 and 1987."

I should emphasise that the report deals with the quality of the 23 waters in Scotland identified in terms of the EC bathing waters directive. It does not deal with the condition of beaches nor with the provision of facilities such as changing accommodation, toilets and catering.

The report describes the main provisions of the EC directive and the way in which the 23 Scottish waters were identified in 1987. It goes on to tabulate and discuss the results of monitoring by the river purification boards in the 1986 and 1987 bathing seasons.

In 1987, the first full season of monitoring, 19 of the 23 waters met the directives quality standards. In addition, the failure at Turnberry was the result of temporary circumstances and is being followed up by the river purification board; and further monitoring is required at Ayr to establish whether improvements to the sewerage system are necessary. There is no doubt, however, that the waters at Irvine and Girvan do not meet the directive's standards and that Strathclyde regional council will have to improve the sewerage systems in order to comply with the standards of the directive.

A success rate of over 80 per cent. in identified bathing waters is nevertheless encouraging. The general standard of Scottish coastal and estuarial waters is excellent, including those bathing waters which are not identified under the directive. We can look forward to the improvement of problem areas through further investment by industry, and by the regional councils which have plans for expenditure of £60 million on sewerage schemes over the next five years.

I wish to pay tribute to the work of the river purification boards. Their efforts have contributed greatly to the improvement of water quality generally over the years, and their independent status means that we have reliable information on bathing waters and the rest of the aquatic environment.

Bruntsfield Hospital

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what additional resources he made available to Lothian health board for the upgrading of the Bruntsfield hospital following his predecessor's decision in 1985 to keep the hospital open.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Special allocations to cover backlog maintenance of the National Health Service estate are made annually to health boards. It is for individual boards to decide, in the light of competing priorities, on which schemes the resources should be used.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Overseas Aid

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) what information he has on the per capital amount, in pounds sterling, spent on overseas aid by each member state of the EEC, the USA, Canada, Sweden, Norway and Japan, in the most recent financial year for which information is available;

(2) what information he has regarding the percentage of gross national product spent on overseas aid by each member state of the EEC, the USA, Canada, Sweden, Norway and Japan in the most recent financial year for which information is available.

Mr. Chris Patten: Comparative figures are available only on a calendar year basis and, in so far as member states of the European Community are concerned, in respect of the eight EC countries which belong to the OECD's development assistance committee (DAC). The information for 1987 is as follows:

Net official development assistance 1987

	[1]*Per capita* [2]*£ sterling*	*As a percentage of GNP*
Belgium	43	0·49
Canada	45	0·46
Denmark	102	0·88
France	73	0·75
Germany	44	0·39
Ireland	9	0·20
Italy	26	0·32
Japan	37	0·31
Netherlands	88	0·98
Norway	130	1·10
Sweden	97	0·85
United Kingdom	20	0·28
United States of America	22	0·20

[1] The population figures used are those for 1986, as given in the DAC 1987 Development Corporation Report.

[2] OECD figures are published in dollars and have been converted to sterling at the 1987 annual average exchange rate of $1 = £0·6102.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

European Awareness

Mr. Key: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what steps he is taking to increase European awareness in schools; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: Recognising the need for a real awareness of the European dimension in education, the Department is supporting a pilot project designed to encourage selected local education authorities to develop cohesive and comprehensive policies on this throughout their areas, in co-operation with surrounding authorities. The dissemination of the outcomes of the pilot will contribute towards the implementation of the resolution on this subject adopted by the EC Education Ministers' Council on 24 May. There will be scope, under our proposals for the national curriculum, for topics such as European awareness to be taught through the relevant foundation subjects, where appropriate, or among the non-foundation subjects.

Trade Union Training

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how much grant aid was given in the financial year 1987-88 to *(a)* the Trades Union Congress to cover trade union training and *(b)* non-Trades Union Congress affiliated unions to cover trade union training; and whether he will list those non-Trades Union Congress affiliated unions that have claimed grant aid in 1987-88.

Mr. Dunn: The position on grant aid for trades union education and training which took place in the financial year 1987-88 is as follows:

	£
a. Unions Affiliated to the Trades Union Congress	
i. grant paid	457,653·42
ii. claims under consideration	1,257,790·57
iii. balance of grant available and yet to be claimed	£33,556·01
Total	£1,749,000·00
b. Unions not affiliated to the TUC	
i. grant paid	38,439·71
ii. claims under consideration	61,016·82
Total	99,456·53

The following unions not affiliated to the TUC have claimed grant for education and training courses held during 1987-88:

Society of Radiographers
Association of National Health Service Officers
Sun Life Staff Association
Nationwide Building Society Staff Association
Halifax Building Society Staff Association
British Dental Association
Natwest Staff Association
Corporation of London Staff Association
Professional Association of Teachers
Association of Clinical Biochemists
Staffordshire Building Society Staff Association
Chartered Society of Physiotherapy
Anglia Building Society Staff Association
Royal College of Midwives
National Association of Head Teachers
Royal College of Nursing
National and Provincial Building Society Staff Association
Union of Democratic Mineworkers
British Medical Association

Teachers (Early Retirement)

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he has any evidence of dissatisfaction among *(a)* heads and *(b)* other teachers leading to early retirement or transfer to other careers.

Mrs. Rumbold: We have no evidence to suggest that dissatisfaction with their work is leading greater numbers of heads or other teachers to retire early from teaching or to take up other careers. The number of premature retirements each year has not varied substantially over the last five years. Evidence presented to the interim advisory committee on school teachers' pay and conditions by the local authorities conditions of service advisory board indicate that only a very small proportion of wastage in the teacher force related to teachers leaving to take up other employment—equivalent to about 0·4 per cent. of primary teachers and 1 per cent. of secondary teachers in the financial year 1985-86.

School Governors

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what further representations he has had on the expanded roles of school governors; what assessment he has made of the extent to which suitable people are likely to come forward as governors; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dunn: A number of letters received by my right hon. Friend have commented upon school governors' new roles and responsibilities. The Government believe that many people will be attracted by this expanded role; and, in order to ensure that potential governors are aware of the new opportunities, we are giving greater publicity to the functions of school governors and the means of becoming a governor.

ENERGY

Coal Dispute

Mr. Skinner: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what further representations he has received asking him to seek discussions with British Coal regarding the reinstatement of miners sacked during the 1984-85 coal strike; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I have nothing to add to the answer given by my right hon. Friend on 28 March 1988 column *293*.

Mining Industry (Coats and Jackets)

Mr. Skinner: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will now issue a direction to British Coal instructing it to maintain long-standing contracts with British cloth manufacturers for the production of coats and jackets used in the mining industry.

Mr. Michael Spicer: No. This is a matter for British Coal management.

Coal Imports

Mr. Skinner: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy from which countries Britain has imported coal in the last 12 months; how many tonnes have been imported from each respective country; and what information he has on the price per tonne from each country listed at the latest available date.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The latest information on imports of coal by country is as follows. For the data on price of coal per tonne I would refer the hon. Member to my answer of today's date.

1987

Country (of origin)	*Quantity thousand tonnes*
Australia	3,459
USA	2,890
Poland	1,083
Netherlands	664
Canada	362
Colombia	319
FR Germany	256
Belgium	192
South Africa	188

Country (of origin)	*Quantity thousand tonnes*
China	146
USSR	89
Others	131
Total	[1]9,781

[1] Rounded total.

Source: HM Customs and Excise.

Mr. Skinner: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will list information available to him on the price per tonne of coal for each country from which Britain has imported coal in 1984, 1985 and 1986 and at the latest available date.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The information requested is as follows:

Average value per tonne £

Country (of origin)	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*
Australia	45·41	46·30	39·00	33·28
USA	47·89	52·73	38·98	36·41
Poland	50·71	53·90	41·13	37·88
Netherlands	59·39	57·18	39·76	35·24
Canada	49·83	47·78	36·68	32·48
Colombia	—	36·05	37·31	37·53
FR Germany	91·73	97·77	101·25	100·13
Belgium	82·65	80·88	44·01	44·49
South Africa	62·35	54·29	38·28	36·60
China	113·08	106·29	75·83	74·83
USSR	98·09	89·81	39·37	22·90
Others countries	67·81	52·74	41·74	44·09

NB Average value of imports are on a cost insurance and freight basis.

Source: HM Customs and Excise.

NUM (Back Pay)

Mr. Skinner: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will now issue a direction to British Coal instructing it to make back payments to members of the National Union of Mineworkers from 1 November 1987; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: No. This is a matter for the management of British Coal.

Concessionary Coal

Mr. Skinner: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will now issue a direction to British Coal instructing it to seek amendments to the concessionary coal and smokless fuel agreements to provide benefit for mineworkers who, with at least 20 years' service, have been declared redundant and are not in full-time employment.

Mr. Michael Spicer: No. Concessionary fuel is a matter for British Coal.

Severn Barrage

Mr. Alan W. Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what studies are being undertaken or sponsored by his Department to investigate the likely changes in the event of a Severn barrage being constructed, in tidal regime, sediment deposition and area of intertidal silts exposed by the tide at Bridgwater bay and the upper Severn.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Studies on tidal regime, sediment deposition, and area of intertidal silts exposed by the tide, are currently being carried out by the Severn tidal power group as part of the £4·26 million Severn barrage study jointly funded by the Severn tidal power group, the Central Electricty Generating Board and my Department.

In addition, we are commissioning a computer modelling generic study of intertidal and flat areas with Hydraulics Research Ltd. at Wallingford.

Mr. Alan W. Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is the annual amount of electricity that would be generated by the most favoured tidal barrage scheme currently being proposed for the Severn estuary; and if he will express this as a percentage of the electricity demand forecast for England and Wales in *(a)* 1987 and *(b)* 2000.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The Severn tidal power group estimates that the most favoured barrage proposed for the Severn estuary on the line seaward of Cardiff to Weston-super-Mare would produce about 14·4 Terawatt hours per year, or 6 per cent. of current electricity demand for England and Wales. The percentage in the year 2000 will depend on the growth in demand.

Electricity Prices

Mr. Cran: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what studies have been undertaken by his Department as to the impact upon bulk users of electricity in the United Kingdom of any increase in electricity prices; whether he will take special account of the position of bulk users when considering representations about the level of any such increases; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Cecil Parkinson: I am fully aware of the impact of bulk users of increases in electricity prices. The contracted load schemes and the qualifying industrial consumers scheme operated by the electricity supply industry continue to provide significant reductions in the price of electricity to bulk users.

Dinorwig Pumped Storage Facility

Mr. Stern: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is the estimated replacement cost at current prices of the Dinorwig pumped storage facility.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I am advised by the Central Electricity Generating Board, that the estimated current replacement cost of the Dinorwig pumped storage station is £840 million in 1987-88 prices.

ENVIRONMENT

Departmental Facilities

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list those hon. and right hon. Members and Members of the House of Lords other than Government Ministers who are entitled to use his Department's secretarial facilities and stationery.

Mr. Ridley: These facilities are occasionally made available to Parliamentary Private Secretaries when doing work on behalf of departmental Ministers, and to my noble Friend, Lord Hesketh, who is a Whip for my Department. In addition, my noble Friend, Lord

Crickhowell, as chairman of the National Rivers Authority advisory committee, has his secretarial facilities and stationery provided by my Department.

Departmental Staff

Ms. Quin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give for each standard planning region of England *(a)* the number of employees of his Department, *(b)* the amount spent in wages and salaries and *(c)* the proportion of total expenditure in each region by his Department which is represented by personnel costs.

Mr. Ridley: The information is not readily available in the format requested. The latest numbers and approximate salary costs of employees in my Department (including the Property Services Agency) broken down by DOE(C) and PSA administrative regions are as follows:

	Number of staff as at 1 June 1988	*1988-89 forecast salaries expenditure*[1] *£ million*
DOE(CO) regions		
Northern	120	1·7
Yorkshire and Humberside	138	1·9
North West	263	3·6
East Midlands	102	1·4
West Midlands	124	1·7
Eastern	883	12·2
South West	826	11·4
London and South East	4,406	61·0
PSA regions		
North East	1,670	19·2
North West	1,177	12·8
Midlands	2,437	18·1
East	2,437	22·0
South East	2,584	30·5
South	1,737	20·4
South West	2,573	35·0
London	7,260	109·9

[1] For DOE(C) these figures are based on average Departmental Salary costs rather than a grade and geographical analysis.

The requested analysis of salaries compared with total Departmental expenditure in each region is not readily available.

District Audit Service

Mr. Tim Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has as to what proportion of local authority audits is undertaken by the district audit service and what proportion is contracted out to private firms of accountants.

Mr. Chope: In its annual report for 1987-88 the Audit Commission recorded that the district audit service carried out some 70 per cent. of local authority audit work and that the remaining 30 per cent. was carried out by private firms. I understand that these figures relate to the proportion by value of work done.

Homelessness

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give for each local authority area in England the total number of people *(a)* registered as homeless, and *(b)* in bed and breakfast accommodation.

Mrs. Roe: The number of households which authorities reported accepting as homeless in January to March and the numbers temporarily in bed and breakfast accommodation at the end of March, appear in table 7 of "Local authorities' action under the homelessness provisions of the 1985 Housing Act: England. Results for the first quarter of 1988 Supplementary Tables", which is available in the Library.

Rating Reform

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much, to whom and by which mechanisms he intends to allocate additional resources in this and the next financial year with regard to work preparatory to the introduction of the community charge.

Mr. Howard: The findings of the Price Waterhouse report indicate that authorities have been provided with sufficient resources for 1988-89. Charging authorities will be provided with resources for preparation costs in 1989-90 through the RSG settlement and capital allocations. Final announcements on the actual provision will follow the usual consultation with local authority associations on RSG and in the specification for capital allocations following the Chancellor's autumn statement.

Waste Tips (Explosions)

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish immediately the report prepared by Her Majesty's pollution inspectorate on waste tip gas explosion dangers; and if he will make a statement on the scale of danger of methane gas explosions and waste tips and the remedial measures he proposes to take.

Mr. Moynihan: Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution is analysing the replies from waste disposal authorities to its letter of December 1987 on landfill gas. It will report their conclusions to the Secretary of State in due course. It plans to issue advice in the autumn on the remedial action to be taken in cases where the disposal authority identifies a risk.

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what negotiations he intends to introduce to enforce a higher standard of safety of rubbish tips generating a build up of methane gas; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moynihan: The Control of Pollution Act 1974 places a duty on waste disposal authorities to license disposal facilities so that operations do not present a risk to public health. This enables waste disposal authorities to take whatever action is necessary to ensure the generation of landfill gas is fully controlled. However, further advice is being prepared as a matter of urgency to guide the disposal authorities in licensing the management of landfill gas. This will be published in the form of a waste management paper in the autumn.

Waste Disposal

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what conclusions the Government have reached following the public consultation exercise on waste disposal law amendment.

Mr. Ridley: My Department and the Welsh Office have announced today the Government's conclusions on the amendment of waste disposal law in the light of comments received on the public consultation paper issued on 15 September 1986. Copies of those comments whose authors agreed to publication are being placed in the Library of the House, together with copies of the 1986 consultation paper, a detailed statement of the two Departments' conclusions and a compliance cost assessment estimating the costs of these measures for industry.

The Government intend to enact all the main proposals set out in the 1986 consultation paper.

A statutory duty of care will be imposed on both producers and holders of waste. Guidance on the duty will be set out in a code of practice.

Carriers of waste will be obliged to register with a waste disposal authority, and there will be provision for the revocation or refusal of registration to persons with unspent convictions for relevant offences.

I will be able to make regulations empowering waste disposal authorities to refuse, revoke, suspend, or refuse the transfer of waste disposal licences to unfit persons. The regulations will be able to specify, as grounds for judging fitness, an applicant's previous unspent convictions, financial resources or technical competence (once a suitable certificate of competence has been introduced in the industry).

Goods vehicle operator licensing authorities will be enabled to take account of convictions of relevant pollution offences in operator licensing.

Waste disposal authorities will be empowered to impose conditions requiring pollution control measures at licensed waste disposal sites to continue as long as may be necessary to make each site safe. Licence holders will no longer be able to surrender a licence until they have satisfied the authority that their site is safe.

Other amendments will be made to the Control of Pollution Act 974 to enable prosecutions for the breach of any waste disposal licence conditions, to permit the licensing of mobile plant, to provide for appeals against delay by authorities in modifying licences and to empower me to direct the disposal of particular waste.

The Government will introduce nationally prescribed charges by waste disposal authorities for the issue of site licences and the registration of waste carriers. The burden of licensing and enforcement will therefore be lifted from local government which will recover its reasonable costs by these charges. There will be some increase in central Government work under new provisions for appeals to me. The main burden of these proposals will fall on industry, either directly through the additional care to be required or indirectly through charges. The estimate in the compliance cost assessment is that these might add some £22 million to industry's annual costs. I believe that this is a price worth paying for increasing the effectiveness of waste regulation.

These measures command a wide measure of support from industry and pollution control bodies. The Government will introduce legislation embodying them when parliamentary time permits.

Since the 1986 consultation exercise a number of further possible improvements to waste disposal law have been considered. My Department and the Welsh Office are preparing a short additional consultation paper on these new proposals which will be issued shortly.

Waste Disposal Authorities

Mr. Burt: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish the report of the working group considering the information needs of waste disposal authorities, the setting up of which was announced on 10 December 1985.

Mr. Moynihan: I have today placed copies of the report in the Library of the House.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Equal Opportunities

Mr. Janner: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many and what percentage of officers in each grade and overall in his Department are *(a)* women and *(b)* from ethnic minorities.

Mr. Brooke: The information is as follows:

Grade	*Women*		*Ethnic minorities*[1]	
	Number	*Percentage of staff in grade*	*Ethnic Number*[2]	*Percentage of staff in grade*
Grade 1	0	0	—	—
Grade 1a	1	25	—	—
Grade 2	0	0	—	—
Grade 3	2	10	—	—
Grade 4	0	0	—	—
Grade 5	9	13	—	—
Grade 6	0	0	—	—
Grade 7	39	15	*	0·3
SEO	24	11	*	0·9
SSO	1	20	*	20·0
SIO	1	33	—	—
Senior Librarian	1	100	—	—
HEO(D)	2	22	—	—
Senior Economic Assistant	1	7	—	—
Senior Assistant Statistician	4	100	—	—
HEO	93	35	10	3·4
Librarian	3	46	—	—
HSO	1	100	—	—
AT	3	33	—	—
Economic Assistant	1	7	—	—
EO	150	43	15	3·5
Assistant Librarian	6	100	—	—

Grade	Women Number	Women Percentage of staff in grade	Ethnic minorities[1] Ethnic Number[2]	Ethnic minorities[1] Percentage of staff in grade
AO	296	63	50	10·4
AA	133	78	20	10·0
SPS	15	100	—	—
PS	106	100	5	3·9
Typing Manager	10	100	*	10·0
Typist	108	98	15	11·8
Trainee Typist	2	100	—	—
Office Keeper	2	40	—	—
Senior Messenger	17	68	*	4·0
Messenger	37	65	5	5·3
Senior Paperkeeper	5	100	—	—
Paperkeeper	19	75	—	—
Security Officer	3	3	5	3·1
Reprographic Officer	12	100	—	—
Catering Manager	49	31	—	—
Industrial staff[3]	9	1	N/A	—
Total for Department	1,165	36	115	4·5[4]

[1] Information on ethnic origins was provided on a voluntary basis. The figures here are based on a response rate of 75 per cent.

[2] In accordance with the Department's Code of Practice governing the use of ethnic data, figures for ethnic minorities have been rounded to the nearest 5 to preserve confidentiality; an asterisk denotes less than 3. The percentages have been calculated on the basis of unrounded data.

[3] Equivalent information on ethnic origins of industrial staff is not available.

[4] Because of [3] above, the percentage quoted is based on the figure for non-industrial staff only.

Alcohol (Duties)

Mr. Gardiner: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what are the latest estimated receipts in 1987-88 and 1988-89 from duties and from value added tax on spirits, beer, wine, made-wine, cider and perry, respectively; and to what factors he attributes any differences.

Mr. Lilley: The information is as follows:

	1987-88 £ million[1] Excise Duties	1987-88 £ million[1] VAT	1987-88 £ million[1] Total Receipts	1988-89 £ million[2] Excise Duties	1988-89 £ million[2] VAT	1988-89 £ million[2] Total Receipts
Spirits	1,570	550	2,120	1,560	570	2,130
Beer	2,020	1,200	3,220	2,100	1,240	3,340
Wine	660	400	1,060	680	410	1,090
Made Wine	65	40	105	70	45	115
Cider and Perry	55	85	140	60	90	150
TOTALS	4,370	2,275	6,645	4,470	2,355	6,825

[1] Latest estimates.

[2] Forecasts.

CIVIL SERVICE

Sir Michael Quinlan

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop: To ask the Minister for the Civil Service why, in the "Civil Service Year Book" for 1988, the title of Sir Michael Quinlan KCB was given only as grade 1, in the Department of Employment; whether he was the senior civil servant in that Department; and whether Sir Michael had no other description or title.

Mr. Luce *[holding answer 27 June 1988]:* Revised grading classifications for senior posts were introduced in 1984. Permanent Secretary—the senior Civil Service post, became grade 1 and this title has been used in the "Civil Service Year Book". Sir Michael Quinlan was the senior civil servant in the Department of Employment. The titles "Permanent Secretary" and "Head of Department" are sometimes used in other documents.

Disabled People

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Minister for the Civil Service what recent steps have been taken to increase employment opportunities in Government Departments for people with disabilities; and if he will make a statement on current variations in the percentages of jobs filled by disabled people in Government Departments.

Mr. Luce *[holding answer 28 June 1988]:* Civil Service policies to increase employment opportunities for people with disabilities are set out in the code of practice published by the Cabinet Office in 1985. In the last 12 months, my Department has taken a number of steps to increase the effectiveness of these policies. These include:

(i) developing direct links with voluntary organisations involved in training and employment projects for people with disabilities; recent contacts include Outset, Lambeth Accord, and the Royal National Institute for the Deaf;

(ii) work to develop appropriate training to help Departmental Disabled Persons Officers to implement policies more effectively;

(iii) improving the quality of information about the posting and career development of staff with disabilities to allow statistical monitoring and the identification of barriers to equality;

(iv) publicising within the Civil Service the work of the Department of Employment Disablement Advisory Service and encouraging participation in the Sheltered Placement Scheme and the Remote Work Unit Scheme.

The most recent figures showing departmental variations in the employment of registered disabled staff were published in the January 1988 edition of "Independent". A copy is in the Library. the Civil Service is committed to increasing job opportunities for people with disabilities and all Departments are encouraged to increase their employment of registered disabled staff to at least 3 per cent. of the work force.

THE ARTS

Welsh Arts Council

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Minister for the Arts what were the total grants to the Welsh Arts Council for every year since 1978-79 up to and including that planned for 1988-89.

Mr. Luce: The information requested is as follows

	£
1978-79	4,004,200
1979-80	4,664,000
1980-81	5,147,000
1981-82	5,705,000
1982-83	6,809,350
1983-84	6,649,150
1984-85	7,222,620
1985-86	7,378,725
1986-87	7,901,500
1987-88	8,045,200
1988-89	8,683,000

The figures comprise grants from the Arts Council, the Crafts Council and the British Film Institute.

Items in Lieu of Tax

Mr. Faulds: To ask the Minister for the Arts when the Office of Arts and Libraries proposes to issue a press notice giving information laid before the House, in accordance with section 9(6) of the National Heritage Act 1980, specifying disposals and transfers of property accepted in lieu of capital transfer tax and inheritance tax carried out during the financial year 1987-88, and including particulars of the bodies or institutions to whom transfers were made and the amount of tax satisfied in each case.

Mr. Luce: The statement is being prepared and will be laid shortly. A press notice will be issued on the same day.

Books for the Blind

Mr. Atkinson: To ask the Minister for the Arts, pursuant to the answer to the hon. Member for Fulham (Mr. Carrington) of 9 May, *Official Report*, column *33*, whether the free basic public library service includes the provision of large print books for those with impaired sight and talking books for the blind.

Mr. Luce: Library authorities have discretion to provide talking books free and can make no charge for lending large print books. I have at present no plans to change either arrangement, but I shall, of course, take account of the responses to my library consultative document.

Library Charging Methods

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Minister for the Arts what studies have been undertaken by his Department concerning the use of library charging methods in New Zealand, the Federal Republic of Germany and the United States of America; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Luce: I have obtained information about the public library book rental subscription scheme run by some library authorities in New Zealand and the United States. Some West German library authorities charge for their normal book lending services, but I am not aware that any provide a premium book subscription scheme.

Works of Art (Sales)

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Minister for the Arts how many works of art from *(a)* the National gallery, and *(b)* other publicly owned galleries have been sold in the last year.

Mr. Luce: The National gallery is at present barred by its governing legislation from selling pictures from its collection. The other national art galleries for which my Department is directly responsible—the Tate gallery, the National Portrait gallery and the Wallace collection—are also prevented by statute or otherwise from selling any of the works of art in their collections.

The position for local authority museums and galleries varies according to their constitution. Information on sales from their collections is not held centrally.

Library Services

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Minister for the Arts what responses he has received to the Green Paper on library services from *(a)* local authorities, *(b)* professional organisations, and *(c)* individuals; and how many of those gave support to the proposals outlined in the Green Paper.

Mr. Luce: I have received about 850 responses so far to the library Green Paper, predominantly from individuals, but many from library authorities. I can, I understand, expect to receive comments before 30 June from all the major professional library organisations. The task of analysing and considering the responses will follow.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Kuwait

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, further to his answer to the hon. Member for Rugby and Kenilworth of 16 June, *Official Report,* column *220,* if he will list the subjects which have been, and are likely to be discussed by members of the United Kingdom and Kuwaiti Governments.

Mr. Mellor: It is not our practice to reveal the detail of communications between Governments. The House may be assured that they cover regional questions and matters pertinent to the relationship between the two countries.

Taiwan

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has received any representation from the Taiwanese Government seeking United Kingdom technical assistance in the safe relocation of its stored nuclear waste at Lanyu Island off the east coast of Taiwan.

Mr. Mellor: No.

Daya Bay Nuclear Plant

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has circulated to independent experts for peer review the report by the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority for the Government of Hong Kong on contingency planning for the Daya Bay pressurised water reactor nuclear power plant.

Mr. Eggar: The United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority's report on contingency planning was published in Hong Kong on 5 May. The Hong Kong Government are formulating their contingency plans on the basis of the report. They do not intend to circulate it to independent experts for review.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the current arrangement for financial and industrial partnership in the Daya Bay nuclear plant.

Mr. Eggar: The Daya Bay nuclear power station is a 75 per cent.-25 per cent. joint venture project between the Guangdong Nuclear Investment Company and the Hong Kong Nuclear Investment Company. The nuclear steam supply system for the power station will be supplied by Framatome of France while the turbines and generators will be supplied by General Electric Company of the United Kingdom. In addition, the General Electric Company, in a consortium with the Shangdong Electric Power Company, has received letters of intent for the civil works contracts associated with the conventional island.

Falkland Islands (Fisheries)

Sir John Biggs-Davison: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement about vessels arrested and other measures taken against contravention of the regulations governing fishing in the Falklands interim conservation and management zone.

Mr. Eggar: Vessels from the Republic of Korea were arrested on four occasions in April and May 1988 for fishing illegally in the Falkland Islands interim conservation and management zone and were fined a total of £260,000 by magistrates in Port Stanley. A Polish vessel received an administrative penalty of £1,000 for unlicensed transshipment of fish.

Sir John Biggs-Davison: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs which United Kingdom trawler operators are now engaged in Falkland Islands and South Georgia waters, respectively; what is the effect on employment in those territories and in the United Kingdom, respectively; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: The following United Kingdom trawler operators and licence holders are currently engaged in Falkland Island waters:

Berkeley Sound Shipping Company
Caley International Limited
Coalite
Fishing Explorer Limited
International Fisheries Investment Limited
Marr (Falklands) Limited
Seaboard Offshore
SPF Atlantic Fishery
Witte-Boyd Holdings

None is at present engaged in South Georgia waters.

There is negligible unemployment in the Falkland Islands. British companies are training islanders in fisheries-related skills. There is no indigenous population in South Georgia.

The Falklands fishery has created welcome job opportunities for British seamen and others involved in fisheries activity.

UN Security Council Resolution 453

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 8 June, *Official Report*, column *604*, what response has been received from the South African Government to pressure from Her Majesty's Government to agree to the implementation of United Nations Security Council resolution 453.

Mrs. Chalker: South Africa is well aware of our position. It is participating in discussions with the United States, Angola and Cuba on withdrawal of foreign troops from Angola and the implementation of UN Security Council resolution 453 for Namibian independence.

Diplomatic Service

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many serving staff of the diplomatic service in the administrative group were recruited from polytechnics; and what numbers were so recruited in each of the years 1985 to 1987, inclusive.

Mrs. Chalker: None.

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will provide a breakdown of the university degree in terms of subject held by serving staff of the diplomatic service in the administrative group.

Mrs. Chalker: The records are currently subject to a computer modernisation programme. According to present information, serving staff of the diplomatic service in the administrative group hold the following university degrees:

Subject	*Number*
Anthropology/Archaeology	7
Classics	81
English	56
Economics	44
French	100
Geography	16
German	61
History	192
International Relations	16
Law	38
Mathematics	4
Modern Languages	49
Natural Science	16
Sciences (General)	20
Oriental Languages	18
Philosophy	20
Politics, Philosophy Economics	32
Politics	23
Regional Studies	5
Russian	29
Social Science	9
Mechanical Science	2
Spanish	16
War	3
Unspecified	15

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, if he will provide a breakdown of the type of secondary school attended by serving staff of the diplomatic service in the administrative group.

Mrs. Chalker: This information can be supplied only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will provide a breakdown of the universities from which serving staff of the diplomatic service in the administrative group have been recruited indicating in each case the numbers recruited in each of the years 1985 to 1987, inclusive.

Mrs. Chalker: The records are currently subject to a computer modernisation programme. According to present information, serving staff of the diplomatic service in the administrative group have been recruited as follows:

University	*Total in Diplomatic Service*	*Recruited 1985*	*Recruited 1986*	*Recruited 1987*
Aberdeen	6	2	—	—
Aberystwyth	1	—	—	—
Australian	1	—	—	—
Bath	2	1	—	—
Belfast	2	—	—	—
Birmingham	6	—	—	1
Bristol	10	1	1	—
Bradford	1	—	—	1
Cambridge	222	6	4	7
Cardiff	2	—	—	—
Dundee	1	—	—	—
Durham	8	—	2	1
East Anglia	4	—	1	—
Edinburgh	13	1	—	1
Exeter	4	—	1	—
French	6	—	—	—
German	1	—	—	—
Glasgow	5	—	—	—
Keele	4	—	—	—
Leeds	10	—	—	1
Leicester	1	—	—	—
Liverpool	6	—	—	1
London	42	1	(LSE) 2	1
Manchester	7	—	—	—
Nottingham	3	—	—	—
Newcastle	3	1	—	—
Oxford	262	6	8	10
Reading	4	—	—	—
Royal Academy of Music	1	—	1	—
Sheffield	2	—	—	1
Southampton	2	1	—	—
St. Andrews	5	1	—	—
Surrey	2	—	1	—
Sussex	8	1	—	—
Swansea	1	—	—	—
Warwick	2	—	2	—
York	1	—	—	—
United States of America	27	—	—	—
Unspecified	8	—	—	—
No University degree	26	—	—	—

Iranian Nationals

Mr. Dicks: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions have taken place between Her Majesty's Government and representatives of the Church of England regarding the entry into the United Kingdom of Iranian nationals not possessing a valid entry visa; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: No discussions have taken place between Her Majesty's Government and the Church of England concerning the entry of any Iranian national not in possession of a valid entry visa.

Iran

Mr. Dicks: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the state of relations between the United Kingdom and Iran; whether any special consideration has been given to any member of those families connected with the Iranian Government with regard to entry to the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: I refer my hon. Friend to my reply of 28 June to a question from the hon. Member for Liverpool, West Derby (Mr. Wareing). All visa applications are considered on their merits and are measured against the requirements of the immigration law.

DEFENCE

Procurement

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his latest estimate of the growth in real terms of the defence procurement budget in 1988-89.

Mr. Sainsbury: Planned defence procurement expenditure in 1988-89 allows for a real increase of some 19 per cent. compared with the outturn for 1978-79, using a measure of inflation based on movements in the price of defence equipment.

HMS Abdiel

Mr. Allason: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will reconsider urgently the decision to pay off and scrap HMS Abdiel.

Mr. Sainsbury: No.

Nuclear Missiles

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans he has for the acquisition of a new air-launched nuclear missile.

Mr. Ian Stewart: Studies into a replacement for the United Kingdom's free-fall nuclear bomb are continuing. A number of options remain open to us. No procurement decisions have yet been taken, nor are any likely before the end of next year.

Army Exercise (Heathrow)

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the purpose and function of the British Army exercise on 9 April at Heathrow airport.

Mr. Ian Stewart: No such exercise took place.

United States Aircraft

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the nature and purpose of the planned deployment of United States air national guard A-7 aircraft to RAF Wittering in June 1988.

Mr. Ian Stewart: Twelve United States air force (USAF) A7 aircraft deployed to RAF Wittering during the period 4 to 8 June for exercise Coronet King. This formed part of an annual programme of short-term deployments designed to provide experience for USAF reservist aircrew of locations in which they might have to operate in time of war. During this deployment, the aircrew took part in exercises in the United Kingdom and in continental Europe.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) if he will make a statement on the nature and purpose of the planned deployment of United States-based United States Air Force A-10 aircraft to RAF Woodbridge in June 1988 in exercise Coronet Spear;

(2) if he will make a statement on the nature and purpose of the planned deployment of United States Air Force F-111 and EF-111 aircraft to Boscombe Down in July.

(3) if he will make a statement on the nature and purpose of the planned deployment of United States marine corps AV-8 aircraft to Edinburgh airport in September.

Mr. Ian Stewart: No such deployments are planned.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) if he will make a statement on the nature and purpose of the planned deployment of United States Air Force reserve C-130 aircraft to RAF Benson in September;

(2) if he will make a statement on the nature and purpose of the planned deployment of United States marine corps F-18 aircraft to Edinburgh airport in September.

Mr. Ian Stewart: Planning for these deployments is not yet complete. Appropriate notifications will be issued in due course.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) if he will make a statement on the nature and purpose of the planned deployment of United States Air Force B-52 aircraft to RAF Marham in June;

(2) what facilities have been established at RAF Marham for support of United States Air Force B-2 aircraft.

Mr. Ian Stewart: Further to the reply which I gave to the hon. Member on 13 June at columns *70-71*, the main purpose of the deployment of these aircraft, which was at the invitation of the Royal Navy and Royal Air Force, was to participate in an exercise involving conventional missile attack upon a target hulk. This took place successfully on 21 June. The aircraft made use of existing facilities.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when the withdrawal of six F-111F aircraft and supporting personnel from the 48 Tactical Fighter Wing, announced by the United States Air Force in February 1986 will take place.

Mr. Ian Stewart: This routine redeployment took place during the first half of 1987.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what is the cost to Her Majesty's Government of the movement of two United States Air Force A-10 squadrons from RAF Bentwaters to RAF Alconbury; and if any of this cost will be reimbursed;

(2) what is the cost to her Majesty's Government of the movement of the United States Air Force 527th Aggressor squadron from RAF Alconbury to RAF Bentwaters; and if any of this cost will be reimbursed.

Mr. Ian Stewart: No such costs are currently foreseen.

United States Forces

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the increase in a number of United States military personnel at Glen Douglas since 1981.

Mr. Ian Stewart: There has been no increase in the number of US military personnel at Glen Douglas since 1981. I regret that there was an error in the figures for 1979 to 1981 in the reply which I gave to the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. Salmond) on 3 December 1987 at columns *709-10*. There have been 18 US military personnel located at Glen Douglas during each year of the period 1979 to 1987, consisting of two personnel stationed there on a permanent basis (hence the figures for the years 1979 to 1981 in my earlier reply) and a further 16 personnel on tours of detached duty on a rotating basis.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the increase in number of United States military personnel at Machrihanish between 1981 and 1987.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The number of United States military personnel at RAF Machrihanish increased in 1981 with the arrival of a United States navy special warfare unit. Fluctuations in the numbers since then result from the composition of the unit which has a small permanent staff and additional personnel on detachment from the United States for periods of about six months.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if the 1973 United States-United Kingdom lines of communication arrangement provides for logistic support to be supplied to United States forces that are not acting in support of North Atlantic Treaty Organisation operations.

Mr. Ian Stewart: No.

HMS Conqueror

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will launch an inquiry into the circumstances surrounding the damage sustained by HMS Conqueror during exercises earlier this month.

Mr. Ian Stewart: No. The damage, which was superficial and readily repaired, occurred during controlled weapon trials and there are no unknown circumstances which require investigation.

US European Command

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) if he will list those facilities in the United Kingdom that are used in support of the United States European command;

(2) if he will list those facilities in the United Kingdom that are used in support of the United States central command.

Mr. Ian Stewart: I understand that all the bases and facilities in the United Kingdom which have been made available for use by United States forces (which were listed in the reply which I gave to the hon. Member on 20 June at columns *431-32*) are used in support of the United States European command and that none of them is used in support of the United States central command.

North Pole Rendezvous

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the estimated cost of the rendezvous of HMS Turbulent, HMS Superb and two RAF Nimrods at the north pole in May; if any of this cost will be reimbursed by Vickers Shipbuilding and Engineering Limited; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The surfacing at the north pole by Her Majesty's submarines Turbulent and Superb formed part of a programme of Royal Navy trials and experiments in the Arctic ocean. Similarly, recording of the event by RAF Nimrod aircraft was undertaken as part of a normal training sortie. Consequently, any additional costs associated with the rendezvous would have been small and cannot be identified accurately in isolation from the costs of the exercises as a whole. The rendezvous was not undertaken on behalf of Vickers Shipbuilding and Engineering Limited and no financial contribution is therefore being sought from that source.

Exercise Elder Forest

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what liquid was sprayed from the Hawker Hunter that undertook mock chemical attacks on air defence bases during Exercise Elder Forest; how much of this liquid was used during Exercise Elder Forest; if this liquid was non-toxic; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: During Exercise Elder Forest, a total of some 1,600 gallons of ordinary mains water was used to simulate chemical attacks upon a number of Royal Air Force stations in order to test the effectiveness of their defences against this threat.

Ulster Defence Regiment

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the strength of the Ulster Defence Regiment and the Regular Army for each year from 1980 to 1988.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The figures as at 31 March each year are as follows:

	UDR	*Regular Army*
1980	7,373	159,046
1981	7,479	165,990
1982	7,130	163,151
1983	7,135	159,069
1984	6,777	161,539
1985	6,449	162,399
1986	6,562	161,399
1987	6,506	159,686
1988	6,373	158,105

SOCIAL SERVICES

Housing Benefit

Mr. Baldry: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services, following the recent changes in housing benefit, how many households now receive housing benefit.

Mr. Portillo: Our latest estimate for 1988-89 is that 6,150,000 claimants will receive some form of housing benefit from local authorities. This figure excludes those who will receive only a transitional payment from the Department.

Earnings Taper

Mr. Squire: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many social security recipients experience a 100 per cent. taper on their earnings under the provisions of the Social Security Act 1986.

Mr. Scott: I refer my hon. Friend to my reply of 25 March at columns *244-46*, which stated that no full-time workers now experience combined income tax and benefit withdrawal rates of 100 per cent. or more as a result of benefit reductions when earnings rise. Similar figures for part-time workers reflecting the provisions of the Social Security Act 1986 are not yet available.

Clostridial Infection

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what assessment he has made of the danger to human health from clostridial infection as a result of handling imported United States domestic waste.

Mrs. Currie: The Department is having discussions with other Government Departments about this matter.

Departmental Civil Servants

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services, pursuant to the answer to the hon. Member for The Wrekin of 20 June, how many civil servants in his Department are employed at grade 3 and above; and what is the estimated cost of discovering whether they were educated at state or private schools.

Mr. Moore: There are about 60 civil servants at grade 3 and above employed in my Department. The estimated cost of providing the information requested would probably be in excess of £500.

Private Medical Insurance

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations he has received concerning the uptake of private medical insurance of people over the age of 65 years.

Mrs. Currie: So far this year we have received some 25 letters from right hon. and hon. Members and from the public and have pointed to the special low-cost schemes that are now available for people over 65. We welcome this development of health insurance designed to meet growing public demand.

Social Fund (Wales)

Mr. Anderson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services in how many offices of his Department in Wales crisis loans only are now being paid from the social fund.

Mr. Portillo: Details of social fund applications and payments for the month ending 31 May (the latest date for which information is available) are in the Library.

Chronically Sick and Disabled People

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what steps he has taken to ensure *(a)* that all local social services authorities in England are financially able to discharge in full their statutory duties under the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act, and *(b)* that their duties under the Act are being fully discharged by all local authorities.

Mr. Scott: Between 1978-79 and 1986-87, gross current expenditure by local authorities on personal social services overall increased by over 26 per cent. in real terms. Responsibility for implementing the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act lies with local authorities, and it is not practicable to identify separately the amount spent on services under that Act. The Department does, however, receive regular returns on certain services including those provided under the Act, in addition to information from the social services inspectorate and other sources.

Mobility Allowance

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many applications were received for mobility allowance in the last five years for which information is available in the United Kingdom, in Scotland, in Fife, and in north-east Fife; and how many of these were granted.

Mr. Scott: The available information is as follows. It relates to decisions given in Great Britain in the relevant years, not to the results of claims made in those years. I regret that these figures cannot be broken down to provide the further information requested. The information relating to Northern Ireland is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.

	Number of claims decided	*Decided in claimant's favour*
1983	126,300	86,300
1984	132,000	93,500
1985	157,250	101,890
1986	175,010	109,220
1987	177,250	110,460

Attendance Allowance

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many applications were received for attendance allowance in the last five years for which information is available in the United Kingdom, in Scotland, in Fife, and in north-east Fife; and how many of these were granted.

Mr. Scott: I regret that information is not available in the form requested. The information which is available is set out in the table.

Attendance allowance: Claims, decisions and awards in Great Britain and in Scotland 1983 to 1988

	Great Britain			*Scotland*		
Year	*Total claims*	*Total decisions*	*Total awards*	*Total claims*	*Total decisions*	*Total awards*
1983	233,480	217,307	159,491	20,370	20,977	11,417
1984	257,747	239,774	181,770	22,044	22,219	12,947
1985	277,017	255,125	184,599	23,908	23,813	14,188
1986	286,889	250,561	174,064	25,623	22,791	13,673
1987	319,661	300,581	208,693	29,348	27,835	17,940
1988[1]	90,213	79,234	52,125	8,655	8,771	5,554

[1] To 31 March 1988.

Hospital Closures

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list in the *Official Report* the procedures that have to be completed before a hospital can be closed; and whether there are any circumstances in which the procedures can be bypassed.

Mrs. Currie: The Community Health Councils Regulations 1985 (S.I. 1985, No. 304) require a district health authority to consult a community health council on proposals to make any substantial variation in the provision of the health service in the council's district. Where the CHC supports the proposed variation, then it may go ahead. If the CHC objects, the proposal is forwarded to the regional health authority which may refer it back to the DHA, or, where it supports the proposal, refer it to Ministers for a final decision. Provision is made for urgent proposals to be implemented without consultation.

Bloomsbury Health Authority

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will monitor the emergency plans being prepared by the general manager of the Bloomsbury health authority; if he will seek to ensure the preservation of facilities and services that have a national role; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: We have asked Bloomsbury health authority to inform us of any decisions which involve a substantial variation in the service it provides, including those facilities and services which have a nationally recognised role. It is, however, for the authority to decide in the first instance how to allocate resources within its budget.

Solvent Abuse

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he intends to make any funds directly available for research, education and other measures related to the combating of solvent abuse.

Mrs. Currie: The Government have funded a study under the direction of Professor Anderson of St. George's hospital medical school to investigate the effects of various teenagers' activities, including solvent misuse, on their health and educational performance. We are considering carefully the outcome of that study before deciding whether further research is necessary. We are also funding a data collection exercise to ascertain the numbers and causes of deaths from solvent misuse in the United Kingdom.

In addition to the range of measures which have been taken directly in line with the Government's policy of education, persuasion and the encouragement of local initiatives, the Government are currently funding drug education co-ordinators in every local education authority, whose work includes activities aimed at preventing solvent misuse.

Private Acute Sector

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what was the total number of *(a)* surgical patients other than termination of pregnancy, *(b)* elective patients, *(c)* emergency patients, and *(d)* urgent patients treated in the private acute sector in 1986-87;

(2) what was the number of deaths and discharges in the private acute sector in 1986-87;

(3) what was the total number of*(a)* operations, and *(b)* day cases treated in the private sector in 1986-87;

(4) what proportion of patients in the private acute sector were discharged to National Health Service hospitals in 1986-87;

(5) what was the total number of *(a)* obstetric and gynaecological patients other than termination of pregnancy, *(b)* elective obstetric and gynaecological patients other than termination of pregnancy, *(c)* emergency obstetric and gynaecological patients other than termination of pregnancy, and *(d)* urgent obstetric and gynaecological patients other than termination of pregnancy treated in the private acute sector in 1986-87;

(6) what was the average length of stay for non-day cases for patients treated in the private acute sector in 1986-87;

(7) what percentage of costs was attributable to administration in the private acute sector in 1986-87;

(8) what was the average bed occupancy in the private acute sector in 1986-87;

(9) what was the total number of *(a)* patients, *(b)* in-patients and *(c)* out-patients treated in the private acute sector in 1986-87;

(10) what was the total number of *(a)* medical patients, *(b)* elective medical patients, *(c)* emergency medical patients and *(d)* urgent medical patients treated in the private acute sector in 1986-87.

Mrs. Currie: I regret that this information is not collected centrally.

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many patients in the private acute sector were treated on contract to district health authorities in 1986-87.

Mrs. Currie: I assume the question relates to the number of private patients in National Health Service hospitals. I cannot give the hon. Member precisely the information requested. In 1986, the latest year for which information is held currently, a total of 63,893 private in-patient cases and 28,225 day cases were treated in National Health Service hospitals. There were also 253,499 private out-patient attendances and 2,067 regular day patient attendances.

Retail Prices Index (Error)

Mr. Sumberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Wells (Mr. Heathcoat-Amory) on 3 May, *Official Report,* column *422,* if the arrangements for local organisations to apply for funding from the NCVO, Charities Aid Foundation and the ITV Telethon Trust have been announced.

Mr. Scott: The National Council for Voluntary Organisations and the Charities Aid Foundation have issued press releases setting out their arrangements for funding local voluntary groups. As a result of the wide publicity given to the Telethon appeal, the Telethon Trust has already received some 10,000 applications from local organisations. Consequently, the trust will not be inviting further applications.

I have arranged for copies of the press releases and of the terms and conditions agreed with the three organisations to be placed in the Library.

Computer Work Stations

Mr. Warren: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many computer work stations there are in his Department; what is the ratio of work stations to civil servants; and how he expects this to change over the next five years.

Mr. Portillo *[holding answer 28 June]:* At present there are about 8,000 computer work stations in the Department which represents one for every 12 members of staff. This figure includes linked terminals and stand-alone microcomputers, but excludes word processors and portable text processors. Within the next five years the operational strategy for social security, linking all our local offices to mainframe computers, will be fully implemented. By 1993 the Department will, on current plans, have approximately 40,000 work stations—a ratio of one to every two staff.

Income

Mr. Squire: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish a table showing the index of average income for 1981, 1983 and 1985 broken down by *(a)* family status and *(b)* economic status in tables A1, 2, 3; C1, 2, 3; D1, 2, 3, and F1, 2, 3 in "Households Below Average Income: A Statistical Analysis."

Mr. Portillo *[holding answer 22 June]:* I regret that a reply can be provided only at disproportionate cost.

EMPLOYMENT

Murton Colliery (Accident)

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement concerning the accident at Murton colliery on Sunday 5 June which led to several injuries and one subsequent fatality.

Mr. Nicholls: I note with regret the death on 18 June 1988 of a 37-year-old fitter who had been employed by British Coal at Murton colliery. This man had been involved with three other workmen in an accident which occurred at 03.00 hours on Monday 6 June 1988. The accident happened when one wall of a steel chamber at the exit from a borehole collapsed. Three other men suffered injuries. Two of them are still absent from work, while one was fit enough to resume duty.

The accident was reported to the Health and Safety Executive's mines and quarries inspectorate who inspected the site on the same day. Discussions with British Coal management to prevent a recurrence are under way.

Waste Imports

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what assessment he has made of the impact on tourism in the north-west caused by the proposed importation of 7·5 million tons of United States domestic waste into the area for dumping.

Mr. Lee: None.

Planning Inquiries

Mr. Adley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what representations his Department has made in the last 12 months, at planning inquiries, regarding matters relevant to his Department's responsibilities.

Mr. Nicholls: The information requested is not held centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Hazardous Substances

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many additional health and safety inspectors will be needed to enforce the control of substances hazardous to health regulations.

Mr. Nicholls: No additional Health and Safety Executive inspectors will be needed specifically to enforce the proposed control of substances hazardous to health regulations as currently drafted. Enforcement of the regulations will be integrated into normal inspection arrangements.

Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many inspector hours were spent enforcing the reporting of injuries, diseases and dangerous occurrences regulations in the last 12 months.

Mr. Nicholls: Enforcement of the reporting of injuries, diseases and occurrences regulations is dealt with during inspections and investigations, and the time spent on drawing the attention of employers to the need to report such incidents is not recorded separately.

Manchester Airport

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many overseas visitors to the north of England arrived through Manchester airport in 1987; and if he will make a statement on his Department's plans to encourage the use of Manchester airport by tourists.

Mr. Lee: It is not possible to say how many overseas visitors to the north of England in 1987 landed at Manchester airport. But the international passenger survey indicates that around 328,000 overseas visitors landed at the airport during the year. The Government are committed to the airport's continued development and have so far approved investment of over £66 million.

Health and Safety

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what consultations he has had to review the penalties available for contraventions of health and safety legislation.

Mr. Nicholls: It has been suggested that the maximum fines available to magistrates courts for breaches of health and safety legislation are not high enough. I have sought the views of the Health and Safety Commission and am now considering with colleagues whether there is a case to be made for reviewing these penalties.

Factory Inspectors

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many accidents and incidents were investigated by factory inspectors employed by the Health and Safety Executive in each region, for each year from 1980 to 1987.

Mr. Nicholls *[holding answer 27 June 1988]:* The Health and Safety Executive cannot identify, without disproportionate cost, the number of accidents and incidents investigated by factory inspectors from 1 January 1980 to 31 March 1982.

The table shows the total number of accidents and incidents by Health and Safety Executive area investigated by factory inspectors for each 12-month period from 1 April 1982 to 31 March 1987.

HSE Area	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	*1984-85*	*1985-86*	*1986-87*	*1987-88*
01 South West	595	395	317	400	465	487
02 South	387	351	321	322	578	569
03 South East	431	363	321	353	482	465
05 London North	302	179	156	173	333	267
06 London South	391	260	230	267	333	395
07 East Anglia	426	246	225	300	444	396
08 Northern Home Counties	287	193	105	122	323	342
09 East Midlands	481	325	273	298	528	547
10 West Midlands	642	417	321	302	355	409
11 Wales	618	457	396	421	611	605
12 Marches	534	366	264	347	544	676
13 North Midlands	626	507	459	396	543	358
14 S. Yorks & Humberside	642	402	339	343	441	505
15 West & North Yorkshire	497	402	430	450	706	681
16 Greater Manchester	733	552	537	489	701	553
17 Merseyside	528	423	337	270	419	390
18 North West	453	344	386	326	523	586
19 North East	718	438	445	472	636	566
20 Scotland East	499	370	306	274	443	553
21 Scotland West	563	394	294	300	500	491

Notes:

The figures include investigations of accidents and dangerous occurrences.

The figures for 1987-88 also include investigations of gas incidents.

Workfare

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what consideration has been given to the introduction of a workfare scheme, along the lines of those introduced in the United States of America; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee *[pursuant to his reply, 28 June 1988]*: I regret that there was an error in the original reply. The number of unfilled vacancies in the economy should read 700,000. The full text of the reply is as follows:

> My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has no plans to introduce a workfare scheme. With the continuing fall in unemployment and some 700,000 unfilled job vacancies in the economy, the priority must be to ensure that unemployed people have the appropriate skills to take up the jobs which are available to them.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Rhizomania

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if there have been further discoveries of the incidence of rhizomania in East Anglia.

Mr. Donald Thompson: No.

Some infection by rhizomania virus has been discovered in the wrapped root balls of Acers imported from a nursery in the Netherlands. Scientific advice is that infection is unlikely to spread from this source. But immediate action is being taken by the Dutch authorities and ourselves to follow up this discovery.

Intervention Food

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will give details of European Economic Community intervention food held in *(a)* Dagenham, *(b)* Hornsey, *(c)* Leyton and Stratford, *(d)* Tottenham Hale and *(e)* Hackney.

Mr. Donald Thompson: At 31 May 1988 stocks were as follows:

Tonnes

	Beef	*Butter*	*Skimmed milk powder*	*Cereals*
Dagenham	7	87	0	0
Hornsey	38	0	0	0
Leyton and Stratford	0	147	0	0
Tottenham Hale	0	0	0	0
Hackney	167	634	0	0

Fruit and Vegetables (Imports)

Sir Richard Body: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will list the tariff and non-tariff measures applied by the EEC in respect of each type of fruit and vegetable imported into the United Kingdom from third countries.

Mr. Gummer: The wide range of EC tariff measures applying—customs duty, concessionary rates, and tariff quotas—are set out in the United Kingdom tariff, available in the Library of the House. The non-tariff measures in respect of each type of fruit and vegetable are as follows:

(a) *the reference price system:* a form of minimum import price, applied seasonally to 20 products: artichokes, aubergines, cabbage lettuce, courgettes, cucumbers, endives, tomatoes, apples, apricots, cherries, nectarines, peaches, pears, plums, table grapes, clementines, mandarins, lemons, satsumas and sweet oranges.

(b) *Import licences:* apples are currently subject to import licences which were introduced earlier this year as a means of surveillance. The European Commission has now extended these arrangements by introducing quantitative limits on supplies from third countries up to 31 August 1988. Certain third countries have exceeded their quantitative restrictions and import licences for supplies from these countries have been suspended.

(c) *Quality Standards:* products for which quality standards are laid down in Community legislation may be imported only if they conform to the quality standards for "Extra" class, class I or class II or to standards at least equivalent. The products are apples and pears, artichokes, apricots, asparagus, aubergines, beans, brussels sprouts, cabbages, carrots, cauliflowers, celery, chicory, cherries, citrus fruit, courgettes, cucumbers, garlic, table grapes, leeks, lettuces, curled-leaved endives, broad-leaved (Batavian) endives, onions, peaches, peas, plums, strawberries, spinach, sweet peppers and tomatoes.

Imported Animal Products

Mr. Butler: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what information he has on the number of outbreaks of swine fever in the United Kingdom considered to be due to meat products imported in the last year.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The outbreak of classical swine fever in Hampshire in August 1987 is believed to have been caused by imported infected material. However, the evidence for that was circumstantial and the actual origin of the infected material could not be proved.

Mr. Butler: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make it his policy to refuse a licence under the Animal Products and Poultry Products Order 1980 for the import of any United States wastes which contain animal products.

Mr. Donald Thompson: As my hon. Friend knows from replies to his earlier questions about imports of domestic waste from the United States, my officials are assessing possible animal disease risks. No import licence under the Immigration of Animal Products and Poultry Products Order 1980 will be granted unless we can be satisfied that there are adequate safeguards against such risks.

Mr. Butler: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what assessment he has made of the dangers to United Kingdom livestock of the transfrontier shipment of wastes containing animal residues infected with bovine spongiform encephalopathy.

Mr. Donald Thompson: We have received no reports of bovine spongiform encephalopathy having been recorded outside the British Isles.

Milk Industry

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what liaison takes place between his Department and the Dairy Trades Federation regarding restructuring of the milk industry.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The current rationalisation of butter manufacturing capacity is taking place under the terms of a scheme negotiated between the Dairy Trade Federation and the Milk Marketing Board. My Department has not been involved in the scheme other than to seek the necessary clearances from the European Commission to the arrangements proposed. Detailed implementation of the scheme is entirely a matter for the parties to the agreement and the dairy companies concerned.

Animal Medicines

Mr. Nicholas Baker: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will review the workings of the system of animal medicines record keeping and bring forward proposals for the reduction of paperwork on the part of livestock farmers.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Statutory animal medicines records were introduced in June this year after full consultation with representative organisations and with the support of the National Farmers Union. I therefore see no need for a review.

ADAS

Mr. Wall: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the number of staff currently employed by the Agricultural Development and Advisory Service.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Currently there are 3,920 professional, scientific, technical and industrial staff (excluding temporary staff) employed in the Agricultural Development and Advisory Service of my Department.

TRANSPORT

Severn Bridge

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will place in the Library copies of his Department's toll projections of November 1986 and January 1988 for the Severn bridge, as referred to in the report of the Comptroller and Auditor General (HC 388, 1987-88, page 18).

Mr. Peter Bottomey: Yes. I have today arranged for copies of these toll projections to be placed in the Library.

Motorways (Traffic Load)

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the average traffic load for all types of vehicle on each motorway in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Estimates of flow of traffic averaged across all sections of each motorway are as follows.

Motorway	*Average 24-hour flow for all motor vehicles (1987)*
M1	62,600
M10	40,200
M11	37,900
M18	24,400
M180	14,600
M181	8,100

Motorway	*Average 24-hour flow for all motor vehicles (1987)*
M2	34,200
M20	28,200
M23	48,200
M25	89,400
M26	27,200
M27	49,900
M271	28,600
M275	47,100
M3	49,700
M32	56,600
M4	53,000
M40	43,800
M41	41,800
M42	35,300
M45	7,900
M5	40,700
M50	14,300
M53	31,800
M54	21,000
M55	32,700
M56	48,600
M57	30,200
M58	18,900
M6	53,700
M602	36,000
M606	[1]
M61	47,300
M62	50,700
M621	38,000
M63	63,500
M65	22,800
M66	36,100
M67	19,900
M69	29,100
M73	42,000
M74	31,400
M8	44,100
M80	22,500
M85	14,400
M876	19,300
M898	16,500
M9	16,000
M90	20,000

[1] No information available.

London Underground (Fires)

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he will publish a list of reported fires in the London Underground between January and June showing *(a)* the date, *(b)* the line, *(c)* the duration of the fire, and *(d)* the cost of damage in each case.

Mr. David Mitchell: The table gives the details of the fires on London Underground Ltd. A fire is statutorily reportable only if it causes death or injury or if it necessitates suspension of the train service or closure of a station, signal box or other premises for more than 30 minutes if the affected part of the railway is below ground or 1 hour if it is above ground. The increase in reported fires in 1988 compared with previous years is not necessarily due to an increase in the number of fires but probably to a better appreciation of those which have to be reported following the revision to the reporting order at the beginning of 1987.

The cost of the damage is not reportable.

Reported fires on London Underground: January to June 1988

Date	*Location*	*Lines affected*	*Duration hours-minutes*
24 January	At Archway	Northern	—.30
27 January	Near South Wimbledon	Northern	1.34
3 February	Near Clapham Common	Northern	1.30
3 February	At Warren Street	Victoria, Northern	—.36
4 February	Near Hyde Park Corner	Piccadilly	—.30
11 February	At St. Pauls	Central	—.42
11 February	At Monument	District and Circle	—.46
12 February	Near Hampstead	Northern	—.30
16 February	Near Chancery Lane	Central	—.47
3 March	Near Mile End	Central, Metropolitan and District	—.50
10 April	Near Holborn	Central, Piccadilly	4.14
14 April	At Angel	Northern	1.—
14 April	At Hampstead	Northern	—.25
24 April	At Victoria	Victoria, District and Circle	—.31
5 May	Near Belsize Park	Northern	—.30
7 May	Train fire, Wood Green	Piccadilly	1.21
16 May	Train fire, Uxbridge	Metropolitan, Jubilee	1.22
17 May	Near Embankment	Northern, Bakerloo, District and Circle	3.04
24 May	Near Oxford Circus	Bakerloo, Central, Victoria	1.05
17 June	Camden Town	Northern	—.42
22 June	Kennington	Northern	1.25

Note: Written report of fires on 17 and 22 June still awaited.

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he will publish a list of all fires reported on the London Underground in each of the last five years showing *(a)* the date, *(b)* the line, *(c)* the duration, and *(d)* the cost of damage in each.

Mr. David Mitchell: The following table gives details of the fires on London Underground for each of the complete years from 1984 to 1987; the information for 1983 is not readily available. Before 1 January 1987 a fire was statutorily reportable only if it caused death or injury or if at a station or signal box it was regarded as serious or if it damaged a bridge or viaduct. After that date fires at stations, signal boxes or other premises became reportable if they caused suspension of the service or station for more than 30 minutes if the affected railway was below ground or more than 1 hour if it was above ground. The cost of the damage is not reportable.

Date	*Location*	*Lines Affected*	*Duration*	
			Hours	*Minutes*
1987				
16 May	At Chancery Lane	Central	—	30
12 June	At Green Park	Piccadilly Victoria Jubilee	1	25
25 June	Near Holland Park	Central	—	45
25 July	At Hampstead	Northern	—	—
30 July	At Bank	Central	2	37
10 September	At Heathrow Terminal 4	Piccadilly	2	17
20 September	At Clapham Common	Northern	—	40
3 November	At Notting Hill Gate	Central District and Circle	—	50
18 November	At Kings Cross	Piccadilly Northern Victoria Metropolitan and Circle	12	10
2 December	Near Old Street (Smoke in tunnel, no fire)	Northern	1	45

NORTHERN IRELAND

Departmental Staff

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many and what percentage of officers in each grade and overall in his Department are *(a)* women and *(b)* from ethnic minorities.

Mr. Stanley: The Northern Ireland Civil Service has some 11,500 female staff which represents 49·5 per cent. of its work force. Details of the grades held in January 1987 are set out on page 17 of the second report of the service's equal opportunities unit, a copy of which is in the Library. The service does not monitor the ethnic origins of its staff.

Of the 192 home Civil Service staff serving in the Northern Ireland Office in London and Belfast, 103 (54 per cent.) are women and 18 (9 per cent.) are from ethnic minority groups. In London, 56 per cent. of the NIO's staff are women and 13 per cent. come from ethnic minority groups.

All of our staff from ethnic minority groups are employed within the secretarial, junior administrative grades, or office support grades.

A breakdown of the 103 female staff by grade is as follows:

	Number
Grade 3	1
Grade 7	2
SEO	2
HEO	6
EO	10
AO	21
AA	10
SPS	9
PS	14
Typist	9
Typing manager	1
Support grade band 1	1
Support grade band 2	4
General household assistants	13

Another female grade 5 member of staff is currently on secondment to industry.

Equal Opportunities

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether he has appointed an equal opportunities officer.

Mr. Stanley: The Northern Ireland Civil Service has established an equal opportunities unit located within the Department of Finance and Personnel which is responsible for developing, formulating, co-ordinating and monitoring policy for the Northern Ireland Civil Service. The small home Civil Service part of the Northern Ireland Office has one equal opportunities officer who is at present a grade 7 officer (principal).

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether he has any plans to improve equality of opportunity for women and for people from ethnic minorities in all grades of his Department, in connection with employment, training and promotion, respectively.

Mr. Stanley: Details of the programme of action being implemented by the Northern Ireland Civil Service to improve equality of opportunity of its female staff are given in the first and second reports of its equal opportunities unit, copies of which are in the Library. The Northern Ireland Civil Service is fully committed to ensuring equality of opportunity for all its staff including those from ethnic minorities.

The Home Civil Service element of the Northern Ireland office is an equal opportunities employer. Personnel management is kept under review to ensure that equal opportunities policies are rigorously implemented.

National Health Service

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will give for Northern Ireland and for each of the area boards in Northern Ireland, actual current expenditure on hospital and community health services, giving figures for net spending, charges, total spending, the percentage increase, inflation in service, the percentage change in purchasing power, the percentage change in real terms, cash releasing cost improvements divided between real money and recurrent, the percentage increase in new cost improvements and the margin available for service development in a year; if he will give this information for the years 1982-83, 1983-84, 1984-85, 1985-86 and 1986-87; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Needham: The information is as follows:

Northern Ireland

	1982-83	*1983-84*	*1984-83*	*1985-86*	*1986-87*
HCHS current net spending (£)	337,251,533	361,873,714	384,016,995	399,051,835	420,813,975
Charges (£)	4,058,453	4,971,510	5,364,915	5,668,174	5,927,110
Total spending (£)	341,309,986	366,845,224	389,381,910	404,720,009	426,741,085
Increase (per cent.)	—	7·5	6·1	3·9	5·4
Inflation etc. in service (per cent.)	—	5·1	5·8	5·2	6·9
Change in purchasing power (per cent.)	—	2·3	0·3	−1·2	−1·4
Change in real terms (per cent.)	—	2·7	1·6	−1·9	−2·2

As the health and personal social services operate an integrated service in Northern Ireland it is not possible or meaningful to disaggregate cash releasing cost improvement schemes for the hospital and community health services from the total figures, which for the years in question were:

	(£'000)	*(£'000)*	*(£'000)*
New	2,438	3,336	6,800
Recurrent	2,438	5,661	12,000

In addition, in line with the regional strategy covering the years 1987-1992, the boards are aiming for non cash releasing cost improvements of approximately 1 per cent. per annum, which will be used to maintain and develop essential services. I have every confidence in their ability to achieve these targets.

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many mentally handicapped children are receiving long-term care in mental handicap hospitals in each area board and for Northern Ireland as a whole; and what planning guidelines are laid down by his Department for boards to follow in this area.

Mr. Needham: The numbers of mentally handicapped children in the 0 to 15 age band who had been in mental handicap hospitals for more than three months at 31 December 1986 were as follows:

Board	*Number of Children*
Eastern	12
Southern	9
Western	7
Northern	—
Northern Ireland Total	28

The corresponding figure for Northern Ireland at 31 December 1981 was 73.

The regional strategy for the health and personal social services in the years 1987 to 1992 states that the Department wishes boards to place particular emphasis on reducing to the absolute minimum the number of mentally handicapped children in hospital and identifies the development of community services as an essential component of the policy.

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will state the number of National Health Service community mental handicap nursing staff, whole-time equivalent in Northern Ireland and each area board at 30 September in each of the years 1983, 1984, 1985, 1986 and the percentage change 1983-86; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Needham: The number of community mental handicap nursing staff employed by the health and social services boards (whole-time equivalent) at 30 September each year was as follows:

Board	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*
Eastern	4	5	5	7
Southern	4	4	4	6
Western	5	5	5	5
Northern	—	—	—	—
Northern Ireland	13	14	14	18

The percentage increase over the period was 38 per cent. In 1987 the number of nurses increased to 22—69 per cent. above the figure for 1983.

The mental handicap nursing service is one element of the developing pattern of community services for the mentally handicapped which also includes day care provision in adult training centres and day centres, residential care, respite care and fostering schemes. The regional strategy for the health and personal social services plans for a reduction by 1992 of 20 per cent. in the number of mentally handicapped people in hospital which will necessitate improvements in community provision, including the development of community mental handicap teams, and a continuing increase in the numbers of community mental handicap nurses.

Irish Language

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the nature of contact between the Department of Education and Irish language groups in Northern Ireland.

Dr. Mawhinney: The Department has had contact with Irish language groups about specific issues, for example, the procedure for seeking registration of independent schools, and other matters related to the establishment, operation and resourcing of Irish medium schools.

I met a deputation from Glor na nGael on 4 November 1986 and I have met other groups whose interests have included the position accorded to the Irish language. I am prepared to respond to any genuine group which wishes to make representations on behalf of the Irish language.

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) if he will list the number of curriculum development projects in the Irish language in *(a)* the primary school sector, *(b)* the post-primary sector and *(c)* the third-level education since 1965;

(2) if he will list the names of curriculum development projects and schools involved with the Irish language in *(a)* the primary school sector, *(b)* the post-primary sector and *(c)* the third-level education since 1965.

Dr. Mawhinney: Like other languages, Irish is included in the major Northern Ireland curriculum initiatives such as primary guidelines, 11 to 16, GCSE cluster groups. In 1985, the inspectorate published a good practice document on modern language teaching which covered the teaching of Irish. As part of a comprehensive in-service programme, teachers of Irish have contributed towards the production of teaching and learning materials and with the development of graded objectives for the subject.

Six new courses with an Irish language component have recently been introduced at university level.

Note 1: The good practice document is called "Good Practice in Education Paper No. 2: Modern Language Teaching", published by the Department of Education for Northern Ireland 1985.

Note 2: The recent higher education courses incorporating an Irish language component are:

At the Queen's University of Belfast:
An Honours Degree in Irish Studies
Two postgraduate courses in Irish Studies

At the University of Ulster:
A Diploma in Higher Education
An Honours Degree
A Postgraduate Diploma

Roads (Capital Expenditure)

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will indicate the amount of capital allocated to each roads division within the Department of the Environment in Northern Ireland in each of the following years: 1980-81, 1981-82, 1982-83, 1983-84, 1985-86 and 1986-87.

Mr. Needham: The information is as follows:

£000

	Roads service headquarters	*Ballymena division*	*Belfast division*	*Coleraine division*	*Craigavon division*	*Downpatrick division*	*Omagh division*
1980-81	4,046	4,767	14,235	4,924	3,646	5,069	3,182
1981-82	6,706	3,587	11,107	4,276	2,883	3,923	2,352
1982-83	8,873	3,079	11,241	2,916	1,967	2,323	1,638
1983-84	6,449	3,217	7,816	3,793	4,006	2,758	2,404
1984-85	2,842	2,482	6,050	3,343	3,356	2,356	2,847
1985-86	718	2,699	5,257	2,724	3,748	3,290	3,976
1986-87	569	2,577	6,913	3,743	4,100	3,614	3,134

Note:

The table is an aggregation of capital expenditure each year on roads and bridges, road lighting, parking, depots and stores and plant and vehicles. Headquarters expenditure was mainly in respect of specific major highway schemes, which were handled centrally rather than divisionally.

Cross-city Rail Link

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he can indicate a possible start date for the cross-city rail project to connect the existing Larne/Belfast line.

Mr. Needham: Present plans envisage a start to construction during 1991, subject to the completion of statutory procedures and availability of finance.

Young Offenders

Mr. Patrick Thompson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he intends to introduce legislation for Northern Ireland concerning the treatment of young offenders.

Mr. Stanley: My Department has published today a proposal for a draft Order in Council entitled the Treatment of Offenders (Northern Ireland) Order 1988. The draft order includes a number of measures which would provide alternatives to custodial sentences and give the courts greater flexibility particularly when dealing with young offenders.

Among the more important changes is the reduction in the maximum period of detention in a training school from three years to two years and a reduction in the age for community service orders from 17 to 16. The proposal also contains a provision to enable courts in Northern Ireland to attach what are commonly known as "fourth conditions" to probation orders. Under this proposal a court may require attendance at a day centre or an activity centre for up to a maximum of 60 days. This provision and the reduction in the age for community service orders will bring Northern Ireland into line with existing law in England and Wales.

It is also proposed to amend the law relating to young offenders centres to enable a number of young person currently being held on remand in a prison or who have been given prison sentences of up to four years to be accommodated in a young offenders centre which is better suited to their needs.

Other proposals affecting the sentencing powers of courts in Northern Ireland include an amendment to the Children and Young Persons Act (NI) 1958 to enable a juvenile court both to try and to sentence a young person who pleads not guilty in a case where he is charged jointly with an adult who pleads guilty; a number of amendments to the law relating to attendance centre orders; the abolition of recorded sentences and their replacement with enhanced powers to suspend sentences; and an amendment to the existing power to defer sentences.

The order would also increase a number of penalties to bring Northern Ireland into line with Great Britain. It is proposed to increase the maximum penalty for cruelty to children from two years to 10 years; for indecent assault on a female from two years to 10 years; and for attempted rape and assault with intent to commit rape from seven years to life imprisonment.

Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what steps he has taken to ensure that all of the duties imposed by the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons (Northern Ireland) Act are being fully met throughout Northern Ireland; and if he will make a statement on progress in implementing the Act.

Mr. Needham: I am satisfied that bodies which have functions under the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons (Northern Ireland) Act 1978 are aware of their responsibilities under the Act. Both Government Departments and local bodies continually monitor services and make improvements having regard to the availability of resources and competing priorities.

Police Authority

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what arrangements have been made for the appointment of a new Police Authority in Northern Ireland following the expiry of the term of office of the previous authority on 28 June; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Tom King: I have today appointed a new Police Authority for Northern Ireland for a term of three years. In making the appointments I have, as required by statute, consulted those organisations and persons who are representative of the community in Northern Ireland. I welcome the positive response that was generally made. As a result, the membership widely represents the whole community, and includes representatives from the district councils, universities, agriculture and commerce.

The Police Authority has an important role in securing and maintaining an adequate and efficient police service. I look forward to the continuation of the excellent working relationships which had been established with the outgoing authority, some of whose members are being reappointed.

Security Forces (Offences)

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will give details for 1986 and 1987 of the number of members of the Ulster Defence Regiment, the Royal Ulster Constabulary, their respective reserves, and the British Army, who have been charged with offences and who have been convicted of offences, giving details of custodial sentences imposed, and separately for charges and convictions concerning murder, attempted murder, membership of illegal organisations, conspiracy to cause explosions, withholding information concerning terrorist activities, possession of explosives, possession of explosives with intent to cause bodily harm, possession of firearms, possession of firearms with intent to cause bodily harm and other offences classified as scheduled offences.

Mr. Stanley *[holding answer 17 June 1988]:* The information available is as follows:

Numbers convicted of a schedule offence for which a custodial sentence was imposed:

Year	*RUC*	*RUC Reserve*	*UDR*	*Regular Army*	*Total*
1986	1	1	11	8	21
1987	1	0	10	3	14
Total	2	1	21	11	35

Outcome of cases

Year	*Service*	*Offence*	*Custodial sentence*
1986	RUC	1. Discharge of firearm in a public place	6 months suspended for 2 years on each charge
		2. Possession of ammunition	
	RUC Reserve	Illegal possession of firearm and ammunition	2 years suspended for 2 years
	Regular Army	1. Murder	1. Life
		2. Possession of firearms and ammunition with intent	2. 14 years
	Regular Army (4 persons)	Wounding with intent	6 months suspended for 2 years (for all)
	Regular Army	1. 2 counts of assault on police	1. 3 months on each count
		2. Assault occasioning actual bodily harm	2. 6 months
	Regular Army	1. Assault on police	1. 3 months
		2. Assault occasioning actual bodily harm	2. 6 months
	Regular Army	Burglary (4 counts)	6 months suspended for 2 years. (4 counts)
	UDR	1. Murder	1. Life
		2. Possession of firearms and ammunition with intent	2. 14 years
		3. Collecting information	3. 3 years
		4. Robbery	4. 10 years
	UDR (4 persons)	1. Murder	1. Life (for all)
		2. Possession of firearms with intent to endanger life	2. 14 years (for all except one)
	UDR	1. Kidnapping	1. 5 years
		2. Blackmail	2. 5 years
		3. Unlawful imprisonment	3. 5 years
		4. Possession of firearms with intent	4. 5 years
	UDR	1. Burglary	1. 4 years
		2. Malicious wounding	2. 4 years
		3. Malicious wounding	3. 4 years
		4. Possession of firearms with intent to endanger life	4. 12 months suspended for 3 years

Year	Service	Offence	Custodial sentence
	UDR	1. Manufacturing hoax device 2. Wasting police time 3. Unlawful discharge of firearms 4. Wasting police time	1. 1 month 2. 1 month 3. 1 month 4. 2 months
	UDR	Possession of an offensive weapon Assault	3 months suspended 2 months suspended for 2 years
	UDR	Criminal damage	1 month suspended for 2 years
1987	RUC	1. Attempted murder 2. Possession of ammunition	1. 14 years 2. 10 years concurrent
	Regular Army	Manslaughter	2 years suspended for 2 years
	Regular Army	1. Criminal damage (4 counts) 2. Grievous bodily harm 3. Various driving offences	1. 3 months (each count) 2. 3 months 3. 3 months; 3 months; 1 month; 1 month. Sentences to run concurrently
	Regular Army	Assault occasioning actual bodily harm	2 months
	UDR	Murder 1. Manslaughter 2. Theft 3. Hijacking 4. Robbery 5. Burglary	Life 12 years
	UDR	1. Possession of firearms 2. Membership of proscribed organisation	2 years suspended for 3 years
	UDR	1. Theft/Burglary 2. Membership of proscribed organisation 3. Possession of firearms	4 years recorded sentence
	UDR	1. Burglary 2. Membership of proscribed organisation 3. Possession of firearms	4 years
	UDR	1. Theft/Burglary 2. Membership of a proscribed organisation	4 years
	UDR	Possession of firearms	4 years recorded sentence
	UDR	Assault occasioning actual bodily harm	2 years suspended for 2 years
		1. Commom assault	1. 3 months suspended for 2 years
		2. Criminal damage	2. 3 months suspended for 2 years
		3. Criminal damage	3. 3 months suspended for 2 years
	UDR	Theft/Burglary	4 months

Privatisation

Sir John Biggs-Davison: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland which district councils have put which services out to private contract; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 27 June 1988]*: The information sought is not held centrally. However, I am aware that many of the 26 district councils in Northern Ireland do not employ professional staff or direct labour forces; capital works and building repairs are therefore usually contracted out.

Written Answers to Questions

Thursday 30 June 1988

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Land Registry

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Attorney-General whether he will take steps to reduce the time taken by Her Majesty's land registry, Gloucester, to process applications for the registration of freeholds, assuming no requisitions.

The Attorney-General: In order to meet the unprecedented volume of applications received for registration in the administrative areas served by the Gloucester district land registry, and to reduce the time taken to deal with applications, a new office has been opened in Coventry. A total of 244 staff are now in post there, the majority being under training. Under the provisions of the Land Registration (District Registries) (No. 2) Order 1987, the office will be constituted as a district registry in October 1988 and will take over responsibility from the Gloucester office for registration in the west midlands.

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Attorney-General what is the average time taken, assuming no requisitions, for the Land Registry to deal with applications for the registration of a freehold; and how this period has varied in each of the last three years.

The Attorney-General: The average completion times for first registration applications (freeholds and leaseholds) at the end of each of the last three financial years were:

	Days
31 March 1986	73
31 March 1987	110
31 March 1988	156

No figures are kept at the Land Registry to distinguish between the completion times on applications requiring requisitions and those not requiring requisitions.

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Attorney-General what, by grade, is the current establishment at Her Majesty's land registry, Gloucester; how this has varied in each of the last three years; and how many officers have been in place against establishment in each of the past three years.

The Attorney-General: The tables provide details of the establishment and staff in post at the Gloucester district land registry as at 1 June in each of the last three years.

	1 June 1986	*1 June 1987*	*1 June 1988*
Establishment	743	747	[1]590
Staff in post			
Permanent	692	676	706
Casual	30	53	30
Total	722	729	736

[1] Plus 328 posts at the new Coventry office.

The information classified by grades is not immediately available. I will reply as soon as possible.

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Attorney-General what, in each of the past three years, has been the annual cost, by financial heading, of running Her Majesty's land registry, Gloucester; and what in each year has been the annual profit or loss.

The Attorney-General: Since not all the Land Registry's costs are allocated to its local offices, profit and loss figures are available only for the registry as a whole. The following is a summary of spending on certain items for which costs were allocated to the Gloucester district land registry since 1985. The figures for 1987-88 are provisional:

	1985-86	*1986-87*	*1987-88*
Manpower	5,118,376	5,853,529	6,543,485
Building Capital	72,791	294,869	94,243
Non-computer machinery capital	32,084	106,236	136,153
Stationery	101,104	75,120	157,694
Postages & Telecoms	286,197	290,454	333,672
Machinery Current	39,152	52,898	67,350
Accommodation	350,842	522,190	616,937
Ordnance Survey	326,199	287,205	423,065
Others	125,329	103,942	120,992
Total	6,452,074	7,586,443	8,493,591

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Attorney-General what, in each of the past three years, has been the number of applications by group dealt with by Her Majesty's land registry, Gloucester; what is the current charge for handling applications by group; and how this has varied in each of the past three years.

The Attorney-General: The number of applications, in each of the relevant work categories, completed at the Gloucester district land registry in the last three years is:

Year	*First registrations*	*Dispositionary first leases and transfers of part*	*Dealings*
1985-86	24,649	25,300	169,438
1986-87	25,364	21,336	181,135
1987-88	23,134	25,721	218,753

Year	*Official search of whole*	*Official search of part*	*Official search of the index map*	*Office copy of the register*	*Enquiries*
1985-86	182,330	31,618	163,819	63,279	53,113
1986-87	227,396	31,021	202,899	76,543	63,137
1987-88	245,345	33,606	223,394	91,101	75,369

Most land registry fees are related to the value of the property concerned. The following table shows how fees have changed at a typical value (£45,000) during the last three years:

	First Registrations £	*Transfers of Part* £	*Dealings with the whole* £
1985 Fee Order (June 1985-September 1986)	66	105	105
1986 Fee Order (October 1986-May 1988)	60	70	70
1988 Fee Order (from June 1988)	60	60	60

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Attorney-General what is the current level of fee charged by the Land Registry to get speedier consideration of applications for the registration of a freehold; when this was last increased; what is the average time taken to deal with applications on this basis, assuming no requisitions; and how this has varied in each year since this facility was introduced.

The Attorney-General: An application for special expedition currently attracts a fee of not less than £25. That fee was increased from not less than £20 from 1 June 1988 by the Land Registration Fee Order 1988 (S.I. 1988 No. 665). No information is available on average times taken to deal with expedited applications and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Security Services

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Attorney-General if Her Majesty's Government propose to initiate actions for account of profits against *(a)* Mr. Anthony Cavendish and *(b)* the hon. Member for Torbay (Mr. Allason) in respect of material about the security services written by them and published without Her Majesty's Government's full agreement; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: No.

Condicot Henge, Gloucestershire

Mr. Faulds: To ask the Attorney-General when he expects the Crown Prosecution Service to reach a decision on possible prosecutions under sections 2 and 28 of the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979 against those responsible for the damage sustained by the creation of a new driveway, the construction of a new car park and the erection of new fencing within Condicot Henge in Gloucestershire.

The Attorney-General: Prosecutions of two defendants in respect of the allegation to which the hon. Gentleman refers were instituted on 26 April 1988.

Gazumping

Mr. Heddle: To ask the Attorney-General whether he has any plans to carry out an investigation into the practice of gazumping.

The Attorney-General: No. The topic of gazumping has already been fully considered by the Law Commission. Furthermore, the conveyancing standing committee at the Law Commission has recently identified changes in conveyancing practice which could help reduce the incidence of the practice.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

University (Teesside)

Mr. Frank Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information he has on plans to locate a university, or to convert any existing institution to university status, in Teesside; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: I am aware of no such plans.

Research

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on Government support for basic science research in general and Her Majesty's Government's priorities for basic research.

Mr. Jackson: In 1988-89 over £1·4 billion is being provided from public funds for the support of basic and strategic research through the research councils and block grants to United Kingdom universities. Responsibility for determining scientific priorities rests with the research councils and the universities.

My right hon. Friend intends to make a considered statement later this year on the Government's policy objectives for the science base and the steps we will be taking to achieve them, taking account of the Advisory Board for the Research Councils' discussion document "A Strategy for the Science Base" and of comments on that received from the higher education and scientific communities.

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what are Her Majesty's Government's priorities for medical-clinical research *(a)* at present, *(b)* in the medium term and *(c)* in the long term.

Mr. Jackson: The Medical Research Council, which receives an annual grant-in-aid (currently £147 million), has the responsibility for determining priorities for medical research funded from the science budget. Its views on priorities in the short, medium and long terms are included in its annual reports and corporate plan, copies of which are in the Library.

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many researchers involved in clinical-medical research projects in teaching hospitals have left to work abroad.

Mr. Jackson: This information is not available centrally.

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he last discussed the state of clinical-medical research and its priorities with representatives of *(a)* the British Medical Association, *(b)* the Medical Research Council, *(c)* the medical academic staff committee and *(d)* representatives of universities of England and Wales.

Mr. Jackson: I met representatives of the British Medical Association, including the chairman of the medical academic staff committee, on 26 January when we discussed various matters concerning education and research in university medical schools.

I attended a meeting of the Medical Research Council on 5 February. My right hon. Friend and I will be meeting representatives of the council again on 4 July to hear more about the research they are currently funding.

My right hon. Friend and I have had several meetings with the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals of United Kingdom universities during the last year. Matters indirectly concerning medical research have been referred to on a number of occasions.

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information he has as to how many clinical-medical research projects, in progress or started in 1975, and financed either with public or private funds, or with both, in teaching hospitals were *(a)* completed, *(b)* extended, *(c)* suspended or totally abandoned for lack of staff or funds and *(d)* how many of those totally or partially funded with public money had to be extended, completed or extended with the help of private funding.

Mr. Jackson: This information is not available centrally.

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what has been, for each year since 1975, the number of medical and other staff working full or part time on clinical and medical research projects in teaching hospitals in *(a)* Scotland, *(b)* Northern Ireland, *(c)* England and *(d)* Wales.

Mr. Jackson: This information is not centrally available.

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) what has been, for each year since 1975, the amount of public funding given for clinical-medical research in the teaching hospitals of *(a)* London, *(b)* Birmingham, *(c)* Bristol, *(d)* Liverpool, *(e)* Manchester, *(f)* Cardiff, *(g)* Edinburgh and *(h)* Glasgow;

(2) what information he has as to how many clinical-medical research projects funded with *(a)* public, *(b)* private or *(c)* public and private funds have been carried out for each year since 1975 on (i) cancer, (ii) heart diseases, (iii) nutritional diseases, (iv) mental illnesses, (v) alcoholism, (vi) skin diseases, (vii) myalgic encephalomyelitis, (viii) liver diseases, (ix) kidney diseases, (x) anaemia, (xi) sexually transmitted diseases, (xii) AIDS, (xiii) anti-viral drugs and vaccines, (xiv) cot deaths, (xv) gene therapy, (xvi) application of molecular and cell biology in the study of human diseases, (xvii) drug addiction and behavioural diseases, (xviii) diarrhoea, (xix) diabetes, (xx) blindness and eye diseases and (xxi) other disease; where in the United Kingdom they are or were carried out; who is or was the researcher in charge and how many medical and other staff are or were involved; what is or was the total funding; and how many of these research projects have been *(a)* completed, *(b)* expanded or *(c)* suspended or totally abandoned due to lack of funds or staff.

Mr. Jackson: The Medical Research Council is the main agency through which the Government fund medical research in the United Kingdom. Current and previous editions of the MRC's handbook and annual reports—copies of which are in the Library—list the various research projects which the council has supported in each year since 1975 and include tables of the MRC's expenditure in university medical schools. Compiling the other information on the thousands of MRC projects concerned would be disproportionately costly.

Comparable lists of research projects funded—in whole or part—from universities' general funds, by the National Health Service, or by charities and other private sources are not available centrally.

Grant-maintained Schools

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he expects to issue guidance on grant-maintained status for schools under the provisions of chapter IV of the Education Reform Bill.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: Draft guidance is being issued today. Its purpose is to inform discussion of this topic during the remaining stages of the Bill's passage through Parliament; to guide local education authorities, the governing bodies of schools, and others in any preparatory work they wish to undertake; and to give all concerned an early opportunity to comment. The draft covers all the provisions in chapter IV of the Bill save the provision in respect of postal ballots of parents, which in particular is subject to further consideration by Parliament, and on which guidance will be issued later.

Comments on the draft guidance are invited by 21 September 1988. Copies have been placed in the Libraries of both Houses and in the Vote Office.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Murder

Mr. Jopling: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many cases there have been of a person convicted of murder having previously been similarly convicted since 1965.

Mr. John Patten: Four persons convicted of murder in England and Wales had previously been similarly convicted since 1965: of these, one committed the second murder in prison and two others committed the second murder before conviction for the first.

Drunken Violence

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will seek to extend the Licensed Premises (Exclusion of Certain Persons) Act 1980 to prevent persons convicted for committing acts of criminal damage or violence whilst under the influence of alcohol from consuming or obtaining liquor from all licensed premises.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: No. We do not believe that this would be practicable.

AWP Machines

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will permit an increase of the stakes and prices of AWP machines installed in public houses in line with those in licensed clubs.

Mr. John Patten: No. Primary legislation would be required to set different limits for AWP machines installed in public houses from those applying to machines elsewhere where the public have access.

Multiple Lotteries

Mr. Hanley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has any plans to introduce legislation to permit multiple lotteries held by reference to a single event, including major national sporting occasions.

Mr. John Patten: We are considering the position in the light of recent developments.

Fresh Start

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what efficiency gains he estimates have been achieved by the implementation of the Fresh Start proposals to date.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: It is estimated that an efficiency gain of about 12 per cent. was achieved by the beginning of 1988. Work is in hand to update this figure now that all establishments but one have implemented Fresh Start.

Police Officers (Identification)

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department in what circumstances police officers on duty wear official issue uniform clothing which obscures or conceals identifying numbers.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: It is the policy of the Department and the Association of Chief Police Officers that means of personal identification should be worn by uniformed officers whenever they are on duty.

Police Time

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will introduce legislation to abolish the offence of wasting police time; what representations to this effect he has received from the Police Complaints Authority; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: No. We have received no such representations from the Police Complaints Authority. My right hon. Friend is, however, considering a recommendation from the authority, contained in its triennial review, published in May this year (HC 466), that it should be empowered to dispense with the investigation of complaints which are vexatious, oppressive or an abuse of the system and cause needless and costly work for the police and itself.

Secure Prison Development

Mr. Jack: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether his Department has any plans for the development of a secure prison alongside the site of Kirkham open prison; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Yes. The Department hopes to use Home Office-owned land alongside Kirkham open prison for a secure category B training prison with a population of about 600 inmates. Following exploratory discussions with Fylde district council, preliminary proposals for the site have been submitted in writing. These informal consultations have taken place under the established procedures for Crown developments. The Department recognises that further discussion will be required in order to develop its proposals to the point of submission of a formal notice of proposed development, which it hopes to be able to do by the autumn of this year.

Mr. Jack: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will list in the *Official Report* the sites for all future secure prison developments, the numbers of prisoners to be accommodated, the category of prisoners to be accommodated and the acreage on each site available for further development;

(2) if he will list in the *Official Report* those areas of land adjoining existing secure prisons which are suitable for expanding those institutions; and how many additional prisoners can be accommodated on these sites.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The prison building programme includes 26 new prisons in the following locations. Eight of these prisons have been constructed. A number of sites remain to be decided; the Home Office is looking for further possible sites in case the programme should be expanded.

Prison	*Category of prison*	*Number of prisoners*
Wayland	C	484
Stocken	YCC	300
Thorn Cross	YCC	300
Full Sutton	B	444
Littlehey	C	484
Mount	C	484
Swaleside	B	504
Garth	B	512
Brinsford	B	448
Woolwich	B	850
Whitemoor	B	522
Bullingdon	B	612
Swaleside II	B	610
Lindholme II	B	610
Milton Keynes	B	544
Lancaster Farms	YCC	360
Prison 3[1]	?	600
Prison 4[1]	?	600
Prison 5[1]	?	600
Doncaster	B	720
Ashford	B	600
Rochdale	B	600
Prison 6[1]	?	600
Wrexham	C	600
Banstead	B	600
Buckley Hall[1]	YCC	300

[1] Site yet to be decided.

A number of existing prisons and of these new sites have adjoining land. The prison building programme includes several schemes to expand the capacity of existing prisons by redevelopment or expansion on to adjoining land. Of the new prisons listed in the table, Lindholme II and Swaleside II are being built on Home Office land next to existing prisons. But it is not always possible to obtain planning clearance for such schemes; land must be retained for agricultural production, and for landscaping purposes, to screen existing or future buildings; and some land is poorly located to meet the Department's strategic needs.

BBC Board of Governors

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what account is taken in recommending persons for appointment to the British Broadcasting Corporation's board of governors of any previous employment they may have had with Her Majesty's Government; how the criteria were applied in the case of Miss Daphne Park; what was the nature of her previous employment by, or on behalf of, Her Majesty's Government; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hurd: The criteria that are used in determining appointments to the BBC board of governors, and other broadcasting appointments, are those of personal distinction, experience and ability. Miss Daphne Park's career in the diplomatic service is a matter of public record.

Risley Remand Centre

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he will publish the report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Prisons on his inspection of her Majesty's remand centre, Risley; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hurd: The report by Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Prisons, His Honour Judge Stephen Tumim, on his inspection of Risley remand centre in February, is published today with a statement setting out the action being taken in response. Copies have been placed in the Library.

The chief inspector draws attention to three major areas of concern. First, certain parts of the establishment were in a poor physical state both with respect to structure and maintenance and cleanliness. Immediate steps have been taken to improve cleanliness and housekeeping, and a major programme of refurbishment costing £2·5 million has been put in hand for completion by the autumn of 1989. This will greatly improve the inmate accommodation and sanitation. In the longer term major redevelopment for completion by the mid-1990s will provide modern accommodation with integral sanitation.

Secondly, revised instructions on suicide prevention (circular instruction 3/1987) issued in January 1987 have not been implemented at Risley. This was a grave omission. Although the prison service cannot guarantee to prevent suicides, every suicide is a matter of profound regret and management and staff of establishments must do all they can to identify those at risk and seek to prevent suicide by supervision, care and involvement of the inmate in personal relationships. The directions in the circular instruction are now being given high priority at Risley, as at other prison service establishments.

Thirdly, although the chief inspector comments favourably on much good work by staff, on their efforts to give prisoners time out of cells and the use that is made of association, education and physical education facilities, he found that inmates were confined to their cells for far too long. Lack of management and staff continuity on wings detracted from staff-inmate relations. The former youth custody centre at Hindley has taken over Risley's remand role for males under 21, retaining its facilities for work, education, physical education and other training, modified to fit shorter periods of detention. The Fresh Start management structure and staffing systems introduced at Risley since the inspection provide the foundation for improvements in regime. Early plans will be developed for extending the facilities and opportunities for education and other useful occupation.

These measures will ensure an immediate and a continuing improvement in conditions at Risley.

Alcohol Sales

Mr. Adley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will take steps to review the law relating to the sale of alcohol in supermarkets; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Following the report of the working group on young people and alcohol, chaired by Baroness Masham, provisions were included in the Licensing Act 1988 to strengthen the licensing law. These included measures to control further the sale of alcohol to young people and in particular to require sales in off-licensed premises by staff under the age of 18 to be effectively supervised. We are not persuaded that a further review of licensing controls on supermarkets is required at present.

Sexual Offences Act 1985

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he is satisfied with the working of the Sexual Offences Act 1985; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: We are reviewing the working of the Act.

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many persons have been arrested in Liverpool under the Sexual Offences Act 1985 to the latest date;

(2) how many offenders have been arrested in England and Wales under the Sexual Offences Act 1985 at the latest available date.

Mr. John Patten: There is no power of arrest under the Sexual Offences Act 1985. However, the information available to me, which may be incomplete, shows 220 prosecutions under the Act in England and Wales up to the end of 1986, of which seven were in Merseyside.

DNA Testing

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his reply of 26 May to the hon. Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Vaz), *Official Report*, column *279*, when he expects to place in the Library a copy of the report on the pilot trial of DNA use in immigration case work.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what are the reasons for the delay in the publication of the report on DNA testing for immigration purposes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: I refer the hon. Member to the reply which I gave to the hon. Member for Bradford, West (Mr. Madden) on Thursday 16 June, at columns *200-1*.

Abortion (Inquest Report)

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if, pursuant to his answer of 16 June, *Official Report*, column *200*, he will place in the Library the information provided by the coroner on the case involving the death of the Carlisle baby.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: No.

Police Stations

Mr. Heddle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps he takes to ensure that a periodic review is undertaken of all police stations owned and occupied by county constabularies and the Metropolitan force in the context of operational efficiency and commercial potential.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Police authorities were asked in 1987 to review their arrangements for managing the police estate as a whole, including operational accommodation, and in particular ensure that surplus accommodation could be identified and either disposed of or used to meet new needs.

The scope of using police accommodation better is also reviewed by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary in its annual inspections of provincial forces. In the Metropolitan police, an audit of the occupancy of the whole estate has recently been completed.

Mr. Heddle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what his policy is towards *(a)* the ownership and *(b)* the leasing of premises used as police stations.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Generally speaking, we prefer police authorities to own premises used as police stations, since this usually offers better value for money and gives greater security of tenure. We do not, however, rule out leasing where this is justified, but if the lease is for more than three years, the current market value of the property counts against the total capital allocation for police buildings.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Government Achievements

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will set out the Government's principal achievements in overseas aid to Third world countries since 1983.

Mr. Chris Patten: Since 1983 the principal achievements of the aid programme include:

1. a swift and generous response (totalling £253 million between 1983 and 1987) to appeals for emergency and refugee relief;
2. the successful completion of many aid projects, large and small, including the Victoria Dam in Sri Lanka (£113 million) and the Songea-Makambako Road in Tanzania (£90 million);
3. 200 new project allocations, each worth £2 million or more, with a total value of £1,662 million;
4. helping to sustain economic policy reforms, particularly in Africa, through the provision of programme aid (£261 million between 1983 and 1987) in support of IMF/IBRD agreed adjustment programmes;
5. the provision (between 1983 and 1986) of 23,502 person-years of training of overseas personnel and of 14,137 person-years of service by British experts and volunteers in developing countries;
6. in the period to 1987, securing contracts for British firms with a total export value of £1,082 million with aid and trade provision support; and
7. between 1985-86 and 1987-88, the cofunding, under the joint funding scheme of about 1,300 projects with over 50 agencies at a cost of £18·2 million. The budget of the JFS, which is one of the fastest growing areas of the aid programme, now stands at £10·5 million for 1988-89, a 75 per cent. increase on the original allocation for last year.

At the November 1986 European Community Development Council, under Britain's presidency, agreement was reached on much needed reforms of European Community food aid. These reforms are now being implemented.

In line with my right hon. Friend the Chancellor's initiative on debt, the United Kingdom has cancelled £263 million of aid loans to 14 African countries; and 10 countries have negotiated better rescheduling terms. Agreement was reached at the recent Toronto summit on further debt relief based on this initiative.

Third World Countries

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what further plans he has to increase financial and other help to Third world countries.

Mr. Chris Patten: In the current financial year we plan to spend about £1,307 million on the aid programme, some £97 million more than the likely outturn for last year. The programme is planned to rise to £1,380 million in 1989-90 and to £1,420 million by 1990-91. This represents growth in real terms.

Primary Health Care (Third World)

Mr. Favell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what progress his Department is making in encouraging primary health care in the Third world.

Mr. Chris Patten: Developing country Governments have been told of our wish to focus on primary health care in our programme of assistance to the health and population sector. To carry forward this approach we have also initiated a programme of reviews of health needs in a number of these countries. Following discussions with the recipient country authorities, these reviews will form the basis for the development of our future bilateral assistance in this sector. Five reviews have already been completed and seven more are planned over the next 12 months.

Over the last 18 months my professional health advisers have visited 14 of the 16 countries with which we have significant health assistance programmes to discuss our primary health care policy and encourage requests for assistance.

In addition, we aim to fill a new health and population adviser post in the British development division in southern Africa in the autumn. This will facilitate the identification of further areas for effective assistance in the countries in the region.

Tropical Development Research Institute

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will indicate the approximate annual sum spent by the tropical pest control section of the Tropical Development Research Institute in the current year; and how it relates in real terms to the expenditure of the Centre for Overseas Pest Research for each year from 1979-80 to 1987-88.

Mr. Chris Patten *[holding answer 27 June 1988]:* Because the Centre for Overseas Pest Research was successively amalgamated into the Tropical Development and Research Institute and the Overseas Development Natural Resources Institute (ODNRI) on 1 September 1987, it is not possible without disproportionate effort to construct an expenditure series for the years specified.

It is estimated that scientific and technical effort by the former Centre for Overseas Pest Research (COPR) amounted to 130 man-years in 1979-80. In 1983-84, COPR's last year of separate existence, the comparable figure was 93 man-years. In 1987-88, under what is now ODNRI, the effort devoted to tropical pest control amounted to 97 man-years.

In April last year I instructed the Tropical Development and Research Institute to increase its operations in Africa. Project proposals estimated at £7 million have been prepared to tackle crop, animal and storage pest problems. These projects are based on the valuable experience of the institute and will further develop its expertise in tropical pest control.

WALES

Pollution

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will set up an investigation into the effects on *(a)* fauna and flora, *(b)* lakes and rivers, *(b)* buildings and *(d)* the acid deposits in the Snowdonia national park.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The Welsh Office, with the Department of Environment, is investigating the effects of acidic deposition on fauna and flora, lakes and rivers, and buildings, through a number of research projects. When the results of these studies have been fully assessed, consideration can be given to the need for further research in specific areas, including Snowdonia.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether he has any evidence of the effect of increased coniferous afforestation on the levels of acidity in soil and water in *(a)* Snowdonia, *(b)* Mid Wales and *(c)* Wales generally; and if he will indicate whether his Department has instigated, or provided financial support for, studies into this matter.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The Department provides financial support for a number of projects concerned with acidification in those areas most sensitive to the effects of acidic deposition, which are mainly in Mid Wales. Early evidence shows that coniferous afforested catchments are more acidic than adjacent moorland streams.

Housing

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what funds he has allocated for 1988-89, and what allocations have been earmarked for future years, towards new housing and refurbishment of existing houses, by county and for Wales as a whole.

Mr. Grist: The information provided in the following table relates to the capital allocations for 1988-89 which have been made to date:

County	*Local authority basic allocations* *£ million*	*Local authority specific allocations for renovation* *£ million*	*Housing corporation allocations for new build and rehabilitation* *£ million*
Clwyd	10·643	1·036	5·704
Dyfed	10·736	1·535	6·428
Gwent	20·305	1·128	12·407
Gwynedd	6·852	1·477	4·686
Mid Glamorgan	24·413	10·397	14·007
Powys	3·631	0·060	1·953
South Glamorgan	14·167	1·000	9·444
West Glamorgan	14·491	0·303	9·106
	105·238	16·936	63·735

Unallocated—£21·582 million.

Housing capital allocations are made at district level and local authorities are free to determine their own expenditure priorities in the light of the needs of their particular area. They are, however, encouraged to concentrate on renovation, including the priority estates projects and enveloping block repair schemes.

Housing association information relates to allocations for new units and rehabilitation of existing units.

No decisions have yet been taken on the level of allocations for future years.

Enterprise Allowance Scheme

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what are the take-up rates for the enterprise allowance scheme in *(a)* Clwyd, *(b)* Gwynedd, *(c)* Wales and *(d)* the United Kingdom.

Mr. Peter Walker: The information is not available at county level. Since the scheme began in August 1983, 22,883 and 349,893 people have joined in Wales and the United Kingdom respectively.

Imported Waste

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will take action to ensure the independent monitoring of all imported waste in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: The legislation requires that controlled waste, including imported waste, is disposed of at licensed sites which are monitored by waste disposal authorities. Additionally, the movement of imported special waste is monitored by local authorities from the port of entry to its final destination.

Rate Support Grant

Sir Anthony Meyer: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what were the levels of rate support grant to local authorities in Wales in each year since 1976-77 in real terms.

Mr. Peter Walker: The levels of rate support grant distributed to local authorities in Wales for each year, expressed in real terms at 1988-89 prices using the GDP (market prices) deflator, are given in the following table:

	£ million
1976-77	1,251·7
1977-78	1,145·3
1978-79	1,096·2
1979-80	1,080·9
1980-81	1,071·6
1981-82	1,047·3
1982-83	1,046·7
1983-84	1,017·6
1984-85	978·6
1985-86	947·7
1986-87[1]	967·2
1987-88[1]	978·6
1988-89[1]	1,000·0

[1] Provisional.

Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what assessment he has made of the dangers to Welsh livestock of the transfrontier shipment of wastes containing animal residues infested with bovine spongiform encephalopathy; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker: None. No incidence of bovine spongiform encephalopathy has been recorded to date outside the United Kingdom.

Forestry

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he last met the Forestry Commission chairman to discuss forestry matters in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker: I shall be having my first meeting with the chairman of the Forestry Commission for the specific purpose of discussing forestry matters in Wales towards the end of July.

Chernobyl Accident

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what evidence he has to show that the food chain was fully protected in Wales in the period immediately after the Chernobyl incident; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker: Full compendia of the results of my Department's extensive monitoring programme have been published and copies are in the Library of the House. This work has been backed up by dietary surveys undertaken by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and independent whole body monitoring programmes in various parts of the United Kingdom, including Wales. Considered alongside the controls introduced on the movement and slaughter of sheep in certain areas, these fully demonstrate the high degree of protection afforded to consumers.

River Pollution

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what plans he has to reduce the agricultural pollution of rivers in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker: The dangers of pollution from farms are being continually brought to the notice of farmers in Wales by the Agricultural Development and Advisory Service. It also offers free advice on what steps should be taken to minimise the risk of pollution. Capital grants are available under the agriculture improvement scheme for the handling, storage and treatment of agricultural wastes. Plans are in hand to stage a major demonstration in Dyfed in early 1989 on the avoidance of agricultural pollution. ADAS and the Welsh water authority are co-operating in staging that event.

Agricultural Development and Advisory Service

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the future of the Agricultural Development and Advisory Service in Wales.

Mr. Peter Walker: The Agricultural Development and Advisory Service is a part of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and operates in Wales as the agent of the Secretary of State for Wales. These arrangements will be kept under review.

Bovine Somatotropin

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what discussions he plans with consumer organisations in Wales about the use of bovine somatotropin; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker: I have no plans to discuss the use of bovine somatotropin with consumer organisations in Wales.

Sheep

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how he proposes to assist the sheep sector in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker: The sheepmeat sector in Wales is buoyant. Discussions on future support arrangements in the review of the sheepmeat regime are proceeding. We will continue to resist changes which would discriminate against our interests.

Agricultural Research

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how he plans to increase the funding of research in agriculture in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker: I have no such plans. We are looking at the funding of research in agriculture, and discussions are in progress with representatives of the individual sectors of the industry.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many people are employed in agricultural research stations in Wales.

Mr. Peter Walker: As at 1 June 1988 the Agricultural and Food Research Council's Welsh plant breeding station employed 226 people. In addition ADAS employs 44 people at its experimental husbandry farm at Trawsgoed/Pwllpeiran.

Ciliau Moor Common (Slurry Tank)

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when construction of the slurry tank begun on Ciliau Moor common; and when it became apparent that building consent would be required.

Mr. Peter Walker: My Department first became aware that consent was required for carrying out these works on 7 October 1987. However, I am given to understand that work on the construction originally began in August 1987.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales who were the builders of the slurry tank on Ciliau Moor common.

Mr. Peter Walker: This information is not known to my Department.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales which individuals and organisations were consulted prior to consent being given for the construction of a slurry tank on Ciliau Moor common; and on what dates they were approached.

Mr. Peter Walker: I wrote to the Open Spaces Society and Countryside Commission on 29 January 1988 to seek their views.

Cardiff (Redevelopment)

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to his answer of 27 June, if he will place in the Library a copy of the consultants' report commissioned by his Department in 1986 into the redevelopment of Cardiff.

Mr. Peter Walker: A copy of the report prepared by Jones Lang Wootton is already available in the Library of the House.

University of Wales

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement about future funding arrangements for the extra-mural departments of the University of Wales.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: In a written answer given in another place on 15 December 1987 Baroness Hooper announced that the Government had decided to transfer responsibility for funding the extra-mural departments of the English universities to the Universities Funding Council proposed in the Education Reform Bill, and that a decision about the funding of the extra-mural departments of the University of Wales would be announced later. After careful consideration, and taking into account the views of the directors of the four Welsh extra-mural departments, it has been decided that responsibility for funding the extra-mural departments of the University of Wales should also be transferred from the Welsh Office to the Universities Funding Council. Discussions are being initiated with the University Grants Committee and the directors of the four extra-mural departments about the detailed arrangements for the transfer of responsibility to the UFC from 1 April 1989.

Housing Revenue Account

Mr. Soley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the value of the Exchequer subsidies and rate fund contributions, respectively, to Welsh local authority housing revenue account dwellings in total, and on a per dwelling basis for the years 1978-79 to 1987-88.

Mr. Ian Grist *[holding answer 27 June 1988]:* Housing subsidy up to 1980-81 was paid under a different system. In 1981-82 the figures were:

Exchequer subsidies (£ thousand)	*Rate fund contributions (£ thousand)*	*Exchequer subsidies per dwelling (£)*	*Rate fund contributions per dwelling (£)*
34,624	11,939	122·35	42·19

A reduction then took place reflecting the Government's decision to increase the proportion of resources available for capital expenditure on housing rather than current expenditure.

Thereafter the figures have been:

	Exchequer subsidies (£ thousand)	*Rate fund contributions (£ thousand)*	*Exchequer subsidies per dwelling (£)*	*Rate fund contributions per dwelling (£)*
1982-83	10,102	12,105	37·21	44·59
1983-84	8,832	8,767	33·65	33·40
1984-85	7,104	6,059	27·59	23·53
1985-86	10,024	5,178	39·08	20·19
1986-87	9,999	4,515	39·14	17·67
1987-88	11,762	6,338	46·95	25·30

The information shown in the tables is based on estimates from the housing subsidy claim form. The table shows gross rate fund contributions (including contributions to the administration of rent rebates) to the housing revenue account.

Chronically Sick and Disabled People

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what steps he has taken to ensure *(a)* that all the relevant local authorities in Wales are financially able to discharge in full their statutory duties under the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act, and *(b)* that their duties under the Act are being fully discharged by all local authorities.

Mr. Grist *[holding answer 29 June 1988]:* Responsibility for implementing the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act lies with local authorities. We do not allocate resources to specific functions of social services departments and it is not practicable separately to identify the total amount spent on services under the Act. However, the Department receives regular returns on certain services provided under the Act in addition to information from a number of sources, including the Department's social work services division. While the level of expenditure on social services is a matter for individual local authorities to determine, notional provision for social services in Wales has increased by 77 per cent. in cash terms since 1981-82 (the start of the separate Welsh rate support grant system) and by 26 per cent. at constant prices. Moreover, full consideration is given to the annual level of social services expenditure by the expenditure sub-group of the Welsh consultative council on local government finance.

Waste Tips

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what action he is considering in the light of those aspects of the report prepared by Her Majesty's pollution inspectorate on waste tip and gas explosion dangers, which have implications for his responsibilities in Wales; whether a similar survey has been conducted in Wales; and if he will make a statement on the scale of the dangers in Wales and the remedial measures he proposed to take.

Mr. Grist *[holding answer 29 June 1988]:* Wales was included in the survey. The responses from local authorities are receiving consideration and Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Pollution will report to me shortly. The inspectorate has issued interim advice which will be followed by detailed guidance on the measures site licences should require for the proper management of landfill gas.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Hon. Members (Resettlement Grants)

Mr. Ashton: To ask the Lord President of the Council what estimate he has made to the extra cost to public funds in the event of those Members retiring at the general election in 1987 who were aged between 64 and 69 years being entitled to resettlement grants; and how many Members who retired then were aged between 64 and 69 years.

Mr. Wakeham: The existing arrangements provide that resettlement grants can be paid to Members aged under 65 who leave the House at a general election. At the 1987 general election 27 Members aged 65 to 69 left the House. On the assumption that the level of the resettlement grant payable was that applicable to those aged 55 to 64 years, the additional cost would have been £476,930.

Mr. Ashton: To ask the Lord President of the Council what was the cost to public funds at the 1987 general election of resettlement grants paid to Members *(a)* who retired or *(b)* lost their seats; and what would have been the total cost of a resettlement grant based on a payment of one month's salary for each year of completed service.

Mr. Wakeham: At the 1987 general election resettlement grants totalling £702,630 were paid to Members who retired and £372,220 to Members who lost their seats. If these resettlement grants had been payable at the rate of one month's salary for each completed year of service the total cost would have been £1,648,042.

Mr. Ashton: To ask the Lord President of the Council how many Members not retiring but losing their seats at the last general election received less than one month's pay for each year of service.

Mr. Wakeham: Sixteen Members who lost their seats at the 1987 general election received resettlement grants which represented less than one month's salary for each year of service.

Mr. Ashton: To ask the Lord President of the Council how many Members losing their seats at the last election and receiving resettlement grants were aged *(a)* 40 to 45 years, *(b)* 45 to 50 years, *(c)* 50 to 55 years, *(d)* 55 to 60 years and *(e)* 60 to 65 years.

Mr. Wakeham: The number of Members in each of the age ranges specified who lost their seats at the 1987 general election and who received a resettlement grant is as follows:

Age	*Number*
40 to under 45	11
45 to under 50	6
50 to under 55	8
55 to under 60	3
60 to under 65	2

Mr. Ashton: To ask the Lord President of the Council what was the cost of the resettlement grants allocated after the 1987 election as a percentage cost of the total Members' salaries from June 1983 to June 1987.

Mr. Wakeham: The cost of resettlement grants paid following the 1987 general election was £1·07 million, which is approximately 2·5 per cent. of £42·55 million, the total of all Members' salaries paid during the 1983-87 Parliament.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

British Steel Corporation

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how much regional development grant was received by the British Steel Corporation between June 1979 and the latest available date; if he will list the steel works receiving such grant with the amounts given; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: Details of payments of regional development grants above certain thresholds are published in *British Business.* The details published are: under the original RDG scheme, individual payments which exceed £25,000 showing the employment office area concerned; and under the revised scheme, payments to individual undertakings in a travel-to-work area which cumulatively exceed £25,000 in any one quarter. Payments of RDG to the British Steel Corporation published in *British Business* for the period 1 July 1979 to 31 March 1988 totalled some £190 million. In addition, BSC will have benefited from RDG paid to leasing companies in respect of assets leased to the corporation. Information on these payments, and on payments to individual works, is not readily available.

Electronics

Mr. Wray: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement on the investment performance and international competitiveness of the British electronics industry.

Mr. Butcher: The United Kingdom electronics industry is a profitable and growing sector which has benefited from the enterprise policies followed by this Government. It invests heavily and has a strong competitive position in a number of areas of the world market. United Kingdom R and D expenditure in the electronics and IT area increased from £1,235 million in 1981 to £1,936 million in 1986. During that period net capital expenditure by the sector increased from £364 million to £657 million.

Skin Lighteners

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what information he has concerning the manufacture in the United Kingdom of skin-lightening cosmetics containing either mercury or hydroquinone; what restrictions exist concerning the sale of these products; whether he has received any representations about the export of such products to Nigeria; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Butcher: The supply of mercury soap and skin lightening creams, and so on, containing more than 2 per cent. hydroquinone is prohibited in the EC. I have not received any representations about the export of such products to Nigeria, but I have stopped the export of mercury soap from Britain to the Third world. Until recently a small number of British firms were producing and exporting it. I shall also be asking the industry not to export to the Third world skin lightening creams, and so on, containing more than 2 per cent. hydroquinone and to ensure that these products carry the warning labels required by law for sale in the EC.

Tropical Timber

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster who represented his Department at the International Tropical Timber Organisation conference in Rio de Janeiro; what proposals they put; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins *[holding answer 29 June 1988]:* The United Kingdom is being represented at the current International Tropical Timber Organisation (ITTO) conference by officials from the Department of Trade and Industry and the Overseas Development Administration. The United Kingdom supports the objectives of the International Tropical Timber Agreement, of which the ITTO is the administrative arm. The objectives balance conservation and trade expansion and diversification. The United Kingdom was one of the first signatories of the agreement under which ITTO was established.

PRIME MINISTER

Merchant Fleet

Q61. **Sir David Price:** To ask the Prime Minister what is her response to the conclusion in the fourth report of the Select Committee on Defence of Session 1987-88 that the decline in the British merchant fleet has alarming implications for the United Kingdom's national and collective security and that only she is in a position to take a broad overview of a national maritime policy.

The Prime Minister: The Government will be responding to the conclusions in the Defence Committee's report in due course, but I can assure my hon. Friend that I and my ministerial colleagues have regularly examined the implications of the decline of the British merchant fleet in recent years and have already introduced a number of measures designed to safeguard the national interest.

North Devon

Q133. **Mr. Speller:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will seek to pay an official visit to north Devon during the next 12 months.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to do so.

Engagements

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 30 June.

Mr. Skinner: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 30 June.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 30 June.

Mr. Patnick: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 30 June.

The Prime Minister: This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House I shall be having further meetings later today.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Cereals

Miss Emma Nicholson: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps he is taking to ensure that the collection of the cereal co-responsibility levy will be effectively policed to present avoidance by misrepresentation of goods and failure to record transactions, so as to avoid discrimination against merchants, processors, and farmer suppliers who obey the law.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Under arrangements coming into effect on 1 July, those responsible for collecting the cereals co-responsibility levy will be required to register with the Intervention Board, keep records of their grain transactions and make them available for official inspection. Failure to comply with these requirements will be punishable by a fine of up to £2,000 for each offence.

In addition there will be regular inspection visits in order to ensure that records are kept and the levy paid in full.

Domestic Waste

Mr. Speller: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps he will take to ensure that any proposal to import domestic waste from other countries into the United Kingdom will satisfy the requirements of the Importation of Animal Products and Poultry Products Order 1980; and if he will make a statement.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what factors he takes into account when considering licence applications under the Importation of Animal Products and Poultry Products Order.

Mr. Donald Thompson: In considering applications for new licence under the Importation of Animal Products and Poultry Products Order 1980, particular account is taken of the animal health status of the exporting country, the nature of the product concerned and its potential to carry disease, so that possible disease risks may be assessed. No licence to import domestic waste will be granted unless we can be satisfied that there are adequate safeguards against such risks.

Bovine Somatotropin

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what discussions he has had with consumer organisations about the use of bovine somatotropin.

Mr. Donald Thompson: None.

Food (Nutrition Claims)

Mr. Boswell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will consider extending controls over the use of nutrition claims in food labelling and advertising; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: I am aware of the strong consumer interest in diet and health which has led to a new generation of nutrition claims for many food products. Such claims can have a disproportionate impact upon consumers, undermining the numerical information given in accordance with our voluntary nutrition labelling guidelines, and can mislead consumers not least because the messages are not consistent across all foods. I am also aware that the industry would find guidance on the criteria to be used in establishing such claims useful in the labelling and marketing of their products. The Food Advisory Committee (FAC) has therefore considered this issue in detail and I have now received the committee's advice, for which I am most grateful.

The FAC has concluded that there is a need for controls and that it may be sensible for these to be drawn up along the lines of the existing claims provisions in the Food Labelling Regulations 1984, which already cover certain nutrients such as protein, polyunsaturates, fatty acids, vitamins and minerals.

I am, however, aware that any legislation may mean changes for some food manufacturers and retailers wishing to make nutrition claims. It is not my intention to impose any unreasonable burdens on the industry, but, at the same time, I wish to ensure that consumers are protected and have adequate information to make choices. I am therefore arranging for the FAC's advice to be sent to the representative organisations of all the interests concerned to seek their views on the legislative approach and on the particular recommendations. A copy of the FAC advice has been placed in the Library of the House.

My colleagues in the Health and Agriculture Departments share my views on this, and consultations with the interested organisations in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland will also be undertaken.

SCOTLAND

Traffic Accidents (Statistics)

Sir Bernard Braine: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the mean blood-alcohol concentration of drivers killed in road traffic accidents in Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The mean blood alcohol concentration of drivers who have died within 12 hours of a road accident in Scotland for 1986 (latest figures) is estimated to be around 50 mg per 100 ml.

Sir Bernard Braine: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the mean blood-alcohol concentration of pedestrians killed in road traffic accidents in Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The mean blood alcohol concentration of pedestrians aged 16 and over who have died within 12 hours of a road accident in Scotland for 1986 (latest figures) is estimated to be around 110 mg per 100 ml.

Pre-court Diversion Schemes

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if, pursuant to his reply of 27 May, *Official Report*, column *363*, he is able to say when the second report relevant to pre-court diversion schemes is likely to be received by his Department.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The second report is expected during the summer.

Rating Reform

Sir Russell Johnston: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has any plans to abolish the present 40 per cent. relief for non-domestic rates.

Mr. Lang: At present industrial derating, at the level of 40 per cent., applies to all manufacturing industry in Scotland. We have made it clear that industrial derating will continue to have a place in Scotland until the reform of the non-domestic rating system is complete. The appropriate level of derating after 1990 will be considered in the light of the results of the forthcoming revaluation.

Teaching Hospitals

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list all teaching hospitals in Scotland, showing their locations.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Information on teaching hospitals and their location in Scotland is contained in the publication "Scottish Health Service Costs", which is available in the Library.

Prison Service

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he will establish a full independent inquiry into the Scottish prison service that will consider the length of sentences, the impact of fine defaulters on the system, the use of remand by the courts, the needs of drug and alcohol abusers, and the role and purpose of the present authorities.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: No. An inquiry of this kind would be very protracted and unnecessarily delay initiatives which the Government have already announced for the Scottish prison service and the penal system as a whole. The activities of the Scottish prison service are closely monitored by Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Prisons in Scotland and by visiting committees for individual establishments.

Peterhead Prison

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what measures he intends to take to improve conditions for the governor, staff and inmates of Peterhead prison.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The main priority at Peterhead is to maintain peace and good order at the establishment in the interests of all staff and inmates. Appropriate and necessary measures to restrict opportunities for attempted disruption and violence have been taken and will be kept under review.

The reduced occupancy of Peterhead and the use of E hall, Shotts prison, continue for the time being, but I hope that additional accommodation will become available for use at Peterhead by the end of the year.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what forces were involved in ending the Peterhead prison siege; and whether such forces will be used in ending any future prison disturbances.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The operational responsibility for dealing with criminal offences, including offences committed in penal establishments, rests with the chief constable concerned. For operational reasons it would not be appropriate to disclose the circumstances in which particular siege incidents are ended, or to speculate on what might be done in future.

DEFENCE

Departmental Offices (Relocation)

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans his Department has for the relocation of offices and facilities to the northern regions.

Mr. Sainsbury: As has been stated in the House on several occasions, we are anxious to see a more even spread of defence employment across the regions. Whenever potential opportunities for relocation arise they are carefully considered. However, all proposals must be justified on both economic and operational grounds.

Ocean Surveillance Centre

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence under which section the expenditure on the United Kingdom national joint ocean surveillance information centre from defence vote 4 comes.

Mr. Sainsbury: Although expenditure on class I, vote 4, is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment, I will reply on this occasion. Expenditure on the project to which the hon. Member refers is borne on class I, vote 4, section A.

Procurement Contracts

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if his policy of non-publication of the value of defence procurement contracts applies in the case of contracts with United States companies whose value has already been publicly announced by the United States Government; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: It would be unusual for the United States Government to publish details of prices in individual contracts between my Department and United States companies. Contract price information is regarded as commercially confidential.

Nimrod

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) how many of the redundant Nimrod airborne early warning 3 airframes are to be converted for use as tankers; and what is the estimated cost of this programme;

(2) what has been the cost of storage and maintenance of Nimrod airborne early warning 3 aircraft since the cancellation of the Nimrod airborne early warning programme.

Mr. Sainsbury: Three Nimrod AEW airframes are to be used to provide spares for the Nimrod maritime patrol aircraft, and a fourth as a ground instructional aircraft. Pending a decision on their future use, the remaining aircraft are being maintained in reserve at RAF Waddington. As the task has been absorbed within the RAF's existing manning levels, no additional manpower costs are involved. The only extra costs involved in holding these aircraft in reserve are estimated at about £400,000 per year, chiefly for the heating and lighting of hangars.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many flying hours have been flown by Nimrod airborne early warning 3 aircraft since the cancellation of the Nimrod airborne early warning programme; and for what purpose.

Mr. Sainsbury: Just under 10, comprising pre-delivery test, delivery and positioning flights.

Take-off Curfews

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the number of occasions for each year since 1979 that the normal curfew on weekend take-offs and landings at RAF Fairford has been breached; whose authority is required before aircraft are permitted to break the curfew on weekend take-offs and landings at RAF Fairford; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: RAF Fairford was made available to the United States air force on the understanding that certain limitations would apply to aircraft operations during peacetime. These included the avoidance, normally, of weekend flying activity. On a few occasions since 1979 weekend sorties have taken place, with the full agreement of the Ministry of Defence, where these have been shown to be necessary for operational or exercise purposes. A record of these sorties is not held centrally. Because of the closure for repairs of the runway at RAF Mildenhall, the MOD agreed to the redeployment of a small number of USAF aircraft to RAF Fairford for approximately six months. During this period, it has been agreed that a limited amount of weekend flying will be permitted to meet operational requirements. Every effort will be made to keep this to a minimum. The new, temporary, arrangements have been publicised locally and notified to the appropriate authorities.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the number of occasions for each year since 1979 that the normal curfew on Sunday morning take-offs at RAF Mildenhall has been breached; whose authority is required before aircraft are permitted to break the curfew on Sunday morning take-offs at RAF Mildenhall; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: There is no such curfew at RAF Mildenhall. However, every effort is made by the United States air force to keep weekend flying to the minimum consistent with the station's operational requirements.

High-intensity Radio Transmissions

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment his Department has made of the danger to military aircraft from flying in proximity to high-intensity radio transmissions; and what measures have been implemented to address this problem.

Mr. Freeman: The potential danger to aircraft flying in close proximity to areas of high intensity radio transmissions are well understood by my Department and by the aircrew of the three services. Appropriate instructions are issued and information promulgated to ensure that military flights are undertaken in as safe a manner as possible.

Radiation (Ouston)

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the nature and purpose of the activities at Ouston, Northumberland, from 25 May to 9 June, which resulted in an intense radiation hazard.

Mr. Freeman: During the period 25 May to 9 June a transportable radar, belonging to the Royal Air Force, was deployed for exercise training to a site near Ouston, Northumberland. During the course of the exercise the equipment was activated but no personnel, military or civil, were exposed to any danger.

Patriot Missiles

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what financial contribution is being made by Her Majesty's Government towards the Belgian purchase of the Patriot surface-to-air missile system.

Mr. Sainsbury: I understand that Belgium currently has no plans to purchase Patriot systems.

Defence Microbiology Division

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the purpose and function of the defence microbiology division at the Chemical Defence Establishment, Porton Down; what is the annual budget of the defence microbiology division; when the defence microbiology division was set up; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: The role of the Chemical Defence Establishment is to carry out research into defensive measures to protect our armed forces against attack by chemical or biological weapons. The defence microbiology division is one of the divisions of the CDE: it was set up when the former MOD Microbiology Research Establishment was transferred in 1979 to the public health laboratory service. It is not in the national interest to disclose detailed resource figures. The division was involved in the recent successful exercise to decontaminate Gruinard Island.

Genetic Engineering

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what contracts and agreements exist between his Department and universities and other institutions of higher education for research related to genetic engineering.

Mr. Sainsbury: The Ministry of Defence has currently five research agreements with universities or other instituitions of higher education concerned with aspects of genetic engineering. All are sponsored by the Chemical Defence Establishment, Porton Down, and their aggregate value is £700,000. (One also relates to monoclonal antibodies).

Monoclonal Antibodies

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what contracts and agreements exist between his department and universities and other institutions of higher education for research related to the production or application of monoclonal antibodies.

Mr. Sainsbury: The Ministry of Defence has currently nine research agreements with universities or other institutions of higher education concerned with aspects of monoclonal antibodies. All are sponsored by the Chemical Defence Establishment, Porton Down, and their aggregate value is £1·26 million. (One also relates to genetic engineering).

Porton Down

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many undergraduates from universities and other institutions of higher education are employed during the summer vacation at the Chemical Defence Establishment, Porton Down.

Mr. Sainsbury: The Chemical Defence Establishment usually employs around 15 undergraduates during the summer vacation.

Strategic Defence Initiative

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many universities and other institutions of higher education have been awarded contracts as part of the strategic defence initiative programme; what is the total value of these contracts; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: I have nothing to add to the answers given to the hon. Member for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers) on 11 January, at column *66*, and 25 April 1988, at column *73-74*.

Tornado Aircraft (Damage)

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if the RAF Tornado aircraft damaged in a landing accident at RAF Wildenrath on 14 April 1987 was repaired on site; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: The Tornado aircraft from 15 Squadron, RAF Laarbruch, which crashed at RAF Wildenrath on 14 April 1987 was assessed to have sustained category 3 damage. Thus, although the damage was repairable on site, the necessary work was beyond the local unit's technical resources, and assistance was therefore required from a service repair unit or outside contractor. The aircraft was subsequently returned to RAF Laarbruch for repair.

Play Area (Fort Newhaven)

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the cost to the Army of the renovation of the children's play area at Fort Newhaven, Sussex, by the Territorial Army; and what contribution towards this cost has been made by the owners of the fort.

Mr. Freeman: The renovation work was carried out during the course of a training weekend held in the Newhaven area by 133 Corps Troops Workshop REME.

A number of unit personnel rendered assistance during periods in which they were not directly engaged in a unit exercise. All materials were supplied by the fort authorities and no additional transport costs were incurred by the unit. In view of the above, no charges were levied against the owners of the fort.

Low Flying

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence which areas have been allocated to low-flying aircraft exercise for the year 1988-89.

Mr. Freeman: While detailed planning for the year 1988-89 is not yet finalised, significant exercise activity is expected to take place throughout most parts of Great Britain.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he will publish rota arrangements for the allocation of low-flying aircraft exercises within the United Kingdom.

Mr. Freeman: The location of exercises involving low-flying aircraft is determined primarily by the type of activity involved, and the facilities needed. Where possible, locations, including those of major NATO exercises, are varied, as a range of locations adds to the training value. There are no pre-planned rota arrangements as such.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence to what extent the opinions of the local population are taken into account in the planning of low-flying aircraft exercises.

Mr. Freeman: The location of exercises involving low-flying aircraft is determined primarily by the type of activity involved and the facilities needed. Wherever possible, locations are varied, which both adds to training value and spreads any disturbance more evenly and equitably. Thus, the interests of the whole population are taken into account as far as possible.

Salisbury Plain

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what is the estimated cost to the Ministry of Defence police of the extra policing of the military lands at Salisbury Plain for the month of June 1988;

(2) what is the estimated cost to the Ministry of Defence police of providing assistance to the Wiltshire constabulary to police lands in the vicinty of the military lands at Salisbury Plain for the month of June 1988; if any of this cost will be reimbursed by the Wiltshire constabulary; and if he will make a statement;

(3) on whose authority the decision to station extra Ministry of Defence police officers to Salisbury Plain in the month of June 1988 was taken; how many officers were involved in operations on Salisbury Plain in the month of June 1988; and under whose control were these officers.

Mr. Sainsbury: Additional Ministry of Defence police were deployed to the Salisbury Plain area by the chief constable at the request of MOD (Army) in order to prevent interference with MOD access to and use of defence land and facilities in the period leading up to the celebration of the summer solstice at Stonehenge and its aftermath. A total of 66 officers were deployed from 20 May to 15 June, increased to a total of 318, including the operational support unit, from 16 to 23 June 1988, working 12-hour shifts throughout, under the operational command of the assistant chief constable, Western area, Ministry of Defence police.

The estimated extra cost of this deployment cannot be separately identified. Since the Ministry of Defence police presence was provided in the first instance to meet the requirements of my Department, it would not be appropriate to charge the Wiltshire constabulary for such assistance as was given to it.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence on whose authority the operational support group of the Ministry of Defence police was deployed with riot equipment on land not owned, used or operated by his Department on the morning of 21 June 1988.

Mr. Sainsbury: The operational support unit of the Ministry of Defence police was deployed in the vicinity of Ministry of Defence land near Stonehenge on the morning of 21 June, with public order protective clothing and shields, on the authority of the chief constable, Ministry of Defence police, and responded to a request for assistance from the chief constable of the Wiltshire constabulary, in accordance with section 2(2)(d) of the MOD Police Act 1987.

Exercise Tristar

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how much night low flying will be conducted during Exercise Tristar; and by what types of aircraft.

Mr. Freeman *[holding answer 16 June 1988]:* Up to 27 night low-flying sorties by Hercules transport aircraft and Chinook helicopters were planned. In the event, 20 were flown, six by Hercules and 14 by Chinook.

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many low-flying sorties are planned during Exercise Tristar by which types of aircraft; and what proportion of these will take place between 11 pm and 7 am.

Mr. Freeman *[holding answer 13 June 1988]:* A total of 29 low-flying sorties were planned for the exercise period, nine by Hercules aircraft and 20 by Chinook helicopters, around 90 per cent. of which were to be flown between 11 pm and 7 am. Some, unquantified, daytime low-flying by light helicopters was also envisaged.

Army (Nepotism)

Mr. Marlow: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what steps he has taken to assess evidence of nepotism in the selection of officers for certain regiments in the British Army; and if he will set out his policy for curtailing such opportunities.

Mr. Freeman *[holding answer 20 June 1988]:* None. Allocation to regiment or corps is based on a number of factors, including personal preference, ability, aptitude and the current vacancy situation in the individual regiment or corps. All regiments or corps actively seek to identify and encourage potential officer candidates with the right qualities at an early stage. This is a most productive aid to recruitment and the fostering of identity within regiment and corps. Many regiments are, for example, regionally based.

All potential officer candidates must meet the standards of the Regular Commissions Board, which is strictly independent of any regimental connection. The pass rate of sons and daughters of serving and retired officers is not noticeably higher than the overall average pass rate.

Similarly, before joining a regiment or corps, all potential officers must pass their training at the Royal Military Academy, Sandhurst, which is also quite independent.

I am satisfied with the system. However, if my hon. Friend has any evidence of nepotism in the selection of officers for certain regiments, I should be grateful if he would write to me.

EMPLOYMENT

Job Clubs

Mr. Sumberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many unemployed people have attended job clubs; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: Since official records began in April 1986 until March 1988, a total of 126,283 unemployed people passed through job clubs. I have been very encouraged by the success of job clubs in helping long-term unemployed people into jobs. We plan a substantial increase in the number of job club places in 1988-89.

Departmental Staff

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment, pursuant to the answer to the hon. Member for The Wrekin of 20 June, how many civil servants in his Department are employed at grade 3 and above; and what is the estimated cost of discovering whether they were educated at state or private schools.

Mr. Lee: There are 36 civil servants employed at grade 3 level and above. The estimated cost of providing the information requested on schools attended would probably be in excess of £350.

Anti-social Hours

Mr. Skinner: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list the occupations which involve anti-social hours being worked; and if he will consider introducing legislation which includes unsocial hours payments worth one third of basic pay.

Mr. Lee: There is no standard definition of "anti-social hours" and it is therefore not possible to give a list of occupations which involve such hours. Legislation in this area is not being considered, as the Government believe that the terms and conditions of employment are a matter for employers and employees to negotiate without Government interference.

Women Workers

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what percentage of full-time working women in Cornwall receive less than £100 a week; and what is the figure for the United Kingdom as a whole.

Mr. Lee: Information on the distribution of earnings from the new earnings survey sample indicates that, in April 1987, some 37 per cent. of full-time female employees in Cornwall on adult rates, whose gross earnings were not affected by absence, earned less than £100 per week. The equivalent figure for the United Kingdom as a whole is 22 per cent.

Wages

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) if he will publish in the *Official Report*, a breakdown of average regional wage rates for skilled and unskilled manual workers, over the most recent decade for which figures are available;

(2) if he will publish in the *Official Report* a breakdown of average regional wage rates for skilled and unskilled manual workers.

Mr. Lee: Regional figures on the average earnings of full-time manual employees are published annually in part E of the report on the new earnings survey, copies of which are available in the Library. Information to distinguish the earnings of skilled and non-skilled manual employees is not readily available.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will publish in the *Official Report* the rates of wage inflation on a regional basis for the last five years for which figures are available.

Mr. Lee: The annual increase in average earnings is provided in the table.

Annual percentage increase in average gross earnings by region, 1983 to 1987

Full-time employees whose pay was not affected by absence; April of each year

per cent.

Regions	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*
South East	9·1	8·8	7·4	8·9	8·7
East Anglia	8·5	8·0	8·5	7·3	6·6
South West	9·4	7·6	7·6	7·5	7·5
West Midlands	8·0	8·7	7·1	7·9	6·8
East Midlands	7·5	7·5	6·2	9·1	6·3
Yorkshire and Humberside	8·5	6·4	8·0	6·9	6·8
North West	7·8	8·6	7·6	7·6	6·7
North	7·7	6·9	6·8	7·4	6·6
England	8·7	8·2	7·3	8·3	7·7
Wales	7·5	6·8	7·6	6·3	7·8
Scotland	8·8	8·0	6·5	6·5	6·4
Great Britain	8·6	8·1	7·2	8·0	7·7
Northern Ireland	7·3	9·4	5·9	4·9	9·6
United Kingdom	8·7	8·1	7·3	8·0	7·7

1983 increase on the basis of the earnings of males aged 21 and over and females aged 18 and over.

1984 onwards, increase on the basis of earnings of all those on adult rates.

Source: New Earnings Survey.

Unemployment Benefit (Investigations)

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what period is laid down in his Department's guidelines for dealing with a claimant who has been suspended from unemployment benefit pending investigations and the claimant being told the result of investigations.

Mr. Lee: Claimants may be suspended from unemployment benefit for a variety of reasons. In most cases, doubtful claims would be submitted for a decision to the adjudication officer. Social security legislation provides that once a claim has been submitted to an adjudication officer, as far as practicable it should be disposed of within 14 days. The adjudication officer is empowered, however, to make whatever inquiries are necessary before making a decision.

The period of time between a claimant being suspended from unemployment benefit and being notified of the result of investigations will therefore vary from one case to another, and will depend, among other things, on the complexity of the case.

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what period is laid down in his Department's guidelines for dealing with a claimant who reports that a payment of unemployment benefit is lost or stolen and the claimant being told the result of investigations.

Mr. Lee: My Department does not lay down any specific guidelines. The period of time between a claimant reporting a loss and being notified of the result of an investigation will vary from one case to another and will depend, among other things, on the complexity of the case under question.

Industrial Action (Ballots)

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many of those ballots on industrial action held since they became compulsory have *(a)* supported and *(b)* opposed such action.

Mr. Nicholls: There is no statutory requirement making it compulsory for a union to ballot its members about industrial action. Part II of the Trade Union Act 1984, however, makes immunity for official industrial action conditional on majority support from a properly conducted secret ballot. The Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service is currently aware of some 639 ballots which took place between 26 September 1984 and 22 June 1988 which were apparently designed to comply with the provisions of part II of the 1984 Act. In 85 per cent. of these ballots the result was in favour of taking industrial action, in 14 per cent. against and in 1 per cent. drawn. There may well have been other such ballots of which the service is unaware.

Wages Act 1986

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he has now supplied the committee of independent experts on the European social charter with the information it requires to assess whether the Wages Act 1986 has placed the United Kingdom in breach of article 2, paragraphs 2 and 3 of the charter; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: Information about the United Kingdom's application of paragraphs 2 and 3 of article 2 of the European social charter will form part of the United Kingdom's next report to the committee of independent experts in its application of the charter generally. This report is in course of preparation.

Wages Councils

Mr. Speller: To ask the Secretary of States for Employment if he will seek powers to remove from the scope of wages councils adults who wish to work part time for up to 18 hours weekly; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: No.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Export Promotion

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what measures his Department is taking to encourage British exports through its offices overseas; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: We attach considerable importance to the promotion of British exports. Our policy is to provide services to exporters which in principle are available to all firms and for all overseas markets, with special emphasis on helping small and medium sized firms, or newcomers to markets.

The United Kingdom's official commercial services are available in markets throughout the world, through the Diplomatic Service's network of some 190 commercial posts.

More than 500 United Kingdom-based and locally engaged commercial officers provide these services, representing about 30 per cent. of the Diplomatic Service's overseas front-line resources, nearly twice as much as any other single function.

Overseas posts undertake commercial work in close collaboration with the Department of Trade and Industry, which administers export promotion services in Britain. The FCO and DTI work closely together on export promotion and jointly manage export promotion services overseas.

Brussels European Council

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether the conclusions of the Brussels European Council have now been translated into legally binding documents.

Mrs. Chalker: Yes. Following the agreement reached by the Foreign Affairs Council in Luxembourg on 13-14 June, on which my right hon. and learned Friend reported to the House on 16 June, at column 218, I attended a special Foreign Affairs Council held in Luxembourg on 20 June. At that meeting the Council and the European Parliament reached agreement on the texts implementing the conclusions of the European Council in February on the future financing of the Community. This opened the way to their formal adoption, which took place at the Industry Council on 24 June. The documents have been placed in the Library of the House.

The only text finalised but not yet formally adopted is the directive on the harmonisation of GNP statistics. It has been unanimously agreed by the Council. Because the new own resources decision will form part of its legal base, however, it can be adopted formally only when the new own resources decision has been ratified by all member states.

We will now bring forward the necessary primary legislation to seek approval for the new own resources decision. The own resources decision and the Inter Governmental Agreement are also being published today as Command Papers (Cm. 419 and Cm. 418).

Cosmetics (Nigeria)

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has received from the Nigerian Government about the sale in Nigeria of skin-lightening cosmetics manufactured in the United Kingdom and containing either mercury or hydroquinone.

Mrs. Chalker: None.

Hanoi (Diplomatic Posts)

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the persons who occupied the post of Her Majesty's consul general or Her Majesty's ambassador in Hanoi since 1958.

Mrs. Chalker: The consuls general in Hanoi until 1974 and then Her Majesty's ambassadors to the Socialist Republic of Vietnam to date have been as follows:

Consuls General:

1958-60	M. T. Walker
1960-62	J. F. Ford, CMG, OBE
1962-64	J. K. Blackwell
1964-65	M. W. Ponsonby
1965-67	H. B. Shepherd
1967-68	B. T. W. Stewart
1968-69	G. C. G. Philo, MC
1969-70	Miss D. M. S. D. Park, OBE
1970-71	J. M. Liudzius, OBE
1971-72	J. B. Wright
1972-74	T. J. Everard

Her Majesty's Ambassadors

1974-75	J. H. Fawcett
1975-76	J. A. B. Stewart
1976-78	R. M. Tesh, CMG
1978-80	J. W. D. Margetson
1980-82	D. Tonkin
1982-85	M. E. Pike
1985-87	R. G. Tallboys
1987-date	E. T. Davies

EC Council of Ministers

Mr. Anthony Coombs: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will publish in the *Official Report* a statement of forthcoming business in the European Community Council of Ministers.

Mrs. Chalker: The usual forecast was deposited in the House earlier today. At present four meetings of the Council of Ministers are planned for July.

The Economic and Finance Council will meet on 11 July to consider the Commission's second quarterly review of the economic situation in the Community, and a proposal to harmonise arrangements under which means of transport may be temporarily imported into the Community.

The Agriculture Council meets on 18-19 July to discuss income aids.

The Foreign Affairs Council will meet on 25-26 July. The agenda includes discussion of progress in the negotiations with Czechoslovakia on trade in industrial products, and the establishment of the court of first instance. The mandate for the re-negotiation of the Lomé convention and issues arising from the Hanover European Council may also be on the agenda. Meeting as a conference of representatives of the member states, Ministers will discuss the appointment of judges to the European Court of Justice.

The Budget Council meets on 26 July to discuss the Commission's preliminary draft budget for 1989.

UN Special Session on Disarmament

Mr. Ian Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement following the third United Nations special session on disarmament 31 May to 25 June.

Mr. Mellor: The special session, which ended on 26 June, provided an important opportunity for the consideration of arms control issues. We regret that it was not able to agree a final document. The United Kingdom delegation played a full part in the debate and negotiations and put forward a number of specific proposals. The United Kingdom position was outlined in a memorandum dated 23 May, which was printed and distributed as a United Kingdom document.

In my right hon. and learned Friend's speech to the special session on 7 June he pressed for wider accession to the 1925 Geneva protocol, which bans the use of chemical weapons in war, and proposed measures to enable immediate investigation of CW use and international action against violence. We shall pursue those proposals in the appropriate fora.

As my right hon. and learned Friend also made clear in his speech, we have a full and practical arms control agenda in the nuclear, conventional and chemical fields. Despite the disappointing outcome at the special session, we shall press ahead with this work with the aim of achieving balanced and verifiable agreements which are consistent with the maintenance of the United Kingdom's security.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Civil Service Jobs

Mr. Holt: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many additional jobs in the Civil Service have been created in the north in the past three years.

Mr. Brooke: Details of all the additional jobs created by Departments in the past three years in the regions are not held centrally, but during 1987-88 the Department of Health and Social Security created over 500 new jobs at its Newcastle central office. In addition, 30 jobs are being created in Darlington this year by the Department of Education and Science. The total of Civil Service staff in post in the northern region at 1 April 1987 was 33,600.

For the future, Departments will be encouraged to consider all suitable locations for the relocation of existing work and the placement of new work, including those in the north, on the basis mentioned in my answer on 31 March, at columns *610-11*, to my hon. Friend the Member for Hazel Grove (Mr. Arnold). They will in suitable cases announce specific plans as and when these are prepared.

VAT

Mr. Wood: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he expects Her Majesty's Customs and Excise to publish the consultation document on items other than non-domestic construction covered by the European Court judgment on value added tax zero rating, which was promised in the Economic Secretary's statement to the House on 21 June, *Official Report*, column 958.

Mr. Lilley: This document has now been published, and copies are available in the Library.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his latest assessment of the extra revenue which would accrue to the Treasury if value added tax were levied at standard rate *(a)* for industry and commerce, to gas, electricity, water, sewerage, news services, protective clothing and footwear and *(b)* to all non-industrial and commercial buildings, as advocated by the European Economic Community Commission in the European Court of Justice; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 21 June 1988]:* If value added tax were levied at the standard rate on supplies made to commerce and industry of gas, electricity, water, sewerage, news services and protective clothes and footwear it is estimated that the full-year net revenue yield would be about £25 million at 1988-89 prices.

If value added tax were levied at the standard rate on all non-industrial and commercial buildings—that is, private sector housing—it is estimated that the full-year net revenue yield would be about £925 million at 1988-89 prices. However, I would refer my hon. Friend to my statement on the European Court's judgment on 21 June, at columns 957-58. The court ruled that the United Kingdom is not in breach of its treaty obligations by zero-rating non-industrial and commercial buildings.

Debt

Miss Lestor: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what information he has on the specific ways in which the United States of America will comply with the Toronto resolution on debt.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 29 June 1988]:* Major industrial countries agreed in Toronto on rescheduling the poorest countries' official debt within a framework of comparability. Creditors will be able to choose between concessional interest rates, longer repayment periods, partial write-offs or a combination of these options. The United States has said that it will consider a broader range of maturities.

Charities (Payroll Deduction Scheme)

Mr. Graham: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will make it his policy to fund a major information campaign to increase public awareness of the payroll deduction scheme to charitable organisations.

Mr. Brooke *[holding answer 28 June 1988]:* By introducing tax relief for payroll giving the Government have provided charities with access to a new source of funds with enormous potential, and it is primarily for charities to publicise the benefits. However, my right hon. Friend the Chancellor is conducting a seminar on 18 July to discuss with employers, charities, and the payroll-giving agencies what more might be done to encourage people to take part in the scheme.

Corporation Tax

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will give the total advance corporation tax repayments made by the Inland Revenue in the last financial year; what is the number of recipients of these refunds; and what percentage of the refunds go to the 10 biggest recipients.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 24 June 1988]:* Repayments of ACT amounted to £140 million in 1987-88. This figure represents the total ACT repaid to the companies which originally paid it. The 10 largest recipients accounted for 42 per cent. of the total repayment. I regret that a figure for the total number of recipients is not available.

Taxation (Late Payment Penalties)

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer on how many occasions in the last financial year financial penalties in respect of the late payment of *(a)* value added tax, *(b)* income tax, *(c)* national insurance contributions *(d)* PAYE and *(e)* customs and excise duties were waived; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 13 June 1988]:* About 30 value added tax penalty and default surcharge assessments have been waived—all on compassionate grounds. There are no penalties for late payment of income tax, class 1 national insurance contributions, PAYE by employers and customs and excise duties.

Taxation Statistics

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the number and proportion of tax units who will be paying more income tax and national insurance in real terms in 1988-89 than in 1978-79; and what is the number of tax units who will be paying a higher proportion of their gross income in tax and national insurance in 1988-89 than in 1978-79.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 23 May 1988]:* I regret the delay in replying. Information is not available to provide estimates about the experience of individuals in the form requested.

The tables are therefore based on the distributions in 1978-79 and 1988-89 of the gross earnings and investment income of married couples and single people aged under 65 who would be liable to pay income tax or national insurance contributions. The changes between the two years in average liability in real terms, and the proportions of income paid in income tax and national insurance contributions in each year, are shown for the corresponding deciles of each distribution. The estimates are provisional.

Single people aged under 65 liable to income tax and national insurance contributions ranged by gross income

Distribution by gross income deciles[2]	Real change[1] in average liability to income tax and NIC 1978-79 to 1988-89 Per cent.	Proportion of gross income paid in income tax and NIC 1978-79 Per cent.	1988-89 Per cent.
Lowest 10 per cent.	−29	9	6
Second	−5	14	12
Third	+4	18	16
Fourth	+10	21	20
Fifth	+13	23	22
Sixth	+10	25	2
Seventh	+11	26	23

Distribution by gross income deciles[2]	*Real change*[1] *in average liability to income tax and NIC 1978-79 to 1988-89 Per cent.*	*Proportion of gross income paid in income tax and NIC*	
		1978-79 Per cent.	*1988-89 Per cent.*
Eighth	+15	27	24
Ninth	+14	28	24
Highest 10 per cent.	+20	32	26
All	13	25	22

[1] Calculated by reference to the forecast movement in the index of retail prices between 1978-79 and 1988-89.

[2] Each decile in 1978-79 contains 0·81 million single people and in 1988-89 0·89 million.

Married Couples and Single People Aged Under 65 Liable to Income Tax and National Insurance Contributions Ranged by Gross Income

Distribution by Gross Income	*Real change*[1] *in average liability to income tax and NIC*	*Proportion of Gross Income paid in income tax and NIC*	
Deciles[2]	*1978-79 to 1988-89 per cent.*	*1978-79 per cent.*	*1988-89 per cent.*
Lowest 10 per cent.	−19	12	9
Second	−3	18	15
Third	+2	21	19
Fourth	+1	23	20
Fifth	+7	23	21
Sixth	+7	23	21
Seventh	+12	23	21
Eighth	+15	24	21
Ninth	+20	25	22
Highest 10 per cent.	+26	31	26
ALL	15	25	22

[1] Calculated by reference to the forecast movement in the index of retail prices between 1978-79 and 1988-89.

[2] Each decile in 1978-79 contains 1·95 million married couples and single people and in 1988-89 1·96 million.

Married Couples Aged Under 65 Liable to Income Tax and National Insurance Contributions Ranged by Gross Income

Distribution by gross income	*Real change*[1] *in average liability to income tax and NIC 1978-79 to 1988-89*	*Proportion of gross income paid in income tax and NIC*	
Deciles[2]	*Percentage*	*1978-79 Percentage*	*1988-89 Percentage*
Lowest 10 per cent.	−11	11	9
Second	−3	18	15
Third	+2	20	17
Fourth	+5	22	19
Fifth	+12	22	20
Sixth	+16	23	20
Seventh	+18	23	21
Eighth	+23	24	22
Ninth	+24	25	22
Highest 10 per cent.	+30	32	27
All	19	24	22

[1] Calculated by reference to the forecast movement in the index of retail prices between 1978-79 and 1988-89.

[2] Each decile in 1978-79 contains 1·14 million married couples and in 1988-89 1·07 million.

Member's Question

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when the hon. Member for Taunton can expect to receive a reply to his question tabled for answer on 17 June relating to income tax payable at certain levels of income.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I shall let my hon. Friend have a reply as soon as possible.

TRANSPORT

Channel Tunnel

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if any changes have been made to the arrangements for the development of the Channel tunnel set out in the Channel fixed link concession agreement dated as of 14 March 1986 Cmnd. 9769.

Mr. David Mitchell: Yes. Amendments have been made which modify certain provisions in annex II to the concession agreement dealing with the acquisition of land, ownership of the fixed link and rights of the concessionaires in so far as these relate to the United Kingdom. The amendments have been made with the agreement of the British and French Governments and the concessionaires, and came into effect on 9 May 1988. Copies have been placed in the Libraries of both Houses. (Amendment No. 1 to Concession Agreement, Cmnd. 406).

Drinking and Driving

Sir Bernard Braine: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what steps are being taken to ensure that the precise number and relative proportions of deaths among drivers, passengers and pedestrians in road traffic accidents which are alcohol related are accurately recorded.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: It is believed that virtually all fatal accidents are reported. The STATS 19 Accident Report form records whether any of the involved drivers-riders were required to take a breath test and, if they were, what the result was. Not all drink-drive accidents are identified as such. It is not always possible to administer breath tests at the scene of an accident and the drunken driver may die or be so badly injured that he is unable to provide a sample of breath.

It is known that many accidents involving minor injuries are not reported to the police.

Coroners in England and Wales and procurators fiscal in Scotland supply data to the Transport and Road Research Laboratory describing the blood-alcohol levels of people aged 16 or over who died within 12 hours of being injured in a road accident; these are matched with information from the STATS 19 form. Returns for approximately 60 per cent. of these fatalities are currently received. The Department is encouraging coroners and procurators fiscal to help improve this vital source of information.

Sir Bernard Braine: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what proportion of crashes involving more than one vehicle resulting in deaths of individuals without alcohol in their blood are caused by drivers with illegal blood alcohol levels.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I shall be writing to my right hon. Friend.

Sir Bernard Braine: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment he has made of the value of breath test surveys of the frequency of drinking and driving as a bench mark against which to judge whether counter-measures against the problem are having an effect; and what studies have been authorised of the frequency of drinking and driving.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The roadside surveys of drinking and driving completed earlier this month will provide an indicator of the effectiveness of drink driving countermeasures. The results are now being analysed.

Barton-le-Clay Bypass, Bedfordshire

Mr. John Carlisle: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects the process of offering the tenders for the construction of the A6 bypass at Barton-le-Clay, Befordshire to be completed.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Tenders were invited on 26 May. They are due to be returned by 4 August.

Mr. John Carlisle: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport on what date he expects the A6 Barton-le-Clay bypass work to be completed.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: In the autumn of 1990.

Mr. John Carlisle: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether there has been any delay from the original dates indicated to the Bedfordshire county council regarding commencement of work on the A6 Barton-le-Clay bypass, Bedfordshire.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The scheme has been listed in successive White Papers for a start of works in the period 1986 to March 1989. I expect construction to start later this year, in line with this programme.

Heavy Goods Vehicles, Kent

Mr. Rowe: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is his best estimate of the amount by which heavy goods vehicle movements in Kent increases for each 1 per cent. increase in the national economy.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The Department's national traffic forecasts for all roads in Great Britain assume that HGV traffic grows by 0·7 per cent. for each 1 per cent. increase in GDP. Local traffic forecasts are prepared for the appraisal of individual new trunk road schemes, where appropriate. These take account of expected growth in relevant economic activity and population.

Road Capacity

Mr. Rowe: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what are the principal criteria by which he forecasts the demand for increased road capacity.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The objectives of building roads are to assist economic growth by reducing transport costs, to improve the environment by removing through traffic (especially lorries) from unsuitable roads in towns and villages, and to enhance road safety.

Forecasts of traffic growth, which depends on changes in gross domestic product, changes in fuel prices and changes in people's behaviour over time, are given great weight in the choice and assessment of road improvement schemes.

The cost and feasibility of a particular scheme, its effects on the environment, and its likely effects on the incidence of accidents, are also very relevant.

We are continuously developing the trunk road network through a large new construction and improvement programme, worth some £5 billion, which is reviewed regularly. Schemes are added to this programme as the need is identified.

Kent (Road Accidents)

Mr. Rowe: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many people have been *(a)* killed, *(b)* seriously injured and *(c)* otherwise injured on the roads of Kent in the current year by (i) month and (ii) type of accident.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The information requested is not available in the Department.

M20 (Hollingbourne and Ashford)

Mr. Rowe: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when the extension of the M20 between Hollingbourne and Ashford will be completed.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: About the end of 1990.

Motorway Service Area, Hollingbourne

Mr. Rowe: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects the report of the inspector into the appeal against the construction of a motorway service area at Hollingbourne.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The inspector's reports on the public inquiries into planning applications in respect of proposals for a motorway service area at Hollingbourne, and into a related draft compulsory purchase order, have now been submitted to my right hon. Friends the Secretary of State for the Environment and the Secretary of State for Transport, respectively. The reports are under consideration.

Redbridge Works (Closure)

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received from the National Union of Railwaymen about the proposed closure of the Redbridge works and the transfer of its employees to Eastleigh.

Mr. David Mitchell: None

Singapore

Mrs. Peacock: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he has any plans to seek to increase the number of flights between the United Kingdom and the Republic of Singapore; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: United Kingdom officials met the Singapore Government last week and had a useful exchange of views on both United Kingdom-Singapore and Hong Kong—Singapore air services arrangements. There will be a further meeting.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Security

10. **Mr. William Ross:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what recent steps he has taken to improve security in Northern Ireland.

20. **Sir John Biggs-Davison:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement about Her Majesty's Government's efforts to improve security in the Province.

Mr. Stanley: Expenditure on law and order in Northern Ireland this year will be at its highest-ever level in real terms. The full-time strength of the RUC is also at its highest-ever level. A third brigade headquarters comes into being tomorrow with specific operational responsibility for the border area. Certain new legislative measures to combat terrorism and racketeering are under parliamentary consideration now and more will be being proposed. Cross-border security co-operation has improved and will be improved further.

16. **Mr. Molyneaux:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the security situation.

23. **Mr. Duffy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the security situation in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Tom King: I refer the right hon. Gentleman and the hon. Gentleman to the answer I gave earlier today to the hon. Member for Brent, East (Mr. Livingstone).

30. **Mr. Flannery:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he will next meet Ministers of the Irish Republic to discuss security issues.

Mr. Tom King: I refer the hon. Member to a reply I gave earlier to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Basingstoke (Mr. Hunter.)

Mr. Flannery: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the security situation in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Tom King: Since 26 May 1988, nine people have been killed in Northern Ireland. These deaths include the murder of a full-time UDR soldier by the Provisional IRA; the murder of two civilians in Belfast and the murder by the Provisional IRA of six soldiers in a charity event at Lisburn on 15 June. The Provisional IRA also claimed responsibility for the death of one of the civilians and whilst no organisation has claimed responsibility for the other death, it is believed to have been the work of a Loyalist paramilitary group.

The efforts of the security forces are continuing to yield results. Since the beginning of the year a total of 182 people have been charged with serious offences, including 11 with murder and 10 with attempted murder. A total of 307 weapons, approximately 70,400 rounds of ammunition and about 4,100 lb of explosives have been recovered in Northern Ireland.

I also understand that the Garda Siochana has recovered some 200 weapons, almost 141,000 rounds of ammunition and 600 lb of commercial explosives.

De Lorean Project

11. **Mr. Cryer:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many civil servants in his Department have resigned or been redeployed as a result of inquiries into the De Lorean project; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Viggers: None. I have nothing to add to the Department of Finance and Personnel memoranda of 24 October 1984 and 8 January 1985 on the 25th report from the Committee of Public Accounts.

Michael Tighe

12. **Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will set up an inquiry into the circumstances in which listening devices came to be placed in the hayshed in which Michael Tighe was killed and as to why no police action was taken before the arrival of the Manchester police to ascertain the identity of those who placed the devices.

Mr. Tom King: No.

Irish Distillers

13. **Mr. Cohen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what discussions he has had over the proposed takeover of Irish Distillers; and if he will make a statement.

19. **Mr. Battle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the proposed takeover of Irish Distillers and its likely impact on the Northern Ireland economy.

Mr. Viggers: Irish Distillers is registered in the Republic of Ireland, where most of its activities are based. I have not therefore been directly involved in the current offer to acquire the company. However, the Industrial Development Board for Northern Ireland is maintaining close contact with the "Old Bushmills" Distillery Company Ltd. which is part of the Irish Distillers group and is located in County Antrim.

Housing Executive

14. **Mr. Clifford Forsythe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he is satisfied that the standard of construction and workmanship carried out in Housing Executive dwellings is of a sufficiently high standard.

Mr. Needham: This is a matter for the chairman of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, who has assured me that all reasonable steps are taken to achieve satisfactory standards of workmanship on the substantial range and number of building contracts let by the Housing Executive each year.

Nurses (Education)

15. **Rev. Martin Smyth:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what representations he has received concerning the shortfall of revenue allocation for 1988-89 for nurse education; what impact he estimates this will have on the Health Service in Northern Ireland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Needham: Representations were made by the National Board for Nursing, Midwifery and Health

Visiting in its letter of 25 May 1988 to the Department of Health and Social Services which alleged there was a shortfall of £154,000 in its revenue allocation for the 1988-89 financial year. The letter also contained a request that the permanent secretary and the chief nursing officer of the Department meet a deputation from the national board. This request has been accepted and arrangements for the meeting are being finalised. It will be for the national board to decide its priorities within the available revenue allocation, but it is expected that in the current year some vacant posts might not be filled.

Harland and Wolff

17. **Dr. Moonie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he has any plans to privatise shipbuilding operations at Harland and Wolff; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Viggers: As I indicated in my response to the Adjournment debate on 27 May, if there were to be an expression of interest in the acquisition of Harland and Wolff the Government would take any such proposal very seriously.

An expression of interest in the acquisition of Harland and Wolff has now come forward from Tikkoo Cruise Line Limited. The Government will consider this and any proposals from any other parties which might lead to the privatisation of the company.

24. **Mr. Madden:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he has any plans to meet trade union representatives from Harland and Wolff to discuss the future of the shipyards; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Viggers: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has no immediate plans to meet trade union representatives from Harland and Wolff. However, I understand he may meet union representatives within the Province later this year to discuss wider economic issues.

Debt

18. **Mr. Galloway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he plans to repeal the Payments for Debt (Emergency Provisions) Act (Northern Ireland) 1971 in the near future.

27. **Mr. Cummings:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he intends to seek to repeal the Payments for Debt (Emergency Provisions) Act (Northern Ireland) 1971.

29. **Mr. Illsley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland the Government plan to repeal the Payments for Debt (Emergency Provisions) Act (Northern Ireland) 1971 in the near future.

Mr. Stanley: No. However, the need for the legislation is kept under review.

Single Payments

21. **Mr. McGrady:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many people in Northern Ireland were awarded single payments between 1 April 1987 and 31 May 1987; and how many were awarded similar benefit under the social fund legislation between 11 April and 31 May of the current year.

Mr. Needham: Information is not collected in the precise form requested, but the available information is as follows:

Period	*Type*	*Number*
8 April 1987 to 2 June 1987	Single payments	27,029
11 April 1988 to 31 May 1988	Community care grants and loans	[1]3,984

During the latter period 41,464[1] single payments were also awarded on claims received before 11 April 1988.

[1] Provisional figures.

Stalker-Sampson Report

22. **Mr. Archer:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when the inquiries by the Northern Ireland Police Authority and Mr. Charles Kelly into the Royal Ulster Constabulary, relating to the Stalker-Sampson report, will be completed.

Mr. Canavan: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether the inquiries into the Royal Ulster Constabulary arising out of the Stalker-Sampson report have been completed.

Mr. Tom King: The completed report by Mr. Charles Kelly on the conduct of officers below the rank of assistant chief constable was given to the Chief Constable on 20 June 1988. I understand that a decision on disciplinary proceedings will be announced shortly. On 29 June the Police Authority for Northern Ireland announced that it had decided not to appoint an officer to carry out further investigations into Mr. Sampson's observations on the role played by more senior officers.

28. **Ms. Short:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether Mr. Charles Kelly has produced a draft or interim report following his inquiries into the Royal Ulster Constabulary relating to the Stalker-Sampson report.

Mr. Tom King: Mr. Kelly furnished a full report to the Chief Constable on 20 June 1988.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether the reports of the inquiries by Mr. Charles Kelly and the Northern Ireland Police Authority on the Royal Ulster Constabulary arising out of the Stalker-Sampson report will be published.

Mr. Tom King: No. As is the practice in all police disciplinary cases, reports on disciplinary issues arising out of the inquiries by Mr. Stalker and Mr. Sampson are confidential.

Legislation

25. **Mr. McCusker:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what proposals he has for improving parliamentary procedures relating to Northern Ireland legislation.

Mr. Tom King: We remain ready to discuss changes in Northern Ireland legislative procedures, or the better use of existing procedures, and how any such changes might affect the wider context of progress towards devolved government.

Kilroot Power Station

26. **Mr. Foulkes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he now expects to announce a decision regarding phase II of Kilroot power station.

Mr. Viggers: The investment appraisal of Kilroot II and the competing public and private sector lignite proposals is still being considered. When this process is completed the decision will be announced as soon as possible thereafter.

Unemployment

31. **Mr. Beggs:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what progress is being made on reducing unemployment in Northern Ireland by the Industrial Development Board, the Local Enterprise Development Unit and the Department of Economic Development Northern Ireland.

Mr. Viggers: Seasonally adjusted unemployment in Northern Ireland has fallen over the last year by 9,400. This is the largest annual decrease in seasonally adjusted unemployment in Northern Ireland for 15 years.

The IDB, LEDU and DED have contributed substantially to this progress. Both LEDU and the IDB were very successful last financial year. The DED continues to develop its wide range of training and support services. The efforts of these bodies to sustain progress will continue.

The Industrial Development Board and Local Enterprise Development Unit were successful in promoting 5,300 and 3,973 jobs respectively in the year ended 31 March 1988, and they assisted in the advancement of business through a range of training and support services together with the Department of Economic Development. The latest available figures show that seasonally adjusted unemployment in Northern Ireland stands at 116,700, a reduction of 9,400 in the last 12 months.

Police Stations (Closures)

32. **Rev. Ian Paisley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement about the proposed closure of police stations around the Ballymena district.

Mr. Stanley: The deployment of police manpower, including the location of police stations, is a matter for the Chief Constable in consultation with the Police Authority. Operational requirements are kept continuously under review, but I understand it is not planned to close any RUC stations in the Ballymena area in the immediate future.

Grammar Schools

33. **Mr. Kilfedder:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will provide more grammar school places in North Down.

Dr. Mawhinney: It is a matter for the South-Eastern education and library board to ensure that there are sufficient secondary school places available to offer all pupils educational opportunities in accordance with their age, aptitude and ability.

Mentally Ill People

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was, for hospital services for mentally ill people in Northern Ireland, the number of nursing staff per occupied bed, expenditure after allowing for general inflation, expenditure after allowing for Hospital and Community Health Service inflation, the number of psychiatric day patients, the number of out-patients attendances and occupied in-patient beds for each year from 1976-77.

Mr. Needham: The information requested is as follows:

Year	*Number of nursing staff per occupied bed*	*Expenditure as adjusted for:*		*Day patient attendance*	*Out-patient attendances*	*Occupied in-patient beds*
		General inflation	*HCHS inflation*			
1976-77	Not available	46,731,654	50,215,534	12,859	25,762	4,281
1977-78	0·57	45,852,996	51,679,194	14,018	23,272	4,186
1978-79	0·61	45,435,875	51,728,084	18,465	23,059	4,100
1979-80	0·63	47,600,592	52,554,492	17,818	23,022	3,997
1980-81	0·66	51,190,850	52,354,547	17,889	35,575	3,843
1981-82	0·72	50,163,763	52,117,805	17,440	40,003	3,771
1982-83	0·74	50,685,151	53,026,416	18,371	43,271	3,642
1983-84	0·76	51,730,229	53,897,913	18,058	45,407	3,650
1984-85	0·76	52,193,316	53,694,784	22,128	49,282	3,571
1985-86	0·73	50,167,227	51,983,007	21,496	55,063	3,515
1986-87	0·79	50,611,595	50,611,595	21,653	33,439	3,291

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether the consultants referred to by the hon. Member for Antrim, East, *Official Report*, column 1263, of 4 February designed larger windows or changed a window design provided by the Housing Executive without reference to the Housing Executive; what were the precise instructions given to those consultants by the Housing Executive in respect of the windows in the contract at Westmount avenue, Windmill, Carrickfergus; and who was responsible for the payment of increase in costs to the Housing Executive which arose from a different size of window being installed.

Mr. Needham: This is a matter for the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, but I have been advised by the chief executive that the consultants arranged for the installation of a larger bedroom window than specified in five out of 215 houses without consulting the executive. The executive had earlier specified the installation of replacement windows and had approved detailed sketches by the consultants showing the design and size of windows to be installed. There was no increase in cost to the executive.

IRA

Mr. John M. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will take steps to provide an opportunity for the Northern Ireland parties represented in this House to unite behind a declaration designed to isolate the Irish Republican Army and its political supporters.

Mr. Tom King: I cannot helpfully add to the replies I gave to my hon. Friend on 24 March, at column *218*, and on 27 May, at column *331*.

Anglo-Irish Agreement

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what assessment he has made of the implications for the future of the Anglo-Irish Agreement of the recent difficulties over extradition from Eire.

Mr. Stanley: These difficulties were discussed at the meeting of the Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Conference on 17 June, when both British and Irish Ministers reaffirmed their determination to ensure effective extradition arrangements. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and the Taoiseach reaffirmed their respective Governments' total commitment to the Anglo-Irish Agreement earlier this week.

Irish Language

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what contact there has been between the Department of Education and voluntary Irish language groups in Northern Ireland since 1980; and if he will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply given on 29 June 1988.

West Belfast

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he last met community groups from west Belfast to discuss the economic and social problems of the area; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Needham: There is regular contact with local community groups to discuss how to improve economic and social conditions. As recently as 20 June my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and I met Bishop Daly and members of the West Belfast enterprise board. My right hon. Friend hopes shortly to announce further measures to be taken in areas of Belfast characterised by exceptionally high unemployment and poor rates of economic activity.

Local Government Records

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list those district councils in Northern Ireland which have not yet transferred all the records of the former local government authorities in Northern Ireland to the Public Records Office.

Mr. Needham: No district council in Northern Ireland has transferred to the Public Record Office all the records of the former local government authority or authorities for its area.

Sewage Disposal

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many outlets exist on the east Antrim coast for discharging of untreated sewage into the sea.

Mr. Needham: Five.

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the remit of the marine survey to investigate the sewage disposal arrangements in the Islandmagee area, due to report in November.

Mr. Needham: Marine surveys in the Islandmagee area, which had been programmed for 1988, have had to be deferred because of other commitments. Marine surveys indicate, among other things, whether existing sewage disposal arrangements are environmentally satisfactory.

Potholes

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how much compensation has been paid by his Department to car drivers who have driven into potholes on public roads and damaged their cars.

Mr. Needham: Approximately £20,000 was paid in the 1987-88 financial year.

Island Road, Ballycarry

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when it is expected that work will begin to alleviate the dangerous driving conditions at Island road, Ballycarry.

Mr. Needham: The Department of the Environment for Northern Ireland has two improvement schemes planned for Island road, Ballycarry. It is hoped that these will start in the 1989-90 and 1990-91 financial years respectively, subject to the successful acquisition of the necessary land.

Ministerial Visits

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many ministerial visits were undertaken by the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland in the Province in 1985, 1986, 1987 and 1988.

Mr. Tom King: The information requested could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Morey Hills Development, Donaghadee

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland why there was no full reply to the letter of 23 November 1987, by Miss M. Yeats of 85 Millisle road, Donaghadee about the proposed development at 12 Morey hills, Millisle road, Donaghadee, until 4 March.

Mr. Needham: The acknowledgement of the letter of 23 November was considered appropriate to its content. The Department responded fully to five subsequent letters on 4 March 1988.

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what conditions were included in the planning approval for the dwelling at site No. 13 Morey hills development, Millisle road, Donaghadee to ensure that there will be no soil slippage from this plot into the gardens at Nos. 83 and 85 Millisle road, Donaghadee.

Mr. Needham: None. It was not considered necessary to impose such a condition, given the relative levels involved.

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what floor level was given planning approval for the dwelling at site 12 Morey hills development, Millisle road, Donaghadee; and what is the floor level as constructed.

Mr. Needham: The planning permission granted did not specify floor levels. The finished floor level, as related to a bench mark of 16·37 m on the garden walls of houses on the Millisle road, Donaghadee, is 17·10 m.

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what were the dimensions of the window, which is now replaced by a patio door, that were given planning approval for the private dwelling at 12 Morey hills development, Millisle road, Donaghadee; and what are the dimensions of the replacement patio door.

Mr. Needham: The window shown in the approved plans measured 1·1 m high by 1·8 m wide. A patio door measuirng approximately 2·2 m high by 1·8 m wide was constructed instead of the window.

Cross-border Co-operation

Mr. Ian Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the present state of cross-border co-operation.

Mr. Stanley: Co-operation takes place over a wide range of activities, and we and the Irish Government are committed to developing it further. Since the signing of the Anglo-Irish Agreement a number of improvements in cross-border security co-operation have been made, and at the meeting of the Anglo-Irish Conference on 17 June British and Irish Ministers discussed a number of issues with a view to enhancing further cross-border co-operation on security matters. The conference also agreed to consider ways in which bilateral contacts between British and Irish Ministers on economic and social questions might be reinforced.

Young Prisoners

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many prisoners held in Northern Ireland gaols are below the age of 21 years; and what is that figure as a percentage of all prisoners held in Northern Ireland gaols.

Mr. Stanley: On 5 June there were 95 prisoners under the age of 21 years. This is 5·7 per cent. of the total of 1,679 prisoners in the five prisons for adults in Northern Ireland. In addition there were 179 inmates under 21 years ordered to be detained in young offenders' centres. This is 90·9 per cent. of the total of 197 YOC inmates. Offenders aged under 21 who are given sentences of less than three years are required by law to be detained in young offenders' centres rather than prisons.

Security Forces (Offences)

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will give details for 1986 and 1987 of the number of members of the Ulster Defence Regiment, the Royal Ulster Constabulary, their respective reserves, and the British Army, who have been charged with offences and who have been convicted of offences, giving details of custodial sentences imposed, and separately for charges and convictions concerning murder, attempted murder, membership of illegal organisations, conspiracy to cause explosions, withholding information concerning terrorist activities, possession of explosives, possession of explosives with intent to cause bodily harm, possession of firearms, possession of firearms with intent to cause bodily harm and other offences classified as scheduled offences.

Mr. Stanley: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave him on 29 June.

Investment

Mr. Baldry: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the amount of new overseas investment in Northern Ireland for the last year for which figures are available.

Mr. Viggers: The Industrial Development Board has had a successful year in promoting investment from overseas. The total number of jobs promoted was 5,300, of which 867 were attributable to 12 new projects introduced from overseas companies already located within Northern Ireland. The aggregate investment associated with these developments by overseas companies was more than £150million.

Identity Cards

Mr. Favell: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will introduce an identity card to assist in the fight against terrorism.

Mr. Stanley: No. The security forces already have adequate powers for establishing a person's identity.

Shipbuilding

Sir John Farr: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what new initiative he is taking to stimulate the flow of shipbuilding orders to Belfast.

Mr. Viggers: Shipbuilding orders for Belfast are dependent on Harland and Wolff's ability to compete in the world market on a commercial basis.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Electro-convulsive Therapy

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish in the *Official Report* any analysis available of the ethnic distribution of patients receiving electro-convulsive therapy treatment; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: I regret that no such analysis is available centrally.

Housing Benefit

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people are expected to benefit from the change in the upper capital limit for housing benefit from £6,000 to £8,000 and what estimate he has made of the number of gainers from raising the lower limit of £3,000 to £5,000.

Mr. Portillo: We expect that about 100,000 people will be brought back within the scope of housing benefit as a result of increasing the capital limit to £8,000. A further 50,000 would be brought back in if the lower limit were to be raised from £3,000 to £5,000, and all those on housing benefit with savings of over £3,000 would see some gain in their entitlement.

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if, pursuant to the answer given to the hon. Member for Walsall, North on 27 June over the publicising of the transitional arrangements relating to loss of housing benefit, it is intended to use television and the provincial press.

Mr. Portillo: No.

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will estimate the cost of [illegible]sing the starting point for reducing housing benefit to £5,[illegible]00 capital; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo *[holding answer 3 May 1988]*: The estimated cost of increasing the starting point in housing benefit from £3,000 to £5,000 is £50 million at 1988-89 prices.

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give the number of claimants who have lost housing benefit arising from the new social security regulations and who will not benefit from the transitional arrangements.

Mr. Portillo *[holding answer 3 May 1988]*: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave him on 16 June, at column *286*. A precise estimate of the numbers who were receiving housing benefit prior to April but are not covered by the transitional payment scheme is not available. The tables previously published remain the best guide to the overall structural effect of the reforms.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services whether housing benefit recipients who were able to take advantage of the higher level of benefit under the former higher rent scheme and who have now lost more than £2·50 per week on the new levels of housing benefit will be eligible for transitional protection.

Mr. Portillo *[holding answer 14 June 1988]*: Yes, provided they are in one of the categories eligible to receive transitional payments. These are listed on page 2 of leaflet "RR4 Housing Benefit—New Rules", a copy of which has been placed in the Library.

Mr. Blair: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many claims have been made to his Department for housing benefit support transitional protection.

Mr. Portillo *[holding answer 23 June 1988]*: To date, 45,788.

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many copies of form RR4 have been *(a)* printed, and *(b)* distributed to (i) post offices, (ii) offices of his Department and (iii) volunteer advice agencies; what information he has as to their current availability to the public; and what is his estimate of the numbers of applicants who will return completed forms.

Mr. Portillo: A total of 8·5 million copies of leaflet "RR4 Housing Benefit—New Rules" have been printed.

Of these, 2 million copies were sent to a Post Office warehouse. Copies were distributed from there to all post offices, and have been on display in main post offices since Monday 13 June.

Each local social security office was sent 500 copies of RR4 in the first week of June. Stocks have also been sent to other DHSS offices such as regional offices, mobile publicity offices, staff training centres, and the transitional payments unit in Glasgow. Stocks can be reordered from a central depot.

A copy of RR4 has been sent to each of the 16,000 addresses on a voluntary sector mailing list. Three thousand copies were originally sent to the National Association of CAB for distribution to its branches. In addition, 20 copies were sent to each citizens advice bureau office from this Department on 20 June.

One thousand copies of RR4 were also sent to each local authority. By 29 June they had ordered over 800,000 further copies for local use.

It is not possible to estimate how many applicants will eventually return a form but 45,788 completed applications on RR4s have already been received by the Glasgow Unit.

Tranquillisers

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Social Services if he will list the self-help groups for tranquilliser addiction which receive direct help from his Department and those which have applied for help and been refused, giving the reasons for the refusal.

Mrs. Currie *[holding answer 22 June 1988]*: Under the central funding initiative, which was set up to pump-prime the development of drug misuse services, the following voluntary organisations, specifically for those dependent on tranquillisers, received or are receiving grants totalling £339,000:—

Tranx (Harrow)
Tranx Release (Northampton)
MIND (Copeland)(Tranquilliser Withdrawal Scheme)
North East Council on Addictions (Tranquilliser Advice and Support Project)

All the organisations specifically for those dependent on tranquillisers which applied have been given funding under this scheme.

Recently Tranx (UK) and the North-East Council on Addictions (NECA) applied for assistance under section 64 of the Health Services and Public Health Act 1968—a scheme designed primarily to contribute towards the central costs of national voluntary organisations. Since these applications for grants were essentially for local and service projects the Department decided that they did not meet the criteria of the scheme. However, both organisations are well supported by a wide variety of funders, including regional and district health authorities, local authorities, urban aid and charitable trusts, to the sum of approximately £82,000 for Tranx (UK) in 1988-89 and approximately £307,000 for NECA in 1987-88. This demonstrates the growing co-operation between the public and private sectors in the funding of voluntary organisations, a policy the Government have been promoting in this field by means of an additional £6 million a year direct to health authorities specifically to develop drug misuse services, including services for those dependent on tranquillisers.

Tameside and Glossop DHA

Mr. Pendry: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the expenditure of Tameside and Glossop district health authority in each of the last 10 years in cash terms, adjusted for inflation and as a percentage of the regional total.

Mr. Newton: The information requested for the latest available 10-year period is shown in the table:

Tameside and Glossop health authority[1]

	Revenue expenditure			*Capital expenditure*		
	Per annual accounts £000	*at 1986-87 prices £000*	*Proportion of region total per cent.*	*Per annual accounts £000*	*at 1986-87 prices £000*	*proportion of region total per cent*
1977-78	11,058	23,980	3·44	1,123	2,426	3·82
1978-79	13,184	25,730	3·59	1,247	2,434	3·59
1979-80	15,376	25,676	3·46	1,170	1,954	2·51
1980-81	20,353	28,664	3·51	1,565	2,204	2·78
1981-82	23,660	30,320	3·62	2,560	3,281	3·26
1982-83	25,341	30,316	3·61	3,339	3,994	4·53
1983-84	26,576	30,366	3·60	2,473	2,826	4·40
1984-85	28,051	30,695	3·58	4,679	5,120	6·33
1985-86	29,165	30,116	3·54	7,716	7,967	10·66
1986-87	31,551	31,551	3·58	5,793	5,793	10·58

[1] Tameside area health authority (a single district area and broadly comparable) for the years before 1982-83.

Source:

Annual accounts submitted to the Department by the Tameside and Glossop health authority and other health authorities comprising the North Western region (Predecessor authorities for the years before 1982-83).

Notes to the table:

1. The figures for earlier years have been expressed at 1986-87 prices by the use of the gross domestic product deflator.
2. The figures for capital expenditure include sums in respect of district (formerly area) schemes recorded in the annual accounts of the North Western regional health authority. Revenue and capital expenditure incurred by the latter authority for the region as a whole is excluded.
3. Expenditure on family practitioner services is excluded; such expenditure is accounted for by family practitioner committees (FPCs). However, prior to 1 April 1985 the Tameside and Glossop health authority, in common with many other district health authorities, had an associated FPC and the district and predecessor authority's expenditure figures for the financial years before 1985-86 include elements relating to FPC administration expenses which are not separately identifiable..

Invalid Care Allowance

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many claims for invalid care allowance are received annually; how many of these claims are successful; and what is the average length of time for processing such claims.

Mr. Scott: A total of 64,382 invalid care allowance claims were received in the 12 months up to 29 April 1988 and, of the claims decided in that period, some 62,649 were successful. The average time taken to decide claims is currently 20·3 weeks, but we are seeking to reduce this substantially.

Pensions

Sir John Farr: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what would be the cost of increasing the extra pension for the very old over 80 years from 25p a week at 80 years by an extra 10p per week for every year of age thereafter.

Mr. Scott: The estimated cost of increasing the age addition by 10p a week for each year of age above 80 years would be £45 million a year.

Sir John Farr: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what would be the estimated cost of increasing the extra pension for the very old over 80 years, from 25p a week to *(a)* 50p a week and *(b)* £1 per week.

Mr. Scott: The estimated cost of increasing the age addition to 50p a week is £25 million a year, and to £1 a week £75 million a year.

St. Peter's Hospital, Chertsey (Deaths)

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the deaths not due to natural causes that have occurred since 1 January 1980 at the Abraham Cowley trust in St. Peter's hospital, Chertsey; and what is the average level of such deaths for such units nationally.

Mrs. Currie: I understand from North West Surrey health authority that there have been seven deaths at the Abraham Cowley unit due to non-natural causes since 1980. Following the two most recent deaths the health authority has tightened up drug security procedures and is installing special hot water controls.

The national information requested is not available. The table shows the relationship between total deaths and deaths from non-natural causes in psychiatric hospitals in England and Wales from 1980 to 1985 which is the latest available information.

Deaths occurring in NHS psychiatric hospitals in England and Wales 1980-1985

	1985	*1984*	*1983*	*1982*	*1981*	*1980*
1. Total deaths in psychiatric hospitals all causes						
Male	4,892	4,590	4,928	4,916	4,755	4,981
Female	6,427	6,236	6,530	6,712	6,621	7,001
2. Deaths from external causes						
Male	116	111	101	105	93	129
Female	114	108	111	123	142	151

	1985	1984	1983	1982	1981	1980
3. 2 (above) expressed as a percentage of 1 (above)						
Male	2·37	2·42	2·05	2·14	1·96	2·59
Female	1·77	1·73	1·70	1·83	2·14	2·16
4. Deaths from suicides						
Male	31	26	28	17	20	24
Female	11	12	13	15	16	19
5. 4 (above) expressed as a percentage of 1 (above)						
Male	0·63	0·57	0·57	0·35	0·42	0·48
Female	0·17	0·19	0·20	0·22	0·24	0·27

Note:

1. These figures include all those who died in NHS psychiatric hospitals in England and Wales between 1980 and 1985 (ie patients, staff and visitors) and are likely to exclude deaths in psychiatric units in general hospitals.
2. *Source* O.P.C.S.

Disabled People

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what guidance he will issue to local authorities on whether they are to disregard payments from the Independent Living Fund when assessing an individual's ability to pay for any services provided by them under section 2 of the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970.

Mr. Scott: We are considering whether guidance needs to be issued to local authorities on the Independent Living Fund.

Disablement Benefit

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the number of applications and awards of disablement benefit for the four asbestos-related diseases for each of the last 10 years for each of the eight medical boarding centres pneumoconiosis medical panels.

Mr. Scott: The information is not available in the form requested. The tables show the number of disablement benefit claims for asbestos-related diseases referred to special medical boards and the number in which the diseases were diagnosed. Prescribed diseases D8 and D9 were not added to the schedule until 1 April 1985.

Medical boarding centre (respiratory diseases)	*Initial references for asbestos-related diseases*			*Positive diagnoses*		
	Prescribed disease D1	*D3*	*Total*	*Prescribed disease D1*	*D3*	*Total*
1978						
Cardiff	74	10	84	15	9	24
Glasgow	46	2	48	10	2	12
London	113	9	122	24	2	26
Manchester	115	15	130	27	15	42
Newcastle	65	16	81	28	14	42
Sheffield	56	4	60	18	3	21
Stoke	10	4	14	3	3	6
Swansea	6	1	7	3	1	4
All centres	485	61	546	128	49	177
1979						
Cardiff	48	18	66	12	14	26
Glasgow	48	1	49	17	1	18
London	88	11	99	15	10	25
Manchester	112	14	126	23	14	37
Newcastle	72	15	87	25	13	38
Sheffield	62	13	75	24	11	35
Stoke	14	—	14	8	—	8
Swansea	3	4	7	1	2	3
All Centres	447	76	523	125	65	190
1980						
Cardiff	67	11	78	24	11	35
Glasgow	50	7	57	19	7	26
London	80	15	95	20	12	32
Manchester	89	20	109	21	19	40
Newcastle	69	13	82	28	12	40
Sheffield	52	9	61	25	9	34
Stoke	14	2	16	6	2	8
Swansea	6	1	7	1	1	2
All Centres	427	78	505	144	73	217
1981						
Cardiff	59	18	77	14	15	29

Medical boarding centre (respiratory diseases)	*Initial references for asbestos-related diseases*			*Positive diagnoses*		
	Prescribed disease		*Total*	*Prescribed disease*		*Total*
	D1	*D3*		*D1*	*D3*	
Glasgow	52	20	72	22	20	42
London	75	13	88	18	11	29
Manchester	87	15	102	29	15	44
Newcastle	69	20	89	23	18	41
Sheffield	60	7	67	27	7	34
Stoke	10	5	15	6	5	11
Swansea	5	2	7	1	2	3
All Centres	417	100	517	140	93	233
1982						
Cardiff	57	24	81	17	23	40
Glasgow	61	15	76	25	14	39
London	94	35	129	23	32	55
Manchester	131	18	149	35	14	49
Newcastle	78	23	101	26	23	49
Sheffield	83	12	95	41	11	52
Stoke	15	5	20	3	5	8
Swansea	6	1	7	1	1	2
All Centres	525	133	658	171	123	294
1983						
Cardiff	68	16	84	12	16	28
Glasgow	89	34	123	45	34	79
London	109	25	134	31	23	54
Manchester	136	14	150	36	14	50
Newcastle	74	27	101	31	27	58
Sheffield	71	35	106	26	27	53
Stoke	33	6	39	12	6	18
Swansea	11	1	12	6	1	7
All Centres	591	158	749	199	148	347
1984						
Cardiff	57	27	84	23	27	50
Glasgow	99	33	132	38	32	70
London	111	52	163	21	47	68
Manchester	142	25	167	44	24	68
Newcastle	48	41	89	22	40	62
Sheffield	58	26	84	22	22	44
Stoke	24	8	32	12	5	17
Swansea	11	4	15	4	4	8
All Centres	550	216	766	186	201	387

Medical boarding centre (Respiratory diseases)	*Initial references for asbestos-related diseases*					*Positive diagnoses*				
	Prescribed disease				*Total*	*Prescribed disease*				*Total*
	D1	*D3*	*D8*	*D9*		*D1*	*D3*	*D8*	*D9*	
1985										
Cardiff	72	23	2	8	105	24	23	2	4	53
Glasgow	160	44	1	3	208	71	43	1	3	118
London	119	70	7	27	223	23	70	4	16	113
Manchester	174	27	3	19	223	46	26	—	14	86
Newcastle	100	46	1	13	160	48	46	—	10	104
Sheffield	87	43	2	13	145	45	30	1	10	86
Stoke	28	5	1	2	36	12	5	—	2	19
Swansea	8	2	1	3	14	4	2	—	2	8
All Centres	748	260	18	88	1,114	273	245	8	61	587
1986										
Cardiff	98	27	7	38	170	31	25	4	12	72
Glasgow	208	40	3	14	265	81	40	1	7	129
London	147	118	21	49	335	37	112	13	20	182
Manchester	148	36	17	31	232	59	33	8	18	118
Newcastle	177	43	3	25	248	38	43	2	22	105
Sheffield	86	41	6	32	165	34	39	6	23	102
Stoke	49	12	1	6	68	27	9	0	5	41
Swansea	13	5	1	4	23	5	4	0	4	13
All centres	926	322	59	199	1,506	312	305	34	111	762

Medical boarding centre (Respiratory diseases)	*Initial references for asbestos-related diseases*					*Positive diagnoses*				
	Prescribed disease				*Total*	*Prescribed disease*				*Total*
	D1	*D3*	*D8*	*D9*		*D1*	*D3*	*D8*	*D9*	
1987										
Cardiff	86	49	26	72	233	30	45	15	21	111
Glasgow	181	55	12	22	270	39	53	5	6	103
London	111	144	44	81	380	37	136	14	28	215
Manchester	170	41	23	14	248	60	40	9	4	113
Newcastle	102	62	24	34	222	29	60	8	24	121
Sheffield	70	54	13	36	173	32	47	2	25	106
Stoke	27	17	8	2	54	16	16	1	2	35
Swansea	11	3	4	7	25	4	2	1	5	12
All centres	758	425	154	268	1,605	247	399	55	115	816

Service Personnel (Parents' Pension)

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the maximum weekly amount payable as a parent's pension in respect of sons or daughters killed on active service in the armed forces; when it was last increased; and what plans he has for further increasing it.

Mr. Portillo: These pensions are means-tested and the normal maximum rates are £1 per week for one parent and £1·38 for two parents, though there is provision for these maxima to be increased to £1·38 for one parent and £2 for two. The pensions were introduced during the first world war and the rates have not been increased since 1948, when a comprehensive system of social security was established. There are no plans for further increases.

Medicinal Products

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what restrictions exist on the use of medicinal products containing hydroquinone; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what limitations exist on the manufacture and sale of medicinal products containing mercurial compounds; and if he will make a statement;

(3) whether skin-lightening products containing mercurial compounds or hydroquinone for which claims are made by the manufacturers that they are efficacious for this purpose require a licence before they are sold in the United Kingdom.

Mrs. Currie: Products containing mercurial compounds or hydroquinone promoted for the purpose of skin-lightening are not regarded as medicinal products under the Medicines Act 1968. They are subject to the Cosmetic Products (Safety) Regulations 1984 (SI 1984/1260) as amended, which generally ban both ingredients from inclusion in cosmetics. However, hydroquinone is permitted, to a concentration of 2 per cent., in agents for localised skin-lightening and there are certain labelling requirements.

There are no specific restrictions on the use of medicinal products containing mercurial compounds or hydroquinone. However, as with all medicinal products, these are assessed individually by the licensing authority before a product licence is granted to ensure adequate standards of safety, quality and efficacy.

Benefits

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what period is laid down in his Department's guidelines for dealing with a claimant who has been suspended from income support pending investigations, and the claimant being told the result of investigations.

Mr. Portillo: Payment of income support may be suspended, wholly or in part, for a variety of reasons. A period of suspension will not normally exceed one calendar month, although it may be extended in individual cases if questions are unresolved.

Full guidance on the procedures relating to the suspension of income support is contained in part 1.11 of the income support manual, a copy of which is in the Library.

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what period is laid down in his Department's guidelines for dealing with a claimant who reports that a payment of income support is lost or stolen and the claimant being told the result of investigations;

(2) what period is laid down in his Department's guidelines for dealing with a claimant who reports that a payment of family credit is lost or stolen and the claimant being told the result of investigations;

(3) what period is laid down in his Department's guidelines for dealing with a claimant who reports that a payment of child benefit is lost or stolen and the claimant being told the result of investigations;

(4) what period is laid down in his Department's guidelines for dealing with a claimant who reports that a payment of invalidity benefit is lost or stolen and the claimant being told the result of investigations;

(5) what period is laid down in his Department's guidelines for dealing with a claimant who reports that a payment of attendance allowance is lost or stolen and the claimant being told the result of investigations.

Mr. Portillo: As I said in my reply to the hon. Member on 24 June 1988, at column *738*, the administrative procedures followed when a claimant reports a loss of benefit vary not only according to the benefit concerned but also according to the method of payment and the circumstances of the loss. If the hon. Member has a particular case in mind perhaps he would write to me about it.

Oral Tobacco Products

Mr. Grylls: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what scientific or medical research has been done in the United Kingdom regarding the health implications of oral tobacco products.

Mrs. Currie: The usage of oral tobacco products has been so far at a very low level in the United Kingdom. It has not therefore been possible to carry out epidemiological research based in this country on the health implications of these products in the way that has been done in other countries with a much larger usage. Extensive research has been carried out in this country and elsewhere on nitrosamines and their carcinogenic activity. Compounds of this type are among those considered to be responsible for the carcinogenic action of oral tobacco.

Abortion (Carlisle)

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what information he has on steps taken by the Registrar General to ensure that the birth and death of the Carlisle baby will be registered.

Mr. Newton: I am seeking further information from the Registrar General about the position, and will then write to the hon. Member.

Private Nursing Homes

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what guidance he gives to health authorities on the employment of medical practitioners with pecuniary interests in particular private residential or nursing homes to treat residents or patients in those homes.

Mr. Newton: This is a matter for health authorities to determine locally in the light of individual circumstances. The General Medical Council issues guidance to practitioners in its book on professional conduct and discipline. If the hon. Member has a particular case in mind he may like to consult the health authority concerned.

Consultants

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services whether consultants holding part-time contracts with the National Health Service are allowed to include the time spent travelling between their National Health Service base and private practice as part of their working hours.

Mr. Newton: The arrangements for travelling time appear in the hospital medical and dental staff terms and conditions of service, which provide that time necessarily spent in travelling between home or private consulting room, whichever is the nearer, and the hospital served, subject to a maximum of half an hour each way, shall be taken into account as part of a part-time consultant's working hours.

Social Workers (Attacks)

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what action he intends to take on the recommendations of the report on violence against social workers, "Safe and Secure in Surrey", a copy of which has been sent to him.

Mr. Newton: We cannot trace having received a copy of the report, but have requested one. We will then consider it.

Student Bursary

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services when he expects to announce the level of the student bursary for those nursing students transferred to higher education through the implementation of Project 2000.

Mr. Newton: The Project 2000 proposals do not envisage the wholesale transfer of student nurses into higher education. We have, however, accepted that there should be closer links with higher education and some expansion in the degree opportunities for nurses. The level of bursaries for student nurses, including those in higher education, is under consideration. We will not be in a position to make final decisions on the level of non-means-tested bursaries until the statutory nursing bodies come forward with firm proposals on the precise pattern of nurse education.

Doctors (Computer Information System)

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if his Department has any plans to introduce a national computer information system for general practitioners; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: Plans are well developed to introduce the family practitioner services data communications network which will allow general practitioners with computers to communicate initially with other general practitioners and other parts of the family practitioner services. Eventually the network will be linked to other parts of the Health Service.

DHSS Leaflets

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is *(a)* the longest time, and *(b)* the average time taken to respond to requests for leaflets from the Department of Health and Social Security leaflets centre, Government Buildings, Honey lane, Stanmore; and if supplies of all current leaflets are held in stock.

Mr. Portillo: I refer my hon. Friend to my replies to the hon. Member for Preston (Mrs. Wise) on 21 June, at column *537*, and the hon. Member for Lewisham, Deptford (Ms. Ruddock) on 22 June, at column *582*. Normally the average time is four weeks; currently most orders are taking 10 weeks to process.

Biochemists and Medical Physicists

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what proposals he has for retaining and recruiting biochemists and medical physicists.

Mr. Newton: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Strathkelvin and Bearsden (Mr. Galbraith) on 27 June. Biochemists are part of the scientist staff group.

Treaty of Rome (Article 4)

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what steps are being taken to implement article 4 of the treaty of Rome.

Mrs. Currie: Article 4 of the treaty of Rome describes the legislative institutions of the European Community. It does not require implementation by the United Kingdom Government.

X-ray Equipment

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what guidelines exist for monitoring and maintaining X-ray equipment; and how his Department ensures that guidelines are being adhered to.

Mrs. Currie: Relevant guidance is given in various DHSS publications, of which the most noteworthy are:

Health Equipment Information No. 98 (1982—reissued 1984) on Management of Equipment.

STB6A/84/19 Maintenance of Radiological Equipment in NHS Establishments by Equipment Suppliers and other Commercial Agencies (1984).

Responsibility for proper management of X-ray and other equipment rests with regional and district health authorities. Professional staff from the Department's procurement directorate and medical division maintain regular liaison with appropriate senior professional staff in regional health authorities as a result of which informal guidance is given on specific maintenance issues from time to time. X-ray equipment requirements are constantly under review, for example, as shown by the initiative taken in 1987 to meet the special needs of the mammography screening programme.

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the age of X-ray equipment currently being used by Calderdale health authority; and if he will give details of monitoring and maintenance programmes operating on X-ray equipment in Calderdale.

Mrs. Currie: Monitoring and maintenance of medical equipment in particular NHS locations, including X-ray equipment, is a matter for the local health authority. The hon. Member may therefore wish to contact the chairman of Calderdale health authority for the information she is seeking.

Medical Research

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services when he expects to reply to the report of the House of Lords Select Committee on Science and Technology, HL No. 54, about medical research.

Mrs. Currie: This report raises a number of important issues, particularly about the mechanisms required to enable the NHS to benefit most effectively from the contribution that medical research can make. We are carefully considering this and other issues and we will publish our response later in the year.

Spectacles

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what assessment he has made of the implications for the provision of spectacles by opticians in the United Kingdom of the finding by the European Court that the United Kingdom was in breach of its treaty obligations by holding that the provision of spectacles was a medical service.

Mr. Newton: The European Court ruled on 23 February 1988 that the United Kingdom was in breach of its obligations in exempting from VAT certain goods supplied with medical care. The Government have indicated that they will comply with the court's decision and have introduced the necessary amendment to the Finance Bill. The amendment if approved is expected to come into effect on 1 September 1988. We are considering the implications for the NHS voucher scheme for spectacles.

NHS Property (Disposal)

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list all National Health Service property disposed of since 1979 in the areas covered by the following health authorities: North West Thames Regional, South West Thames Regional, North East Thames Regional, South East Thames Regional, Basingstoke, Winchester, Portsmouth, Southampton, Isle of Wight, Milton Keynes, Aylesbury, Wycombe, East Berkshire, West Berkshire and Oxfordshire.

Mrs. Currie *[holding answer 16 June 1988]:* I have placed in the Library a list giving the information up to 1986-87, the latest figures available, in respect of properties valued at over £50,000.

Körner System

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish a list of data, collected under the Körner system, which he expects to be able to publish on a routine basis; and if he will publish a timetable for a release of this information.

Mr. Newton *[holding answer 16 June 1988]:* We are considering how information derived from Körner data can best be made available to assist hon. Members and others to assess developments in the overall pattern of activity, costs, manpower and waiting lists in the hospital and community health services. Meanwhile, we are making available Körner data corresponding as closely as possible to earlier series, in particular the hospital in-patient waiting list and NHS directly employed staff by main staff group. In addition, the statutory summarised accounts of health authorities, which are derived from Körner data, will continue to be published annually as a House of Commons paper.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what information collected under the Körner system has been published during the current year; and in what form.

Mr. Newton *[holding answer 16 June 1988]:* National and regional information on elective admissions and patients waiting for the quarter ending 30 September 1987 was published in DHSS "Statistical Bulletin 2/6/88". Provisional tables for September 1987 of NHS directly employed staff by main staff group have been placed in the Library.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what steps he is taking to ensure that the Körner system is applied to private hospitals and clinics; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton *[holding answer 16 June 1988]:* Those recommendations made by Körner about the NHS use of private hospitals and clinics have been implemented. There are no plans to introduce into private hospitals and clinics the collection of the Körner minimum data sets which have been implemented in NHS hospitals.

Foetal Tissue (Transplants)

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Hexham (Mr. Amos) of 7 June, *Official Report*, column 557, he will publish in the *Official Report* further details of the background of the individuals whom he has appointed to the committee of inquiry into the use of foetal tissue in transplants, indicating and summarising in each case the published work which was taken into account when assessing suitability for appointment;

(2) pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Hexham (Mr. Amos) of 7 June, *Official Report*, column 557, which organisations or individuals were consulted by his Department about the selection of individuals for appointment to the committee of inquiry into the use of human foetal tissue in transplants.

Mr. Newton *[holding answer 21 June 1988]:* The members of this committee were chosen because they have expertise relevant to the issues involved. They were not appointed to represent any particular organisaton or body of opinion. No consultations about membership were therefore necessary.

The committee's chairman, the Reverend Dr. John Polkinghorne FRS is Dean of Trinity Hall Cambridge and an Anglican clergyman. He was formerly Professor of Mathematical Physics at Cambridge university and has published in that field.

Sir Raymond Hoffenberg is president of the Royal College of Physicians and has written about endocrinology and metabolism in medicine and biochemistry.

Professor Ian Kennedy is Professor of Medical Law and Ethics at Kings college London. He has written about medical ethics.

Dr. Sally McIntyre is director of the Medical Research Council's medical sociology unit at Glasgow university and previously worked in that unit when it was in Aberdeen university. She has published on a range of sociological questions particularly maternity and reproductive services.

Income

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how much average household income was in 1981, 1983 and 1985 before and after housing costs, as used in "Households Below Average Income: A Statistical Analysis."

Mr. Portillo *[holding answer 20 June 1988]:* As explained in the report of the technical review of the low-income statistics, and in the technical annex to the households below average income statistics, to enable meaningful comparisons, the actual cash incomes received by households are adjusted to reflect varying household size and composition and expressed in terms of individuals in households. National average income per individual, calculated after these adjustments, is shown in the table. The figures therefore do not reflect average cash income per household.

Average incomes of individuals in households 1981 to 1985
(adjusted for family size and composition)
Great Britain—current prices—weekly basis

	Before housing costs £	*After housing costs* £
1981	104·70	93·00
1983	119·20	104·20
1985	140·95	120·80

Notes to table:

1. Household income is defined after the payment of any income tax and national insurance and the receipt of any social security benefits. Individuals within households have been ranked according to their household incomes.

2. Further details on methods and assumptions, can be found in "Households Below Average Income: A Statistical Analysis, 1981-85", copies of which are in the Library.

Attendance Allowance

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services, under the new social security arrangements, what help is available to those who are awarded attendance allowance but have to wait six months for it to be paid; and what help is available to those babies, under two years of age, who are eligible to be paid attendance allowance.

Mr. Scott *[holding answer 22 June 1988]:* People in this position can qualify for the new income-related benefits under the normal rules of entitlement. In addition to the age-related personal allowance for a single claimant or couple and for each child, premiums may be payable. It is possible for disabled adults to qualify for the disability premium on grounds other than the receipt of attendance allowance. There are also premiums for families with children and a further one for lone parents.

A social fund community care grant may be awarded to a disabled person receiving income support or to a family on income support which includes a disabled adult or child (details are contained in the social fund manual, a copy of which is in the Library).

The Independent Living Fund can provide help to people whom the trustees judge likely to be successful in their claim for attendance allowance, subject to the other eligibility criteria.

ENVIRONMENT

Housing for the Elderly

Mr. David Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he would be prepared in principle to relax the current restrictions on the use of capital receipts from the sale of council housing such that a greater proportion than the present 20 per cent. could be used in any one year, for additional specialised housing for the elderly.

Mr. Chope: Different prescribed proportions can be set for different classes of capital receipts, but the proportions cannot be varied by reference to the use proposed to be made of the receipts. All prescribed proportions are constantly kept under review, but any increase in them would reduce the level of capital allocations consistent with the level of local authority capital expenditure allowed for in public expenditure plans. It is for individual local authorities to decide what priority should be given within their overall capital programmes to the provision of specialised housing for the elderly.

Waste (Disposal)

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment he has made of the impact of dumping 7·5 million tons of United States domestic waste on the banks of the River Mersey on his policy to clean up the Mersey river basin.

Mr. Moynihan: The waste disposal authority, Cheshire county council, which operates the disposal site in question is under a statutory duty to do so in a manner which prevents the pollution of water. An assessment of the impact of waste disposal operations on water resources would, for this proposal, be a matter for the North West water authority, which would advise the waste disposal authority accordingly.

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has on the number of landfill sites in the United Kingdom which have been identified as requiring the retrofitting of additional gas controls; and, what would be the estimated cost of such procedures.

Mr. Moynihan: We are currently awaiting a report from Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Pollution following the survey it has conducted with waste disposal authorities.

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment he has made as to whether the proposed imports of American domestic wastes into the United Kingdom and their subsequent dumping in Cornwall and Warrington conform with the recommendations of the Royal Commission on environmental pollution's 11th report, "Managing Waste: The Duty of Care".

Mr. Moynihan: The Royal Commission noted that the advantages of using a more appropriate disposal facility than the one available locally can justify international trade in waste, but recommended that wastes that are hazardous should not be exported without the prior informed consent of the importing country. Proposals to import domestic waste from USA on the scale reported in the press are a new development which does cause concern, and we are considering the implications.

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish in the *Official Report* the reply of his Department to the letter dated 8 June from the chairman of the Royal Commission on environmental pollution to Lord Caithness regarding the import of wastes for dumping in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Moynihan: I have arranged for copies of the correspondence to be placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment he has made of the pressure on the availability of dumping capacity for United Kingdom waste arising consequent upon the large-scale import of United States domestic waste for landfill.

Mr. Moynihan: As far as I am aware, there have been no imports of domestic waste from USA. Proposals for imports on the scale reported in the press would affect the availability of landfill capacity for United Kingdom waste, and waste disposal authorities would need to consider such proposals in the light of their waste disposal plans.

Mr. Hind: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what proposals he has to ensure that Power Water and Waste Ltd. does not dump toxic chemical waste from the United States of America at Arpley Meadows, Warrington; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moynihan: It is for the waste disposal authority, Cheshire county council, to consider the proposals by Power, Water and Waste Ltd, in the light of its waste disposal plan and the conditions it has imposed on the operation of the Arpley Meadows site. The council has asked to meet me and I shall discuss the matter with councillors shortly.

Mr. Hind: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has any plans to issue an order prohibiting Power Water and Waste Ltd. from dumping 7½ million tons of waste from the United States of America and at Arpley Meadows, Warrington; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moynihan: I refer my hon. Friend to my answer of 9 June to my hon. Friend the Member for Warrington, South (Mr. Butler), at column *655*.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what steps he proposes to take to prevent waste brokers and waste transfer stations obstructing the flow of information between waste producer, waste disposer and regulatory authority;

(2) what steps he proposes to take to overcome the problem identified by senior officials of the hazardous waste inspectorate at a press briefing at his Department on 22 June concerning the information regarding the chemical composition and volume of waste on many consignment notes pertaining to imported special waste being cursory and inadequate.

Mr. Moynihan: The Control of Pollution (Special Waste) Regulations apply to an importer of waste in the same way as they apply to a producer of special waste in this country. They require that the producer notifies the waste disposal authority for the area where the waste is to be disposed of, of the intended movement of the waste from his premises at least three days before the movement takes place. The producer must give a description of the waste, its relevant chemical and biological components, its quantity, the size, type and number of containers and the process from which the waste originated. He must certify the accuracy of the information. Failure to comply with the regulations is an offence carrying maximum penalties of imprisonment and an unlimited fine.

Thus waste disposal authorities have the necessary powers to prevent obstruction of the flow of information about these wastes and it is for authorities to use them effectively.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what provisions will be included in the regulations implementing the European Community's transfrontier shipment of hazardous waste directive to overcome the problem of waste disposal authorities at the port of entry of waste not being notified of the consignment of waste until after it has left for its United Kingdom destination.

Mr. Moynihan: The regulation to implement the Community directive will include a provision for the waste disposal authority at the port of entry to be notified of the consignment before it arrives at the port.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he proposes to take to prevent imported materials destined for the recovery industry ending up as waste which is disposed of in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Moynihan: Imports of waste materials for recovery are subject to the same control and supervision by waste disposal authorities as any other waste.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what steps he intends to take to remedy the situation identified in the conclusions of the third report of the hazardous waste inspectorate, page 83, paragraphs 5 and 6, regarding the lack of prenotification of imported non-special waste;

(2) what steps he proposes to take to resolve the problem experienced by waste disposal authorities in respect of the import of non-special waste for direct landfill as a result of the lack of prenotification.

Mr. Moynihan: Waste disposal authorities have powers under section 93 of the Control of Pollution Act 1974 to obtain information reasonably considered necessary to assist them in the exercise of their statutory functions. The volume of imports of non-special wastes so far identified does not at present appear to be such as to call for further powers, but we shall continue to keep imports of wastes generally under review.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment why only wastes with concentrations of the 27 proscribed chemicals listed as hazardous in the European Council's toxic and dangerous wastes directive at levels that would result in the waste being defined as special waste will be covered in United Kingdom regulations to implement the transfrontier shipment of hazardous wastes directive.

Mr. Moynihan: Substances covered by the directive on transfrontier shipment of hazardous wastes are defined by reference to the 27 substances in the toxic and dangerous waste directive. The latter, which is implemented in the United Kingdom by the Control of Pollution (Special Waste) Regulations 1980, defines toxic and dangerous waste as any waste containing or contaminated by any of the 27 substances of such a nature, in such quantities or in such concentrations as to constitute a risk to health or the environment. It follows that implementation of the transfrontier shipment directive must be made by reference to the definition in the special waste regulations.

ESCATA

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has received a copy of East Sussex county council's report into the collapse of the consultancy and training agency ESCATA.

Mr. Chope: No.

Water Supply (Metering)

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether his Department has conducted or commissioned any market research on the public opinion towards metering of the water supply; and if he will publish any responses.

Mr. Moynihan: The Department has not carried out or commissioned any market research on public attitudes towards water metering, but it will monitor carefully the public reaction to the forthcoming programme of compulsory metering trials to be run in selected areas by the water industry over the next four years. The public's reaction to metering is one of the major issues the trials are intended to explore.

Pollution

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he accepts the recommendation of the Royal Commission on environmental pollution that, in principle, the costs of preventing pollution by wastes should fall on the waste producers.

Mr. Moynihan: Yes.

Mr. Duffy: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to receive the report of the Department of the Environment's pollution inspectorate on pollution issues, including methane gas.

Mr. Moynihan: Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Pollution is analysing the responses of the waste disposal and planning authorities to the letter sent to it last December about landfill gas. This work will provide the basis for any appropriate measures to deal with the problem.

Rating Reform

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will state the latest estimate cost for the tax collection in each local government area *(a)* by total amount and *(b)* as a proportion of current cost of domestic rates collection.

Mr. Howard: There are no estimates available for the cost of collecting the community charge by local government area. In its report, Price Waterhouse has estimated the cost of collecting the community charge (including national non-domestic rates) in 1990-91 to be between £379 million and £435 million compared to the £200 million it now costs to collect rates.

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he intends to require poll tax registration officers to seek dates of birth under the registration process.

Mr. Howard: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave on 7 June to the right hon. Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale (Mr. Steel), at column *482*.

Mr. Carrington: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has yet come to a decision in relation to the joint representations he has received from the City of London, the London Boroughs Association and the Association of London Authorities about his proposal that domestic rates should be retained in some parts of inner London for four years after introduction of the community charge; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Ridley: I have considered those representations carefully, together with others from the individual boroughs concerned, the arguments which were put when this matter was considered in another place, and revised illustrative community charges for the affected boroughs which I published last week—*Official Report*, 23 June, columns *713-14*.

In the light of all these considerations I have concluded that it would now be right to withdraw the proposals for residual rating, to move direct to the community charge and to abolish domestic rates everywhere in England with effect from 1 April 1990. The Government are, therefore, today tabling in another place amendments to the Local Government Finance Bill which will have this effect.

The Government's original concern was with protecting community charge payers in the high spending areas from excessively high community charges. The present position, that residual rates should apply to 10 authorities, is no longer justifiable on the evidence before me. I have therefore accepted the arguments which have been put to us that other powers within the Local Government Finance Bill are sufficient to achieve the objective of tolerable levels of community charge in those inner London boroughs. I have placed in the Library exemplifications of the community charges which take account of this charge. These exemplifications replace those I provided on 23 June to the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham), at columns *713-14*.

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has made any estimates of the effect of the community charge on people under the age of 25 years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard *[holding answer 28 June 1988]:* Many young adults under 25 currently make no direct contribution to the cost of local services despite the fact that they are consumers of those services and entitled to vote in local elections. We expect that the community charge will bring home to those people the cost of local services and improve local accountability. Those on low incomes will be eligible for rebates in their own right.

Council of Ministers

Mr. David Martin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will make a statement on the outcome of the Environment Council held on 28 June.

Mr. Moynihan: I represented the United Kingdom at this meeting which resumed on 28 June.

I am pleased to report that in a brief discussion on large combustion plants, Denmark, France and Italy withdrew their reserves on the agreement in principle which was reached at the last Council of 16 June, and on which I reported in answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Richmond and Barnes (Mr. Hanley). In the light of a minor change to the text, Portugal also withdrew its reserve. The United Kingdom maintained a parliamentary scrutiny reserve on the directive.

After further lengthly discussion a political agreement was reached by qualified majority, and subject to a United Kingdom parliamentary scrutiny reserve, on the Commission's proposals for the second stage limit values for gaseous emissions from small cars.

I am pleased to say that Ministers also reached agreement on draft guidelines for a future Council directive to harmonise programmes for the reduction and eventual elimination of pollution caused by waste from the titanium dioxide industry.

Further consideration was given to a proposal for a Communitywide programme of projects demonstrating how actions taken in the environmental field might contribute to employment creation. The proposal is to be discussed again at the next Council.

The Council agreed a resolution on the protection of the North sea and other Community waters, put forward by the German delegation following the recent problems associated with algae growth in he Skagerrak and Kattegat.

A discussion on the dispatch of toxic waste to developing countries ended with a statement of presidency conclusions.

The Council also heard statements from Denmark and the Commission on proposals in the field of biotechnology and from the Commission on nuclear safety.

Local Authority Publicity

Mr. Wood: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he proposes to issue a code of recommended practice on local authority publicity under section 4 of the Local Government Act 1986; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: Following consultations with the local authority associations and other interested parties, my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for the Environment, for Scotland and for Wales have today laid before the House a draft code of recommended practice on local authority publicity. Copies have been placed in the Library of the House and in the Vote Office.

The draft code encourages good, effective publicity aimed at improved public awareness of a council's activities. It is essential that local authority decisions on publicity should be properly made and conform with clear principles of good practice. The draft code sets out these principles and reflects the conventions which should apply to all publicity paid for at public expense.

The draft code has to be approved by a resolution of each House of Parliament before it is issued. Once it is issued, local authorities will be required to have regard to the code in coming to any decision on publicity.

Cemeteries (City of Westminster)

Mr. Bidwell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what recent representations he has received from relatives of those interred in the three cemeteries sold by Westminster council; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: Nine letters from the Westminster Association of Relatives concerning the recent report of the council's internal inquiry into the sales: these call for a full public inquiry, for the Secretary of State to order an extraordinary audit of the council's accounts and for him to implement a compulsory purchase order for the cemeteries. It has been made clear on a number of occasions that the Secretary of State has no power to hold a statutory inquiry into the sale. There would be no purpose served by his requiring the Audit Commission to direct an extraordinary audit as this matter is already under investigation, in the way that Parliament intended, by the independent district auditor. Whether to use compulsory purchase powers is a matter for the council in the first instance. If this route is followed the Secretary of State's function is to consider whether or not to confirm any such order.

Environmental Protection

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will list all the national and international initiatives which Her Majesty's Government support in order to promote the protection of *(a)* rain forests, *(b)* the ozone layer and *(c)* the North sea;

(2) if he will list all the national and international initiatives for the protection of *(a)* the rain forests, *(b)* the ozone layer and *(c)* the North sea which Her Majesty's Government are funding, showing in each case the amount given;

(3) if he will list all the working groups, conferences and projects for the protection of *(a)* the rain forests, *(b)* the ozone layer and *(c)* the North sea in which Her Majesty's Government are or have been involved.

Mr. Moynihan: Her Majesty's Government have been active participants from the beginning in the tropical forest action plan and were instrumental in introducing conservation as an objective into the international tropical timber agreement. The United Kingdom is currently a member of the TFAP's technical assistance group and the Food and Agriculture Organisation's committee on forestry and committee on forestry development in the tropics. We play an active role in both the council and permanent committees of the International Tropical Timber Organisation and contribute annually to its administrative budget. The amount for 1988 was US$ 59·895.

Support is also given to the convention on international trade in endangered species of wild fauna and flora, which controls the import of those species of hardwood considered to be endangered. CITES is implemented throughout the European Community by EC regulations Nos. 3626/82 and 3418/83.

The Overseas Development Administration has provided technical assistance to several of the TFAP's sector review missions. The TFAP has not reached the stage of project implementation in most of the countries involved. However, projects being undertaken by the Overseas Development Administration include:

	£ million
Ghana: Forest inventory and management	4·80
Cameroon: Korup national park	0·44
Cameroon: Limbe botanic garden	0·75
Nigeria: Oban national park	0·07
Indonesia: Feasibility study for communications system for forest protection	0·14
Sierra Leone: Research into natural forest management	0·08
Brazil: Research into forest regeneration	0·04

At a national level the Overseas Administration provided £5,000 to support the recent Oxford forestry institute conference on the future of the tropical rain forest.

On the ozone layer, the United Kingdom was closely involved in the negotiation of the Vienna convention for the protection of the ozone layer, which it signed in 1985 and ratified in May 1987, and of the Montreal protocol on substances that deplete the ozone layer, of which the United Kingdom was an initial signatory in September 1987. The United Kingdom also played an active part in discussions of proposals to ratify and implement the protocol on which the EC Environment Council on 16 June reached a common position subject to parliamentary reserves on behalf of the United Kingdom and several other member states. The Council also agreed a political resolution emphasising the importance of voluntary action to reduce the use of chlorofluorocarbons and halons further. Officials of the Departments of Environment and Trade and Industry have regular meetings with British industry on implementation of the protocol, as elaborated in my answer of 8 March to the hon. Member, at column *119*. Officials have participated in conferences organised by the refrigeration industry, which I addressed, and by the electronics industry. The United Kingdom participates in a United Nations environment programme working group on data harmonisation for the purposes of the protocol.

As regards research, I refer the hon. Member to the answers I gave to the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) on 19 April, at column *426*, to the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) on 20 April, at columns *495* and *496*, and to my hon. Friend the Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown) on 14 June, at column *138*. The United Kingdom participates in meetings of UNEP's co-ordinating committee on the ozone layer and in other ad hoc scientific meetings. The Department's chief scientist is at present leading the United Kingdom delegation at the UNEP-WHO conference on the changing atmosphere in Toronto. The United Kingdom was involved in the experimental programme in Antarctica last year and will participate in a similar programme in the Arctic in January 1989. Following an initiative by the United Kingdom, progress has been made on European co-operation on stratospheric ozone research in EC and EFTA countries through meetings hosted by the United Kingdom.

With regard to the North sea, the United Kingdom is an active member of the Oslo and Paris commissions and its working groups. The commissions' members include all the North sea states, and agreements reached by members have contributed to a considerable reduction of pollution of the marine environment in general as well as focusing attention on the North sea. The United Kingdom is also an active participant in the work of the International Council for the Exploration of the Seas.

In November of last year my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment chaired the second international conference on the protection of the North sea. It brought together all the North Sea states and the Commission of the European Communities. A ministerial declaration, to which the United Kingdom subscribed, set a programme for long-term protection of the North sea. Following the conference the United Kingdom hosted the inaugural meeting of the scientific task force, which is to be established through the Oslo and Paris commissions and ICES to co-ordinate work internationally to enhance scientific knowledge of the North sea. The United Kingdom is taking an active part in the preparations for the third North sea conference to be held in 1990.

Work on particular aspects of the marine environment affecting the North sea also involves a range of other international organisations including the International Maritime Organisation, the London dumping convention and the Commission of the European Communities.

Expenditure on the Paris and Oslo commissions in 1987-88 by the United Kingdom was £74,000. This includes the cost of ICES North sea environmental works. Contributions to the work of the task force will be met through future years' budgets of the Oslo and Paris commissions.

The United Kingdom is also active in sponsoring a substantial programme of research relevant to the North sea and in supporting a number of voluntary bodies, including the marine forum and the advisory committee on pollution of the sea.

Pollution Inspectorate

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he intends to take to ensure that the hazardous waste section of Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Pollution is staffed at an adequate level in view of a comment of a senior officer of Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Pollution at a press briefing at his Department on 22 June, that present staffing levels are inadequate.

Mr. Moynihan: It has never been intended that Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Pollution should attempt to inspect all licensed landfill sites. Its remit is to visit selected sites in order to discharge its functions of advising waste disposal authorities and promoting adequate and consistent standards and it undertakes this job effectively.

Direct Land Grants

Mr. Heddle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he proposes any change in the criteria used for eligibility for derelict land grants to enable parish councils to be treated as public sector authority.

Mr. Trippier: I have no plans to make any such change.

Waste Tips (Explosions)

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps Her Majesty's Government are taking to encourage infra-red aerial photography in areas in danger of leakage of methane gas from rubbish tips; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moynihan *[holding answer 29 June]:* Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Pollution is currently investigating various techniques for monitoring the production and migration of methane gas at landfill sites.

The taking of aerial photographs, both colour and infra-red, can assist in detecting the changes in vegetation due to migrating gas over an area around a landfill site. Infra-red cameras can be used to measure heat emission from the ground surface. However, this type of survey has to be carried out at night to avoid interference from the sun. The hot spots detected can be physically marked on the site during the survey, which can then be monitored with instruments. This technique detects only excess heat, which could be due to causes other than gas emission.

Advice on this technique will be included in the waste management paper planned for publication later this year.

Written Answers to Questions

Friday 1 July 1988

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Extradition

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Attorney-General how many extradition warrants are currently in existence for persons wanted for questioning in the United Kingdom about Irish Republican Army terrorist offences.

The Attorney-General: Warrants are not sought in order to obtain the return of fugitives from the Republic of Ireland for questioning by the police. They are sought only where there is sufficient admissible evidence to found a prosecution. It would not be in the public interest to give any details as to the number of warrants in existence in relation to terrorist offences.

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Attorney-General, what steps are currently being taken to ensure that police officers from the United Kingdom are present in Irish courts to officially identify persons facing extradition proceedings to the United Kingdom.

The Attorney-General: The Irish authorities, who present applications to the Irish courts for the return of fugitives under the backing of warrants procedure, indicate to our authorities whether and, if so, what evidence will be needed from the United Kingdom as a matter of Irish law. The evidence as to identity which will be presented by the Irish state in any particular case will depend on the circumstances of that case, in the light of the view taken by the authorities in the Republic of the requirements of Irish law.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Scottish Universities

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) what evaluation his Department has conducted of the effects of the deficits facing *(a)* Dundee, *(b)* Aberdeen, *(c)* St. Andrews, *(d)* Strathclyde, *(e)* Stirling, *(f)* Heriot Watt, *(g)* Glasgow and *(h)* Edinburgh universities;

(2) what extra allowance is under consideration for *(a)* Dundee, *(b)* Aberdeen, *(c)* St. Andrews, *(d)* Strathclyde, *(e)* Stirling, *(f)* Heriot Watt, *(g)* Glasgow and *(h)* Edinburgh universities to ensure that no courses or subjects are lost as a result of their cash shortfalls;

(3) whether he will establish a committee to examine the ability of Scottish universities to maintain their position as centres of academic excellence within present funding levels; and if he will make a statement;

(4) what evaluation his Department has conducted on the effects of the £5·6 million deficits which face the eight Scottish universities.

Mr. Jackson: Some Scottish and other universities are facing particularly difficult decisions on how best to plan an appropriate range and quality of provision with the resources at their disposal. The University Grants Committee monitors all institutions' planning and offers financial support from the restructuring programme for which £250 million has been set aside over three years.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what discussions his Department has had with representatives of *(a)* Dundee, *(b)* Aberdeen, *(c)* St. Andrews, *(d)* Strathclyde, *(e)* Stirling, *(f)* Heriot Watt, *(g)* Glasgow and *(h)* Edinburgh universities about the effects of their cash shortfalls and the possible loss of staff.

Mr. Jackson: In my year as Parliamentary Under-Secretary, I have visited six of the eight Scottish universities and discussed a wide range of higher education matters with staff and students. In addition, I receive many representations about their funding position.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what allowance has been made for the reduction in investment income which *(a)* Dundee, *(b)* Aberdeen, *(c)* St. Andrews, *(d)* Strathclyde, *(e)* Stirling, *(f)* Heriot Watt, *(g)* Glasgow and *(h)* Edinburgh universities have suffered as a result of the stock market crisis of October 1987 and of changes in interest rates.

Mr. Jackson: As autonomous institutions universities are responsible for the management of their own financial affairs.

Academic Pay

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what steps he is taking to ensure that the Universities Grants Committee is able to meet the costs of academic pay rises in full.

Mr. Jackson: It is for the universities to reach pay settlements with their staff which they can finance from within their income, from the Government and other sources.

EMPLOYMENT

Dangerous Workplaces

Miss Lestor: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many of the United Kingdom's 1,500 most potentially dangerous workplaces the technology division of the Health and Safety Executive has inspected and certified for fire precautions since 1976.

Mr. Nicholls: Of the approximately 1,300 premises which are subject to the Fire Certification (Special Premises) Regulations 1976, the HSE has issued approximately 600 fire certificates and surveyed a further 35. This is part of a continuing programme.

Mr. Ted Garrett: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many of the United Kingdom's 1,500 most potentially dangerous workplaces the technology division of the Health and Safety Executive plans to inspect in the next 12 months.

Mr. Nicholls: Of the approximately 1,300 premises which are subject to the Fire Certification (Special Premises) Regulations 1976, HSE inspectors from the technology division expect to visit 215 in 1988-89. Some 600 certificates have already been issued, a further 35 premises have been surveyed and listed major hazard sites are also subject to other visits by HSE inspectors.

Overseas Labour Scheme

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) what are the current numbers of applications for employment in Britain under the overseas labour scheme; and what were the figures for the years 1982 to 1987;

(2) what are the current numbers of staff employed in the overseas labour section of the Department of Employment in the current year and each year from 1982 to 1987;

(3) what is the average length of time it takes to deal with an application under the overseas labour scheme;

(4) how many specialist *(a)* Gujarati, *(b)* Punjabi and *(c)* Bangladeshi cooks have been given visas to work in Britain's overseas labour scheme;

(5) what are the total numbers of cases dealt with by the overseas labour section of his Department for *(a)* the current year and *(b)* 1981-82 and *(c)* the years 1982 to 1987 inclusive.

Mr. Lee: There are currently 4,320 work permit applications under consideration by the overseas labour section. Equivalent figures for earlier years are not available. At present the overseas labour section is taking 8-12 weeks on average to process applications.

The information relating to specialist Gujarati, Punjabi and Bangladeshi cooks is not collated centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. The current number of staff in post in the overseas labour section is 63. The total number of decisions made on aplications and the number of staff employed for each year from 1981-82 to 1987-88, are given in the table.

Financial year	*Decisions on applications received*	*Average staff in post*
1981-82	16,466	56
1982-83	17,090	57
1983-84	18,662	59
1984-85	19,574	56
1985-86	20,356	55
1986-87	23,762	55
1987-88	25,851	62

Employment Training Scheme

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment, pursuant to the answer of Tuesday 28 June, *Official Report,* what is his estimate of the net cost in a full year of the employment training scheme taking into account the cost of benefits which would otherwise have to be paid.

Mr. Nicholls: The best estimate at present of expenditure on employment training in a full year is about £1.5 billion. Of this, the estimated cost of training allowances, including premiums over and above benefit levels, is £770 million.

Rating Reform

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list all publications, and their date of publication, initiated by his Department in connection with the community charge, together with the cost of each and public funds; and if he will give the cost of newspaper and television advertising to date in connection with the communiity charge.

Mr. Lang: Two publications have been produced as part of the public infomation campaign of the community charge in Scotland. The leaflet "The New Community Charge" was published on 24 November 1987 at a total cost of about £17,000. The booklet "You and the Community Charge—A Step by Step Guide" was published on 3 March this year at a cost of about £246,000. Both these figures include distribution costs. The total cost of newspaper advertisiong so far is about £218,000. There has been no television advertising.

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what further proposals he has for advertising in connection with the introduction of the poll tax in Scotland; and what will be the estimated costs.

Mr. Lang: The public information campaign on the community charge in Scotland will include further press adverisements at appropriate points in the run-up period to introduction on 1 April 1989. No estimates of cost are available at this stage.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Michael Ryan

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Londonderry of 16 June, *Official Report,* column *194,* if he will call for a report from the chief constable of the Thames Valley police as to how many *(a)* persons who made written statements to police officers, and *(b)* solicitors representing persons who made written statements to police officers, concerning matters leading up to the shootings by the late Michael Ryan in Hungerford, have requested copies of these written statements from any police officer or civilian; what were the dates of such requests; whether copies have been given or sent to those persons or their solicitors; and when the chief constable or other police officers or civilians intend to deal with those requests to which they have not as yet given an answer.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Since I answered the hon. Member's question on 16 June I have been informed by the chief constable of the Thames Valley police that his force has traced one such request, which was made by a firm of solicitors in early May. That request was for a copy of a statement taken by the Wiltshire police and the solicitors were therefore advised to contact the chief constable of Wiltshire. I have been further informed that two complaints were made against the Thames Valley police in the aftermath of the Hungerford shootings and that it is possible that some requests have been made and met for copies of statements taken in connection with the investigation of these complaints. But no central record has been kept of any such requests and detailed checking would therefore be necessary in order to establish if any were made and if so what happened to them. This could only be done at disproportionate cost.

Immigration

Mr. Sayeed: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information he has on the extent to which financial inducements are being offered by people abroad in return for engagements or marriage with a United Kingdom resident for the purposes of assisting immigration into the United Kingdom.

Mr. Renton: No such information is now available, nor is it likely to become available. The discouragements to such practices already in the immigration rules will be reinforced by the recent repeal of section 1(5) of the Immigration Act 1971.

Mr. Sayeed: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information he has on the number of stages in immigration appeal systems in all Council of Europe member states, including the United Kingdom.

Mr. Renton: In the United Kingdom the appeals system consist of two tiers. Appeals are normally heard by an adjudicator sitting along in the first instance but there is an avenue of appeal, usually with leave, to the tribunal if either party is dissatisfied with the adjudicator's decision. Information on immigration appeals systems which operate in other Council of Europe countries is not readily available.

Community Radio Stations

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make it his policy that no one who has been associated with illegal radio broadcasting stations will be considered for any licence to run an approved community radio station; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Edgbaston (Dame Knight) on 21 June, at column 485.

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he now expects to announce further details regarding the legislative implementation of his Department's policy on community radio stations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to his earlier question on 25 May, at column 172.

Lunar House

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many unopened items of mail there are at Lunar House, Croydon, as at 28 June.

Mr. Renton: On 28 June there were 870 items unopened mail in the immigration and nationality department. All these were applications for citizenship received since 10 June.

DNA Tests

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he intends to publish his views on the DNA tests pioneered by Dr. Jefferies of Leicester university.

Mr. Renton: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the Hon. Member for Bradford, West (Mr. Madden) on Thursday 16 June, at columns *200-1*.

WALES

Museums

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what were the total grants to the National museum of Wales for every year since 1978-79 up to and including that planned for 1988-89; and if he will break the figures down for *(a)* current expenditure, *(b)* capital expenditure and *(c)* purchase grants.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The information is shown in the following table:

The total grant-in-aid to the National museum of Wales was:

Year	Net current £ cash	Purchases £ cash	Capital £ cash	Total £ cash
1978-79	2,549,000	376,000	1,050,000	3,975,000
1979-80	3,110,000	598,000	403,000	4,111,000
1980-81	3,844,000	768,000	367,000	4,979,000
1981-82	4,333,000	877,000	575,000	5,785,000
1982-83	4,565,000	955,000	633,000	6,153,000
1983-84	4,906,000	810,000	636,000	6,352,000
1984-85	5,443,000	562,000	684,000	6,689,000
1985-86	5,378,000	1,108,000	1,132,000	7,618,000
1986-87	5,841,000	741,000	1,009,000	7,591,000
1987-88	5,712,000	1,170,000	2,200,000	9,082,000
1988-89	6,158,000	1,199,000	3,997,000	11,354,000

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what Welsh local authorities spent on *(a)* the arts, *(b)* museums and *(c)* libraries in every year since 1978-79; and if he will estimate their expenditure on each in 1988-89.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Details of expenditure on *(a)* museums and art galleries and *(b)* libraries are given in the following table. They illustrate the increases that have taken place every year since 1978-79. No information is held centrally on expenditure on the arts although such information is published by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy in "Leisure and Recreation Statistics".

Net[1] expenditure (£000)

	Museums	Libararies
1978-79	974	9,693
1979-80	1,138	11,009
1980-81	1,231	12,915
1981-82	1,491	14,120
1982-83	1,574	15,337
1983-84	1,713	16,233
1984-85	1,858	16,824
1985-86	2,238	17,327
[2]1986-87	2,444	19,051
[3]1987-88	3,246	20,362
[4]1988-89	3,800	22,100

[1] Net expenditure to be financed from general grants, rates and balances.

[2] Provisional outturn.

[3] Revised estimates.

[4] Estimate, based on budgets at outturn prices.

Sport and Leisure Facilities

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement, following the recent consultation exercise, on the proposals to bring competition to the management of local authority sport and leisure facilities.

Mr. Grist: My right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for the Environment, for Wales and for Scotland have considered very carefully the wide-ranging responses to consultation. They have decided that the competitive tendering regime provided for in part I of the Local Government Act 1988 should be applied to the management of sport and leisure facilities. We will therefore lay an order under section 2(3) of the Act to make the management of sport and leisure facilities a defined activity for the purpose of the Act. Before laying the order we shall undertake the consultation as provided for by section 2(4) of the Act.

My hon. Friend the Minister with responsibility for sport has provided a very detailed explanation of the proposals for implementation in his statement earlier today. In Wales, competition will be implemented in five stages over a two-year period beginning 1 February 1992. the two-year period acknowledges the low threshold of private sector capacity in this field in Wales at present. The local authority groupings used in the main implementation programme for services defined by the Act will also apply to sport and leisure facilities.

I have arranged for copies of a schedule giving full details of implementation by date and local authority grouping to be placed in the Library of the House.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Trade Balance

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what was the trade difference with other European Economic Community countries in manufacturing goods, excluding precious stones, for the first five months of the year, at an annualised rate.

Mr. Alan Clark: There was a crude deficit of £5·8 billion in the first five months of the year, on a non-seasonally adjusted basis. Annualised figures can be an unreliable guide to the outturn for the year.

Waste Exports

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (1) if Hubday Ltd. of the Isle of Man has applied to his Department for permission to export toxic wastes to Guinea-Bissau;

(2) if Bis Import-Export Ltd. of London has applied to his Department for export licences to ship *(a)* toxic and *(b)* radioactive wastes from the United Kingdom to Guinea-Bissau.

Mr. Alan Clark *[holding answer 28 June 1988]*: It has been the practice of successive Governments not to comment on individual licensing matters. Export licences would be required for the export of any toxic or radioactive wastes containing chemicals or materials specified in the Export of Goods (Control) Order 1987.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Union Flag

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what arrangements were made to fly the Union flag on the Department of Agriculture (Northern Ireland) buildings at the Mall, Armagh, on the date of Her Majesty's official birthday; whether the Union flag was flown on that day; whether the person responsible for flying the Union flag at these premises had been advised of the appropriate dates to fly the Union flag; and what further arrangements are being made to ensure that advice as to the matter is being implemented.

Mr. Viggers: I regret that the Union flag was not flown on the Department of Agriculture drainage office in the Mall, West, Armagh, on the occasion of Her Majesty's official birthday on 11 June 1988. The Department of Agriculture advises staff in writing each year of all days which the Union flag is to be flown. The date appointed for the official celebration of Her Majesty's birthday, which is variable, is subsequently confirmed by telephone. It appears that this latter advice was not received in the Armagh office in respect of Her Majesty's official birthday. Arrangements have now been made for the date to be confirmed in writing each year.

Civil Servants (Secondment)

Mr. McCusker: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many Northern Ireland civil servants are on secondment to various Departments in the Home Civil Service.

Mr. Stanley: There are 1,244 complemented posts in the Northern Ireland Office allocated to civil servants who are seconded from the Northern Ireland Civil Service. Three of these are serving in the Northern Ireland Office (London); the remainder serve in Northern Ireland. A further three Northern Ireland civil servants are on secondment to the Overseas Development Agency.

Housing Transfers

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the average time taken to satisfy a housing transfer request in East Antrim.

Mr. Needham: This is a matter for the Northern Ireland Housing Executive. I understand from the chief executive that the information requested could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Educational Testing

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many representations have been received in opposition to educational attainment testing at seven years for primary school children.

Dr. Mawhinney: Approximately 5,500 responses to the consultative document have been received, but not all of these have been analysed at this stage. However, many of the submissions contain detailed and constructive comments upon particular aspects including testing at age seven and these simply could not be summarised in general categories such as "for" and "against".

Sewage Disposal

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will take steps to ensure that sewage treatment facilities will be provided for the treatment of sewage at Ashvale park, Islandmagee, where untreated sewage is currently being discharged into the sea.

Mr. Needham: There are no plans at present to alter the arrangements for disposing of sewage from the Ashvale park area of Islandmagee.

Primary and Secondary Schools (Links)

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what plans he has to provide closer links between primary and secondary schools.

Dr. Mawhinney: The Department of Education will continue to encourage the establishment of links between primary and secondary schools, particularly where they are to the benefit of the pupils in their educational and social development.

School Building

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the extensions and modernisations carried out in 1986, 1987, and 1988 in maintained schools in Northern Ireland.

Dr. Mawhinney: The following extensions and modernisations have been approved to begin construction at maintained schools in Northern Ireland in the financial years 1986-87, 1987-88 and 1988-89.

Board Area	*School*	*Scheme*
Financial Year 1986-87	None	
Financial Year 1987-88		
North eastern	St. Joseph's primary school, Garvagh	Extension
South-eastern	St. Colman's high school, Ballynahinch	Extension
Southern	St. Catherine's college, Armagh	Alterations and extension
Southern	St. Brigid's primary school, Glassdrummond, Newry	Extension
Financial Year 1988-89		
Southern	Drumcree high school, Portadown	Extension
Southern	St. Mark's high school, Warrenpoint	Extension
Southern	Grange primary school, Kilkeel	Alterations/ conversions

Education Authority

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he has any plans to seek to create a single elected education authority for Northern Ireland.

Dr. Mawhinney: No.

Royal Ulster Constabulary

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the strength of the Royal Ulster Constabulary and the Royal Ulster Constabulary Reserve for each year from 1980.

Mr. Stanley: The information is as follows:

	Royal Ulster Constabulary	*Royal Ulster Constabulary Reserve (Full-time)*	*Royal Ulster Constabulary Reserve (Part-time)*
31 December 1980	6,935	1,685	3,067
31 December 1981	7,334	2,060	2,810
31 December 1982	7,718	2,173	2,666
31 December 1983	8,003	2,294	2,198
31 December 1984	8,127	2,533	1,907
31 December 1985	8,259	2,755	1,753
31 December 1986	8,234	2,753	1,659
31 December 1987	8,236	2,987	1,657
30 April 1988	8,247	3,016	1,652

Single Payments

Mr. Hume: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the processing of single payment claims, indicating the month in which the non-urgent claims now being processed in each social security office were made.

Mr. Needham: At 11 April 1988 there were approximately 80,000 single payment claims to be processed. This number had reduced to 18,446 by 24 June 1988, the latest date for which figures are available. Information is not collected on the urgency or otherwise of claims and information on the various dates of the claims now being processed could only be obtained at disproportionate cost and with consequent delays to their clearance.

Mr. Hume: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland wht consideration has been or is being given to making special staffing arrangements to have the outstanding single payment claims processed as soon as possible.

Mr. Needham: Extra staffing resources, including overtime and detached duty staff, have been allocated to social security offices as necessary to ensure that the outstanding single payment claims are processed as quickly as possible.

Mr. Hume: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when the Department of Health and Social Services estimate that each social security office will have completed their processing of single payment claims.

Mr. Needham: It is estimated that all single payment claims will have been cleared in 26 offices by 30 June 1988, in a further six offices by the end of July and in the remaining two (Londonderry and Strabane) by the end of August.

Artificial Insemination

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether AI Services (NI) Society Ltd. will be required to provide its service to persons who are not members of the society.

Mr. Viggers *[holding answer 24 June 1988]:* No.

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether he has agreed to AI Services (NI) Society Ltd. charging clients any fee in addition to the normal charge for the artificial insemination service which it is to provide; whether it will be free to charge such additional fees; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Viggers *[holding answer 24 June 1988]:* In making its application for the licence, AI Services (Northern Ireland) Society Ltd. indicated that each user of the service would be required to purchase a share in the society. The level fee is a matter for the society.

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what information he has as to how many shareholders there were in AI Services (Northern Ireland) Society Ltd. when he decided to give it the licence to provide an artificial insemination service for cattle producers.

Mr. Viggers *[holding answer 24 June 1988]*: In submitting their application for the licence, A1 Services (Northern Ireland) Society Ltd., a proposed new industrial and provident society or co-operative limited company, indicated support from 11 founder society members with some 16,700 individual members.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Southern Africa

Mr. Watts: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Slough of 7 June, *Official Report*, column *465*, on maintaining contacts with a wide range of political opinion in southern Africa, he will list those political leaders in Bophuthatswana with whom his officials have had contact in the last 12 months.

Mrs. Chalker: Within the limitations of our policy of non-recognition, our embassy in South Africa maintains contact with a range of political and community leaders in Bophuthatswana.

Independent Businesses

Mr. Stern: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has as to which Comecon countries permit small independent businesses to exist and own business assets.

Mr. Mellor: The position varies considerably among the 10 CMEA member countries. Small independent businesses are most developed in Poland and Hungary, and least in Romania, where they are not permitted. They operate chiefly in the services sector. I am writing to my hon. Friend about the detailed position in each country.

European Parliament

Mr. John M. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he last visited the European Parliament plenary session in Strasbourg.

Mrs. Chalker: My right hon. and learned Friend last visited the European Parliament on 10 December 1986 to report on the United Kingdom's Presidency of the Council. I regularly visit the European Parliament during its plenary sessions.

Falkland Islands (Broadcasting)

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether the head of British interests in Argentina will meet the chief executive of the Argentine Broadcasting Authority to discuss English language transmissions to the Falkland Islands.

Mr. Eggar: No such meeting has been requested and we have no plans at present to arrange one.

Immigration Appeals System

Mr. Sayeed: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will give the cost to his Department of the immigration appeals system for the last five years.

Mr. Eggar: It is not possible to isolate or apportion the cost of the immigration appeals system within the overall cost of the entry clearance operation overseas since the staff concerned spend varying amounts of their time on appeal-related work.

However, the appeals system has significant manpower implications. A recent exercise undertaken in respect of visit appeals only showed that, in the Diplomatic Service, an estimated 53·5 United Kingdom based man-years are taken up by the preparation of explanatory statements plus the need for more in-depth interviews and note-taking at a conservative estimated cost of around £5 million.

Children's Rights

Mr. Hume: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statment on Her Majesty's Government's policy towards the draft United Nations convention on the rights of the child indicating any articles to which Her Majesty's Government object or seek to amend.

Mr. Eggar: We support the draft United Nations convention on the rights of the child and have played a leading role in its drafting. There are no articles to which we object but they are seeking amendments to clarify or modify the text of the following articles to ensure that they are consistent with United Kingdom legal and administrative provisions: articles 2, 3(3), 4(1), 4(2), 5(bis), 6(1), 6(2), 6(bis), 7, 7(bis), 8, 10, 11(1), 11(2), 15(3), 18(2), 18(ter), 18(quinto), 18(sixt), 19, 20.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Diet

Ms. Walley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps he has taken to ensure that a healthy diet is available to all; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: We have acted to ensure that there is a plentiful supply of wholesome and varied food, at competitive prices, which is compositionally and hygienically safe and that there is adequate information available so that all consumers can make informed choices and obtain a balanced diet which is best suited to their individual health and lifestyle requirements.

Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how much his Department has spent on investigating the disease bovine spongiform encephalopathy for each year since 1980.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Bovine spongiform encephalopathy was first identified in December 1986. The cost of investigatory and research work from then until 31 March this year has been about £420,000.

Quarantine and Rabies Rules

Mr. David Martin: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if the arrangements with the European Economic Community for 1992 will involve any relaxation of United Kingdom quarantine and rabies rules; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The Government have no plans to relax the rabies controls, including the quarantine requirements.

Sheep

Mr. Boswell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what further assessment he has made of the effectiveness of the mark and release scheme in preventing radioactive sheep from entering the food chain; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The mark and release scheme permits sheep that have been live-monitored to leave the restricted areas. Those above 1,000 Bq/kg are marked with a distinctive paint mark to ensure that they are not slaughtered until restrictions on them are lifted. Sheep were marked blue between 28 September 1987 and 10 January 1988. Restrictions on blue-marked sheep were lifted on 1 June 1988.

Radioactivity levels in sheep fall at a rapid and steady rate once they have left the restricted area. The biological half life of the caesium in sheep grazing clean pasture is 10 days. Farmers outside the restricted area were therefore able to have blue-marked sheep remonitored and if they were no longer above the action level they were released from restriction by attaching a distinctive ear tag. It was not necessary to await a change of colour for such remonitoring to take place. 5,500 blue-marked sheep were remonitored; 33 were found to be above the action level in late 1987. These were subsequently remonitored and levels had fallen as expected. No blue-marked sheep have been found above the action level since January and the Ministry is entirely satisfied that no blue-marked sheep above the action level entered the food chain.

Cereals

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what green pound changes were recommended for each country of the EEC in the proposals agreed by 11 member states at the recent Council meeting; and what effect these will have on the penalties for the overproduction of cereals agreed by Heads of Government at the meeting of the European Council in February.

Mr. MacGregor *[holding answer 27 June 1988]*: The answers to my hon. Friend's question are given in the following table, the final column of which shows the effect that the proposed green rate changes, agreed by eleven member states at the end of the recent Agriculture meeting in Luxembourg on 17 June, would have on cereal support prices in national currencies. The decisions reached by the European Council in February 1988 on cereals stabilisers are not affected. The maximum impact on effective cereals support, if the stabiliser mechanisms are fully triggered by this year's harvest, would be a 3 per cent reduction in all member states in the 1989-90 marketing year, plus an increase in the co-responsibility level from 3 per cent. to 6 per cent. from 1 July this year.

Country	*Commodity sector*	*Proposed reduction in monetary gaps between green and market rates (per cent. points)*	*Change in cereals prices (per cent.)*
Belgium	Sheep	2·0	—
Luxembourg	Others	0·5	+0·5
Denmark	Pigmeat	0·5	—
	Others	1·0	+1·0
Germany	All	0	0
Greece	Beef	10·0	—
	Others	14·5	+11·6
Spain	Sheep	1·0	0
	Others	0	—
France	All	1·5	+1·4
Ireland	All	1·55	+1·5
Italy	Sheep	6·6	—
	Others	2·5	+2·4
Netherlands	Milk	0·5	—
	Others	0	0
Portugal	Sheep	4·8	—
	Others	11·0	0
United Kingdom	All	3·2	+2·9

1. All the green rate changes would apply (except in Greece and Portugal) from 1 January 1989, and would apply in all sectors except beef, where a decision would be taken in the light of the forthcoming review of the arrangements to apply in this sector after 31 December 1988.

2. In Greece, the monetary gap would be reduced by 10 percentage points in all sectors from the start of the 1988-89 marketing years. A further 4·5 percentage points would apply in all sectors except beef (to which the arrangements mentioned in (1) above would apply) from 1 January 1989.

3. Under transitional arrangements, the common cereals regime is not yet applicable in Portugal.

TRANSPORT

Nuclear Waste

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the answer to the hon. Member for Burnley given on 21 June, if he will now make it his policy to keep statistics on the movement of nuclear waste within United Kingdom airspace.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: No. Safety is ensured by prescribing design standards for the containers.

National Bus Company

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he intends to report to the House the full details of the disposal by National Bus Company of its assets with the names of the companies concerned and the details of the transactions.

Mr. David Mitchell: I hope to make a statement on the aggregate proceeds of the disposal programme shortly. Details of individual transactions will not be disclosed for commercial reasons.

ENVIRONMENT

Planning Refusals

Sir Anthony Grant: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many appeals against planning refusals in the county of Cambridgeshire he has received in each of the last 10 years; how many he approved or rejected in each of the years; and if he will give the same figures for East Anglia as a whole and for England and Wales over the same period.

Mr. Waldegrave: The comparative figures requested are readily available only for the period since 1 January 1984. These are given in the table. Decisions issued in a particular year do not necessarily relate to the appeals received in that year; and some of the appeals received were withdrawn before being determined.

Planning appeals

	Received	*Decided*	*Allowed*
Cambridgeshire			
1984	246	189	54
1985	334	264	93
1985-86	342	270	96
1986-87	407	294	131
1987-88	448	372	134
East Anglia[1]			
1984	810	618	169
1985	925	809	278
1985-86	985	797	266
1986-87	1,183	889	326
1987-88	1,356	1,071	363
England			
1984	16,192	11,643	3,773
1985	17,053	14,639	5,477
1985-86	17,839	14,130	5,581
1986-87	19,856	15,613	6,208
1987-88	22,482	18,474	6,955
Wales			
1984	806	631	229
1985	912	614	261
1985-86	923	700	312
1986-87	1,030	791	326
1987-88	1,066	868	281

[1] Cambridgeshire, Norfolk and Suffolk.

Council Tenants (Rent Arrears)

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what are the latest figures for the number of council tenants who were in arrears for their rent payments.

Mrs. Roe: Latest estimates of the number of local authority tenants in arrears with their rent and rates are published by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy in "Housing Rent Statistics at April 1987", which is in the Library.

Building Societies (Repossessions)

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish the latest figures available to him on the number of mortgage repossessions by building societies.

Mrs. Roe: For the latest available figures, I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) on 27 June.

Rating Reform

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if, pursuant to his answer of 23 June, giving illustrative community charge figures, he will deposit in the Library a table showing all the variables needed to calculate the figures, including data for each local authority, class of local authority and England as a whole.

Mr. Ridley: I have today placed in the Library a note setting out the data sources and calculations used to produce the figures given in my reply of 23 June together with a table showing the relevant data for each local authority.

Sports Council

Mr. Michael Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the membership of the Sports Council.

Mr. Moynihan: In recent years, the Sports Council has played an important role in encouraging the extensive increase in opportunities for people to participate in sport. In Great Britain, overall levels of participation have risen from 17 million in 1977 to 23 million in 1986 and are continuing to rise. A wider variety of sports are being played, and in some areas we have seen higher levels of performance and achievement. Sports men and women have ever rising expectations of the facilities they need, as well as more exacting requirements for specialist support at the highest levels of achievement.

These trends suggest that, in common with the roles of the governing bodies, the role of the Sports Council is vital to the future of sports at all levels. To fulfil that role, the Sports Council needs to be able to respond quickly and flexibly to changing demands and expectations.

In my open letter of 19 November to the Chairman of the Sports Council, I asked whether there is a case for a smaller membership of the council. I have now considered the responses to that question and the further comments which I have received from the Central Council of Physical Recreation. Many respondents took the view that the Sports Council in its present form is too large and unwieldy. I share that view and intend, therefore, to reduce the membership of the Sports Council to less than half its present size. This will bring the size of the Council into line with that of the other non-departmental public bodies sponsored by my Department.

To bring about this change, I have today written to those members of the council whose appointments expire today to tell them that they are not to be reappointed. I have also written to a number of others, inviting them to resign with effect from 31 July. I have it in mind to make a number of new appointments on that date.

In the course of my review of sports policies, I will be considering a number of issues during the rest of this year. In particular, I want to examine how we might place greater emphasis on the work of the regional councils for sport and recreation in the context of developing the role of the new Sports Council.

I am certain that the Sports Council will wish to develop new consultative arrangements, involving the chairman of the regional councils for sport, the governing bodies of sport, local authorities, sportsmen and women, and others. The form of that consultation will be a matter for the new council to consider.

This is the first in a series of important initiatives setting the scene for the structure and direction of sports policy for the 1990s.

Sport and Leisure Facilities

Mr. Leigh: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will announce the Government's decisions, following the recent consultation exercise, on the proposals to bring competition to the management of local authority sport and leisure facilities.

Mr. Moynihan: I refer my hon. Friend to the statement that I made earlier today.

CIVIL SERVICE

Ministers' Private Offices

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop: To ask the Minister for the Civil Service which private office telephone numbers have changed since the February edition of the Cabinet Office publication "List of Ministerial Responsibilities"; which have numbers yet to be changed on present plans; when those changes will be complete; and when this document will be available reprinted to include these changes.

Mr. Luce *[holding answer 27 June 1988]:* I am sending details of changes in private office telephone numbers since February to my hon. Friend and will place a copy of my letter in the Library of the House. No further changes are anticipated until March 1989. In accordance with normal practice, I expect the next edition of the list of ministerial responsibilities to be published during the summer recess.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Income Tax

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what amounts of income tax were or are payable by a single person with the following gross earnings in each of the specified years: *(a)* £4,000 in 1985-86, *(b)* £4,210 in 1986-87, *(c)* £4,440 in 1987-88 and *(d)* £4,680 in 1988-89.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The information is in the table. It is assumed that no allowances or reliefs other than the single personal allowance are claimed.

Income tax liability of a single person

Financial year	*Income* *£ per year*	*Income tax liability* *£*
1985-86	4,000	538·50
1986-87	4,210	543·75
1987-88	4,440	544·05
1988-89	4,680	518·75

Income Tax (Member's Correspondence)

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when the hon. Member for Taunton can expect to receive a reply to his question tabled for answer on 17 June relating to income tax payable at certain levels of income.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 30 June 1988]:* Today.

THE ARTS

Arts (Wales)

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Minister for the Arts what were the total grants made under the business sponsorship incentive scheme to arts organisations in Wales for each year since its inception; and what was the total related sponsorship for the same years.

Mr. Luce: Awards paid and related sponsorship in each financial year amounted to:

	Number of awards	*BSIS* £	*Related sponsorship* £
1984-85	3	32,500	112,500
1985-86	8	54,335	122,500
1986-87	12	81,917	155,417
1987-88	14	82,334	142,700
1988-89 (to date)	13	54,451	71,450

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Minister for the Arts what proportion of total central Government spending on Wales was represented by central Government expenditure on arts, museums and libraries in Wales in 1987-88 and 1988-89.

Mr. Luce: In Wales, central Government spending on arts, museums and libraries in 1987-88 and 1988-89 from my programme and that of the Secretary of State for Wales represents approximately 1·5 per cent. of total central Government spending there.

Equal Opportunities

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Minister for the Arts what information he has as to how many clients of the Arts Council have equal opportunities policies.

Mr. Luce: The Arts Council expects all its clients to have equal opportunities policies, and monitoring of these policies forms part of the Arts Council's regular evaluation of its clients.

Libraries

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Minister for the Arts (1) what has been the level of expenditure per capita on libraries in each of the past 10 years;

(2) what has been the level of expenditure, per capita, on libraries in *(a)* Great Britain and *(b)* England in each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Luce: Expenditure per capita over the last 10 years in respect of the British Library, which is the only library expenditure borne on the Vote of my Department was:

	£
1978-79	0·44
1979-80	0·57
1980-81	0·63
1981-82	0·68
1982-83	0·76
1983-84	0·79
1984-85	0·83
1985-86	0·85
1986-87	0·88
1987-88	0·89

Museums and Galleries

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Minister for the Arts whether he will publish a table showing *(a)* the total budget, *(b)* earned income and *(c)* income from sponsorship and expressing both *(b)* and *(c)* as a percentage of *(a)* (i) the Tate gallery, (ii) the National gallery, (iii) the British museum, (iv) the Victoria and Albert museum, (v) the National portrait gallery, (vi) the Science museum, (vii) the National maritime museum, (viii) the National museum of photography, television and film, (ix) the Natural history museum, (x) the Imperial war museum and (xi) the Yorkshire sculpture park in each of the last five years.

Mr. Luce: The information that the hon. Member has requested is not held centrally and cannot be obtained without disproportionate cost. Levels of grant-in-aid and non-grant income for the national museums and galleries that I sponsor are published annually in the Supply Estimates.

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Minister for the Arts (1) what information he has as to what has been the education budget of *(a)* the Tate gallery, *(b)* the National gallery, *(c)* the British museum, *(d)* the Victoria and Albert museum, *(e)* the National portrait gallery, *(f)* the Science museum, *(g)* the National maritime museum, *(h)* the Natural history museum, *(i)* the Imperial war museum, *(j)* the National museum of photography, television and film and *(k)* the Yorkshire sculpture park in each of the last five years;

(2) what information he has as to what has been the advertising and marketing budget for *(a)* the Tate gallery, *(b)* the National gallery, *(c)* the National portrait gallery, *(d)* the British museum, *(e)* the Victoria and Albert museum, *(f)* the National maritime museum, *(g)* the Imperial war museum, *(h)* the Science museum, *(i)* the Natural history museum, *(j)* the National museum of photography, television and film and *(k)* the Yorkshire sculpture park in each of the last five years.

Mr. Luce: The budgets of individual institutions cannot be broken down to give the detail the hon. Member has requested without disproportionate cost.

SOCIAL SERVICES

War Widows

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will undertake an investigation into the effects of his recent social security changes on war widows.

Mr. Portillo: War widows' pensions were not affected by the recent changes: they were uprated in line with the retail prices index on 11 April in the normal way. In general, war widows receiving social security benefits as well as war widows' pensions are affected in the same way as any other recipients, except that for income-related benefits the statutory disregard of war widows' pension has been increased by 25 per cent. to £5. In addition, war widows who satisfy the conditions can receive the new £1,000 lump sum paid to national insurance widows as well as the standard or lower rate of war widows pension. Local authorities have retained the discretion to disregard war widows' pensions in calculating entitlement to housing benefit.

Distinction Awards

Mr. Fallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what action is being taken by the chairman of the distinction awards committee in the light of the criticisms by the Review Body on Doctors' and Dentists' Remuneration in its 18th report;

(2) what advice or instructions have been given to local distinction awards committees in the light of criticisms made by the Review Body on Doctors' and Dentists' Remuneration in its 18th report.

Mr. Newton: In its 18th report, the Doctors' and Dentists' Review Body asked the Health Departments and the professions to consider a number of changes to the distinction awards system. We are currently considering those recommendations and will then discuss with the profession any proposals for change.

Income Generation

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish guidelines for district health authorities on income generation.

Mr. Newton: Guidance to health authorities was issued on 5 April in the form of a letter from the NHS management board director of financial information. A copy has been placed in the Library.

Sight Tests

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services when he anticipates announcing the date of the changes in payment for the sight test.

Mr. Newton: Subject to the enactment of the Health and Medicines Bill, it is expected that free NHS sight tests will be confined to groups of patients specified in the Bill or in regulations with effect from 1 April 1989.

Green Lane Children's Home, Greenwich

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what part his Department played in the recent investigation into the running of a London borough of Greenwich children's home at Green lane, SE9; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: Responsibility for investigating allegations of malpractice at Green lane Community Home lies with the London borough of Greenwich. The Department's social services inspectorate has, however, been kept informed of progress and developments in the inquiry undertaken by the borough and has been able to offer professional advice and support. A thorough management investigation by senior council officers is considered an appropriate way of dealing with allegations of the kind that have been made.

The council has asked the social services inspectorate to scrutinise the investigation and the findings recorded in the report of its social services committee working party in relation to the allegations. The inspectorate has undertaken to offer comment on any pertinent professional and service issues and this will be done as soon as possible.

Leeds Western Area Health Authority

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what action he proposes to take with respect to the projected £1·25 million overspend in the current financial year by the Leeds Western area health authority; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: It is the responsibility of Leeds Western health authority to consider how the recently identified overspending should be addressed, in consultation with Yorkshire regional health authority.

Social Workers

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is his latest estimate of the annual cost to local authorities of providing post-qualifying training to social workers.

Mr. Newton: Information on costs to local authorities of providing post-qualifying training to social workers is not held centrally. Information provided by the Central Council for Education and Training in Social Work is that 249 social workers were admitted to post-qualifying courses in 1987. About half of these were seconded by their employers.

Competitive Tendering

Mr. Neil Hamilton: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what measures he is taking to ensure that the true redundancy and severance pay implications for health authorities of private contractors' tenders for hospital services are independently assessed.

Mrs. Currie: Tendering and contractual matters are already subject to independent audit. Additionally, guidance to health authorities already makes it clear that authorities must give an estimate of redundancy costs that arise if a contract is awarded to an outside contractor, when issuing tenders. Authorities may also consider spreading those costs over a period longer than the intended contract period where local circumstances make this appropriate. The 1987 National Audit Office report on competitive tendering in the NHS concluded that procedures for evaluating tenders and awarding contracts were being implemented fairly and in accordance with departmental guidance.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he has taken steps to ensure that health authorities properly estimate the value of existing plant and machinery when they require private contractors to purchase it as part of a tender for hospital services; and whether he will ensure that such estimates are reviewed independently.

Mrs. Currie: Detailed guidance to health authorities on this type of contract stresses the need for authorities to arrive at valuations which are seen to be fair and realistic by both parties at the start of the contract. Authorities have already been advised to seek independent assistance from specialist firms or consultants where appropriate.

Mr. Rost: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what steps he will take to ensure that successful in-house tenders for hospital services are properly monitored.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will take steps to ensure that health authorities monitor the costs of successful in-house tenders for hospital services.

Mrs. Currie: Guidance to health authorities already stresses the continuing need for effective monitoring and control of contracts whether held by in-house teams or private contractors. To assist health authorities in this task the Department part-financed a study on contract monitoring for domestic, catering and laundry services sponsored by the Nuffield Provincial Hospitals Trust. The study, carried out by outside consultants, resulted in the publication of a practical guide and handbook on the management and monitoring of contracts for these services, which was issued by the Nuffield Provincial Hospitals Trust to health authorities last November and includes specific guidance on contracts awarded in-house.

Benefit Office Staff (Training)

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how much his Department has spent on training staff employed in benefit offices in the administration of the new social security rules.

Mr. Portillo: £21 million.

Baby-walkers (Accidents)

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many children have been admitted to hospital during each of the past five years following accidents suffered while using baby-walkers or other infants' walking devices.

Mr. Butcher: I have been asked to reply.

Home accidents to children under five years old using baby-walkers are recorded in the Department of Trade and Industry's home accident surveillance system (HASS) which covers a sample of accident and emergency (A and E) Departments in 20 hospitals in England and Wales.

The most recent five-year period for which HASS figures are available is 1982-86. In these years HASS recorded the following number of accidents:

Accidents to children under 5 involving baby walkers
HASS: Hospital attendances at accident and emergency department

Year	Not admitted to hospital (1) Sent home or (2) referred to GP or (3) out patient	Admitted to hospital In patients	Specialist or other hospital	Incomplete information Other disposal	Unknown	Total
1982	173	22	1	—	1	197
1983	171	12	2	1	—	186
1984	242	8	2	2	—	254
1985	212	14	2	—	1	229
1986	285	14	4	2	—	305

It is possible to estimate national figures from the HASS sample in the case of the total accident and emergency attendances quoted in the last column of the table above. These national estimates are as follows:

Year	*Estimated total A and E attendances for England and Wales*
1982	5,000
1983	3,900
1984	4,900
1985	4,900
1986	6,100

The number of cases being admitted to hospital is too small to make reliable national estimates of such admissions. The figures quoted suggest that in this period in England and Wales between 300 and 400 children a year were admitted to hospital as a result of an accident involving a baby-walker.

Abortion

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what was the number of abortions performed in 1987 at *(a)* under 12, *(b)* 12 to 18, *(c)* 18 to 24 and *(d)* over 24 weeks' gestation by health authority area in England and Wales; and if he will give the numbers performed by National Health Service and private facilities by the same time limit categories.

Mr. Newton: *[holding answer 27 June 1988]*: The information is shown in the table.

Number of notifications of abortions to residents of England and Wales—1987[2]
Regional Health Authority of usual residence by gestation weeks and category of premises.

Area of usual residence					*Gestation weeks*					
	[1]Total		*Under 12*		*12-17*		*18-24*		*24*	
	NHS	*Non-NHS*	*NHS*	*Non-NHS*	*NHS*	*Non-NHS*	*NHS*	*Non-NHS*	*NHS*	*Non-NHS*
England and Wales	69,390	86,790	51,932	69,651	16,226	13,111	1,210	4,026	41	37
England	65,302	84,073	49,170	67,560	14,981	12,641	1,130	3,870	40	37
Wales	4,088	2,717	2,762	2,091	1,245	470	80	156	1	0
Regional Health Authority										
Northern	5,486	954	4,424	659	972	204	89	91	3	0
Yorkshire	3,327	5,801	2,511	4,716	720	821	95	264	1	2
Trent	6,367	4,892	4,503	4,085	1,764	561	98	245	3	5
East Anglian	3,782	989	2,716	746	1,010	170	55	73	1	0
North West Thames	5,952	10,556	4,492	8,962	1,328	1,219	132	375	3	3
North East Thames	8,873	10,030	6,703	8,351	2,018	1,282	148	397	7	5
South East Thames	5,740	9,080	4,257	7,146	1,382	1,544	99	389	5	4
South West Thames	3,411	7,049	2,726	5,804	637	991	47	254	2	4
Wessex	2,830	4,323	2,098	2,860	671	1,220	60	243	3	3
Oxford	3,382	3,903	2,704	3,168	601	524	76	211	1	1
South Western	5,413	1,902	4,111	1,325	1,234	425	66	152	2	0
West Midlands	2,827	13,920	2,098	11,054	677	2,059	51	807	3	4
Mersey	3,177	3,887	2,395	3,092	743	658	37	137	2	2
North Western	4,735	6,787	3,432	5,592	1,224	963	77	232	4	4

[1] Excluding not stated.
[2] Provisional.

Mrs. Bowell

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services why attendance allowance will not be paid to Mrs. Bowell, currently of 80 Blatchcombe road, Paignton, who attends to her son, Mr. Alan Bowell, when they move to Spain at the beginning of July, in the light of the information in booklet SA29 paragraph 26; and if he will make a statement, with reference to the letter from the hon. Member for South Hams to the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State on 8 June.

Mr. Portillo: The adjudication officer has ruled that attendance allowance is not payable to those who take up permanent residence outside the United Kingdom. Leaflet SA29 will require amendment. Mrs. Bowell may appeal to a social security appeals tribunal, and hence to the social security commissioner on a point of law.

Dental Services

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the cost to the National Health Service in 1988 terms, for each year since 1975, of dental services given to people *(a)* aged up to 16 years, *(b)* between the age of 16 to 21 years, and *(c)* over the age of 21 years.

Mrs. Currie: I regret that the requested information is not available in full. The table gives the net cost (after allowing for patient charges) of the general dental service for people aged under 16, between the ages of 16 to 20 years and aged 21 years and over, for each year between 1975 and 1985. The basis of these figures was changed to the financial year in 1986, and the table includes the costs for 1986-87, the latest year for which this information is available. Similar information is not collected on the costs of dental services provided through the hospital and community health services.

General dental service
Net cost (after allowing for patient charges) in 1988-89 real terms[1]
£ million

	Total	*Under 16*	*Age group 16 to 20*	*21 and over*
1975	486	116	64	305
1976	477	109	64	303
1977	431	101	62	268
1978	458	114	72	271
1979	470	104	68	297
1980	485	100	73	312
1981	503	103	68	332
1982	515	105	59	352
1983	525	110	60	355
1984	551	112	59	380

			Age group	
	Total	*Under 16*	*16 to 20*	*21 and over*
1985	535	115	55	365
1986-87	572	129	55	388

[1] Adjusted in line with the GDP deflator at market prices.
Note: Figures may not sum due to rounding.

DEFENCE

Chemical Weapons

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if assurances were given to the United States President that the final assembly of United States binary chemical weapons was necessitated by the national security interests of the United Kingdom, pursuant to the requirements of section 1411 of the United States Department of Defence Authorisation Act 1986.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The United Kingdom lent its support to the adoption of a NATO force goal which stated the requirement for the United States to modernise its chemical weapons stock. No other assurances have been sought or received from the United Kingdom Government in connection with this programme.

Military Training

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 25 April, *Official Report,* column *73,* what non-NATO countries have agreements to use military training facilities in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Freeman: During 1986-87 and 1987-88 individuals or units from the following non-NATO countries made use of military training facilities in the United Kingdom by agreement with United Kingdom authorities.

Algeria
Australia
Bahamas
Bahrain
Bangladesh
Barbados
Belize
Bermuda
Botswana
Brazil
Brunei
Cameroon
Chile
Ecuador
Egypt
El Salvador
Fiji
Gambia
Ghana
Guyana
Hong Kong
India
Indonesia
Iraq
Iceland
Israel
Jamaica
Japan
Jordan
Kenya
Kuwait
Lebanon
Lesotho
Malawi
Malaysia
Maldives
Malta
Mauritius
Mozambique
Nepal
New Zealand
Nigeria
Oman
Pakistan
Philippines
Qatar
Saudi Arabia
Senegal
Sierra Leone
Singapore
South Korea
Sri Lanka
Sudan
Swaziland
Sweden
Switzerland
Tazania
Thailand
Trinidad and Tobago
Tunisia
United Arab Emirates
Uganda
Uruguay
Venezuela
Yemen Arab Republic
Yugoslavia
Zambia
Zimbabwe

Gunner R. W. Jones and Others

Mr. Roger King: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he now expects to publish the result of his investigations into the fate of Gunner R. W. Jones and others.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The review which the MOD is conducting of the results of the investigation which it carried out in 1986 into the fate of captured British service men and the involvement, if any, of the then Lieutenant Waldheim is intended to be as thorough and comprehensive as possible and is being pursued as quickly as is consistent with proper consideration of the evidence and the need for accuracy. While good progress is being made, this is a complex and important matter and the work is not likely to be completed before the autumn.

Low Flying

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what geographical area, expressed *(a)* by county and *(b)* by parliamentary constituency, is covered by low-flying area 11.

Mr. Freeman: Low-flying area 11 covers *(a)* the county of Humberside and parts of the counties of Lincolnshire, Nottinghamshire, North Yorkshire, South Yorkshire and West Yorkshire and *(b)* the parliamentary constituencies of Scarborough, Ryedale, Bridlington, Beverley, Boothferry, Kingston upon Hull, East, Kingston upon Hull, North, Kingston upon Hull, West, Brigg and Cleethorpes, Great Grimsby, Glanford and Scunthorpe, Gainsborough and Horncastle, Lincoln, Pontefract and Castleford, Selby, Elmet, Harrogate and York and parts of the parliamentary constituencies of Langbaurgh, Richmond (Yorks), Skipton and Ripon, Leeds, North-East, Normanton, Wakefield, Barnsley, Central, Hemsworth, Barnsley, East, Don Valley, Doncaster, Central, Doncaster, North, Bassetlaw, Sherwood, Newark, Grantham, Stamford and Spalding, Holland with Boston and East Lindsey.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what geographical area, expressed *(a)* by county and *(b)* by parliamentary constituency, is covered by low-flying area 5.

Mr. Freeman: Low-flying area 5 covers *(a)* the county of Suffolk and parts of the counties of Cambridgeshire, Essex, Lincolnshire and Norfolk *(b)* the parliamentary constituencies of Norfolk, North, Mid-Norfolk, Norfolk, South, Norwich, North, Norwich, South, Great Yarmouth, Waveney, Suffolk, Central, Suffolk, Coastal, Suffolk, South, Ipswich, Harwich, Colchester, North and Bury St. Edmunds and parts of the parliamentary constituences of Norfolk, North-West, East Lindsey, Holland with Boston, Norfolk, South-West, Cambridgeshire, North-East, Cambridgeshire, South-West, Cambridgeshire, South-East, Saffron Walden, Braintree, Chelmsford, Colchester, South, and Maldon.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what geographical area, expressed *(a)* by county and *(b)* by parliamentary constituency, is covered by low-flying area 16.

Mr. Freeman: Low-flying area 16 covers *(a)* the county of Lothian and parts of the counties of Borders, Central, Cumbria, Dumfries and Galloway, Fife and Northumberland, Strathclyde and *(b)* the parliamentary constituencies of Clydebank and Milngavie, Glasgow, Garscadden, Glasgow, Maryhill, Glasgow, Hillhead, Glasgow, Springburn, Glasgow, Provan, Glasgow, Govan, Glasgow, Central, Glasgow, Shettleston, Glasgow, Pollok, Glasgow, Cathcart, Glasgow, Rutherglen, Paisley, North, Paisley, South, Eastwood, Cunninghame, South, Kilmarnock and Loudoun, East Kilbride, Ayr, Hamilton, Strathkelvin and Bearsden, Monklands, West, Monklands, East, Cumbernauld and Kilsyth, Falkirk, West, Falkirk, East, Motherwell, North, Motherwell, South, Linlithgow, Livingston, Midlothian, East Lothian, Edinburgh, Leith, Edinburgh, West, Edinburgh, Central, Edinburgh, East, Edinburgh, South, Edinburgh, Pentlands, Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley, Clydesdale, Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale, and Galloway and Upper Nithsdale and parts of the parliamentary constituencies of Cunninghame, North, Renfrew, West and Inverclyde, Greenock and Port Glasgow, Dumbarton, Stirling, Clackmannan, Dunfermline, West, Dunfermline, East, Kirkcaldy, Roxburgh and Berwickshire, Berwick-upon-Tweed, Penrith and The Border and Dumfries.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the minimum permitted height for fixed-wing military aircraft operating in *(a)* the Kinloss-Lossiemouth, *(b)* Vale of York, *(c)* Spadeadam and *(d)* Ternhill areas of intense aerial activity.

Mr. Freeman: Such aircraft are not permitted to fly at heights beneath 250 ft minimum separation distance (msd) in any of these areas other than within the confines of Spadeadam training range, where aircraft may descend to 100 ft msd during their final approach to target.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what standing instructions are issued to station commanders at Royal Air Force bases concerning the procedures to be followed when complaints about low flying are received.

Mr. Freeman: The RAF general and administrative instruction covering the investigation of flying complaints from members of the public in the United Kingdom is a classified document. The instruction calls for responses to be courteous.

NATO Facilities

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what is the purpose and function of the proposed NATO-funded petrol, oil and lubricants storage at RAF Abingdon;

(2) what is the purpose and function of the proposed NATO parking platforms at RAF Benson;

(3) what is the purpose and function of the proposed NATO-funded petrol, oil and lubricants storage at RAF Benson;

(4) what is the purpose and function of the proposed NATO-funded petrol, oil and lubricants storage at aeroplane and armament experimental establishment, Boscombe Down;

(5) what are the purposes and functions of the proposed NATO-funded parking platforms at RAF Odiham;

(6) what is the purpose and function of the proposed NATO-funded petrol, oil and lubricants storage at RAF Odiham;

(7) what is the purpose and function of the proposed NATO-funded jet fuel storage at RAF Sculthorpe;

(8) what are the purposes and functions of the proposed NATO-funded ammunition storage igloos at RAF Sculthorpe;

(9) what is the purpose and function of the proposed NATO-funded missile maintenance facility at RAF Sculthorpe;

(10) what is the purpose and function of the proposed NATO-funded missile maintenance facility at RAF Heyford;

(11) what is the purpose and function of the proposed NATO-funded jet fuel storage at RAF Waddington;

(12) what is the purpose and function of the proposed NATO-funded missile checkout facility at RAF Waddington.

Mr. Ian Stewart: All facilities to which the hon. Member refers are designed for use by US forces operating in support of NATO. On good grounds of security, it is not our general practice to give more detailed operational information of the sort requested.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the NATO-funded projects that will be in construction for United States forces at bases in the United Kingdom in the fiscal year 1989.

Mr. Ian Stewart: I understand that the following NATO-funded projects will be in construction for the United States forces in the fiscal year 1989.

RAF Abingdon
  POL (Petroleum, oil and lubricants) storage

RAF Alconbury
  Avionics facility
  Sensor maintenance facility
  Jet fuel storage
  Weather shelters

Warehouse
Aircraft shelters
Corrosion control wash rack
Runway overrun
Squadron operations building

RAF Benson
Parking platforms
POL storage

A&AEE Boscombe Down
POL storage
Aircraft shelters
Ammunition storage igloos
Parking platforms
Standby electrical power
Taxitrack

RAF Fairford
POL storage

RAF Lakenheath
Ammunition storage igloos
Base operations building
Flying control tower
Restore taxitrack

RAF Mildenhall
POL storage
Runway overrun

RAF Odiham
POL storage
Parking platforms
Liquid oxygen storage

RAF Scampton
Jet fuel storage

RAF Sculthorpe
Jet fuel storage
Ammunition storage igloos
Missile maintenance facility

RAF Upper Heyford
Missile maintenance facility
Ammunition storage igloos

RAF Waddington
Jet fuel storage
Missile checking facility

RAF Wittering
Jet fuel storage

RAF Woodbridge
Aircraft ground environment workshop

Air Training Corps

Mrs. Maureen Hicks: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans his Department has to improve the accommodation facilities for members of the Air Training Corps.

Mr. Freeman: Additional funds of £500,000 will be made available this year to accelerate the ATC's building programme of primary and auxiliary huts.

Hong Kong

Dr. Marek: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the future sharing of defence costs between the Hong Kong Government and Her Majesty's Government.

Mr. Ian Stewart *[holding answer 29 June 1988]:* An outline agreement on the future sharing of defence costs in Hong Kong has been concluded between officials of both Governments. The agreement, which provides for an apportionment of costs between the Hong Kong Government and Her Majesty's Government of 65:35, will run from 1 April 1988 to 30 June 1997.

Written Answers to Questions

Monday 4 July 1988

WALES

Mentally Handicapped Persons

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales which agency is responsible for providing employment opportunities for people with a mental handicap residing in Wales.

Mr. Peter Walker: People with a mental handicap should be able to enjoy full access to the normal range of services available to the public, and this applies equally to those in the employment field. The employment service in Wales, through its jobcentre facilities and disablement advisory service, provides assistance for people with a mental handicap to find suitable employment. A wide variety of schemes, supported by local authority social services departments, is available in those cases where additional support may be necessary.

Health Authorities (Membership)

Ms. Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the names and addresses of *(a)* all nurse members on health authorities and special health authorities and *(b)* generalist members on health authorities who are nurses.

Mr. Grist: Nurse members currently serving on health authorities in Wales are:

Ms. M. Williams—(Clwyd District Health Authority)
Mrs. D. M. Tyler—(East Dyfed District Heath Authority)
Mrs. J. Evans—(Gwent District Health Authority)
Mrs. M. P. Wiliam—(Gwynedd District Health Authority)
Mr. D. Thomas—(Mid Glamorgan District Health Authority)
Miss J. Sinnott—(Pembrokeshire District Health Authority)
Mr. D. Williams—(Powys District Health Authority)
Mrs. C. M. Owen—(South Glamorgan District Health Authority)
Miss V. Burns—(West Glamorgan District Health Authority)

Of the generalist membership appointed by the Secretary of State, the following two individuals are nurses:

Mrs. S. G. Badland—(Clwyd District Health Authority)
Mrs. H. M. Jones—(East Dyfed District Health Authority)

In addition, Mrs. Noreen Edwards CBE, chairman of the Gwynedd district health authority, is a former matron.

Updated records of the occupations of local authority membership are not held centrally.

There are no nurse members on special health authorities in Wales.

It is not our practice to publish home addresses of district health authority members, but they can be contacted at the authority's official address.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

World Bank

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he is making to the World Bank in relation to structural adjustment facilities.

Mr. Chris Patten: The bank is committing about 25 per cent. of its lending in aid of adjustment, including about 5 per cent. for wider structural adjustment. We strongly support this.

Sub-Saharan Africa

Mr. Favell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the Government's support for structural adjustment programmes in sub-Saharan Africa.

Mr. Chris Patten: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave my hon. Friend the Member for Portsmouth, South (Mr. Martin) on 20 June, at columns *377-78*.

Under-developed Countries (Waste Disposal)

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he provides assistance for the removal or treatment of wastes deposited in under-developed countries by developed countries.

Mr. Chris Patten: The Overseas Development Administration funded the visit of three scientists to work with a small American team advising on the recently discovered hazardous waste in Koko, Nigeria. Within the resources available, we stand ready to consider providing further technical co-operation if asked by developing countries.

Ethiopia

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement about the United Kingdom's assistance to Ethiopia.

Mr. Chris Patten: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave my hon. Friend the Member for Chipping Barnet (Mr. Chapman) on 13 June, at columns *11-12* and to the answer I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Canterbury (Mr. Brazier) on 20 June, at columns *379-80*.

PRIME MINISTER

Professor Peter Mortimore

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Prime Minister what approach the Government made to Professor Peter Mortimore about his possible appointment to the shadow National Curriculum Council; which Department made the approach; for what reasons it was decided not to appoint him; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science announced the initial appointments to the shadow National Curriculum Council on 20 May at columns *596-97*. Further appointments are expected to be made in due course. It is not the practice to comment further on public appointments of this kind.

Children's Rights (UN Convention)

Mr. Hume: To ask the Prime Minister if she will make a statement on co-ordination between the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and other interested Government Departments on Her Majesty's Government policy towards the draft United Nations convention on the rights of the child with particular reference to its compatibility with existing domestic policies and legal provisions.

The Prime Minister: The Foreign and Commonwealth Office plays a co-ordinating role in the negotiations on the draft United Nations convention on the rights of the child, liaising as necessary with other Government Departments. Domestic policy and legal provisions are of course primarily a matter for the Department of Health and Social Security.

ENVIRONMENT

Bathing Beaches

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what action he proposes to take to advise intending holidaymakers that the water off the beaches of Sandwich, Deal, Folkestone, Sandgate, Hythe, Dymchurch and St. Mary's Bay failed the EEC coliform bacterial test in both 1986 and 1987.

Mr. Moynihan: These bathing waters were among those included in the 1987 monitoring survey, the results of which I announced on 5 May in reply to a question by my hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton, North-East (Mr. Hicks) at columns *571-77*. We are committed to bringing all identified waters up to EC standards. In general, no specific advice is necessary to holidaymakers in respect of waters which currently fail to meet standards. If, because of exceptional local circumstances, it were necessary to advise the public in respect of any water, it would be for the water authority and the local environmental health officer to take the appropriate action.

Pollution

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the total number of sites designated for monitoring by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Pollution in *(a)* 1986, *(b)* 1987, and *(c)* the latest available date.

Mr. Moynihan: Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Pollution advises both my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for the Environment and for Wales, and in that capacity is responsible for inspecting and or monitoring the following:

Number of premises subject to the Radioactive Substances Act 1960

1987:5,799

Number of works registered under the Alkali etc. Works Regulation Act 1906 and the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974

1987:1,943

Number of works subject to discharge consent under the Control of Pollution Act 1974

1987: approximately 6,500 sewage treatment works[1] of which 4,600 have numerical consents and are therefore subject to compliance testing. The remainder are small works serving less than 250 people which have descriptive consents. Although not subjects to compliance testing, they are subject to inspection.

[1] HMIP is also responsible for issuing consents on behalf of the Secretaries of State for discharges for storm overflows, coastal outfalls and some water treatment works the total for which is not available.

Number of controlled waste sites under the Control of Pollution Act 1974

1987:5,100

The figures for 1987 are the latest available. Comparable figures for 1986 are not available.

Pollution Inspectorate

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many inspectors formed the staff complement of Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Pollution in *(a)* 1986, *(b)* 1987, and *(c)* the latest available date.

Mr. Moynihan: Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Pollution was formed on 1 April 1987, with a professional complement of 123 posts, of which 66 were for field inspectors. The current professional complement is 120, of which 69 are field inspectors.

Water Supplies

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment who is currently responsible for monitoring the quality of tap water supplied by water authorities, and whether he has any proposals to change the current system.

Mr. Moynihan: Monitoring of public water supplies is currently carried out by the water undertakers. Local authorities also have a duty to monitor the quality of all water supplies within their areas. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State is also responsible for ensuring that appropriate measures are taken to fulfil the monitoring requirements of the EC directive on the quality of water intended for human consumption. These arrangements are to continue, and will be strengthened and clarified in the forthcoming legislation to privatise the water authorities. In particular, the legislation will contain measures enabling my right hon. Friend to arrange technical assessments of utility company monitoring to ensure compliance with the standards.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list *(a)* European Economic Community directives which currently affect the water supply and *(b)* the areas in which discussions are currently taking place on further European Economic Community directives relating to water.

Mr. Moynihan: The EC directive relating to the quality of water intended for human comsumption, (80/778/EEC) applies to the quality of water supplies. The EC directive concerning the quality required of surface water intended for the abstraction of drinking water applies to the quality of the raw water and the level of treatment to be applied to it. Discussions are currently in progress on proposals for the protection of the aquatic environment in the following areas:

(i) on water quality objectives and limit values for discharges of chromium.

(ii) on procedures for harmonizing the programmes for the reduction and eventual elimination of pollution caused by waste from the titanium dioxide industry.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what sanctions operate against water authorities which do not comply with European Economic Community directives.

Mr. Moynihan: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State exercises sufficient control over water authorities to ensure general compliance. Should he consider that an authority was not complying with any directive in particular circumstances, appropriate steps would be taken.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has estimated the cost to water authorities prior to privatisation of complying with all existing European Economic Community directives on water; and whether his Department will assist in meeting this cost.

Mr. Moynihan: The Department does not grant-aid this type of investment. We are at present discussing these programmes with water authorities as part of the corporate plans round.

Membrane Technology

Sir Trevor Skeet: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has on the amount of money being spent in the United Kingdom on membrane technology for the benefit of the chemical, water treatment and waste-processing industries.

Mr. Moynihan: This information is not held centrally.

Houses (Care and Repair Initiative)

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on progress on the care and repair initiative in elderly home owners, giving details of the location of the centres, expenditure and numbers receiving help at the latest convenient date.

Mr. Waldegrave: My Department is part funding 62 agency services projects under the initiative launched in November 1986: 27 are supported by Care and Repair Ltd., 10 by the Anchor Housing Trust and the remainder by Neighbourhood Revitalisation Services. The locations of projects specifically aimed at assisting elderly homeowners are as follows. The Department's contribution to Care and Repair Ltd., and through it to individual projects, was £470,000 to 30 June 1988. By 31 March 1988, 2,354 inquiries had been received by projects, 2,024 of which have led to further action being taken, including work to properties. It is too early to say what the total cost of the completed works will be, but this information is being collected as part of the monitoring exercise conducted by Bristol university.

"Care and Repair" schemes

Boston
Braintree
Bristol
Camden
Carlisle
Castleford
Coalville
Croydon
Derby
Easington
Eastbourne
Hartlepool
Ipswich
Leeds
Leicester
Liverpool
London, Bexley
London, Newham
Mansfield
Northampton
Plymouth
St. Helens
Stroud
Waltham Forest
Waveney
Wigan
Wolverhampton

"Staying Put" schemes

Birmingham, Ladywood
Blackburn
Hove
Hull
Kirklees
London, Southwark
Oldham
Oxford
Stoke
Sunderland

Council House Sales

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will bring forward legislation to increase the present £35,000 maximum discount for council tenants purchasing their homes under the right-to-buy scheme.

Mr. Waldegrave: My right hon. Friend is considering the case for increasing the £35,000 limit under the Housing (Right to Buy) (Maximum Discount) Order 1986.

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has as to the reasons for the delay in the purchase by Mr. R. W. Rook of 14 Horton Avenue, London NW2 2SA, of his council house from Camden council; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Roe: According to the council, problems in the preparation of the conveyancing plan.

Nature Conservancy Council

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what are the criteria laid down by the Department of the Environment for the purposes of reviewing the Nature Conservancy Council's current and proposed landholdings; and how the new criteria apply to the Glen Feshie acquisition case.

Mr. Moynihan: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State to the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) on 13 January 1988, columns *281-82,* which listed the issues which the Department has asked the Nature Conservancy Council to consider as part of its current review of national nature reserves. The NCC has no plans to acquire Glen Feshie.

County of Kent (Planning Inquiries)

Mr. Gale: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish in the *Official Report* the details of each planning inquiry relating to the county of Kent held in the past 18 months; and if he will show, for each inquiry *(a)* the recommendation of the county council, *(b)* the recommendation of the district or city council, *(c)* the recommendation, where appropriate, of hon. Members, *(d)* the nature of the appeal, *(e)* the recommendation of the inspector and *(f)* the decision issued by him.

Mr. Waldegrave: The information requested could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

American Waste

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what European Economic Community grants are being paid towards the cost of the Arpley Meadow tip infrastructure at Warrington; which American company Power, Water and Waste plc is purchasing the waste from; and when the imports of the waste are due to commence.

Mr. Moynihan: I understand from Cheshire waste disposal authority that £1·92 million has been granted from the European regional development fund towards the development of the Arpley Meadows waste disposal site. I have no information on the arrangements made by Power, Water and Waste for the procurement of the waste in the United States of America. Whether and when imports might commence depends upon necessary approvals being obtained.

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether animal carcases are contained in the American waste proposed to be imported into Warrington.

Mr. Moynihan: I believe that the proposal relates to household waste, the precise content of which is unknown at this stage.

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether his comments to Manchester hon. Members in his letter of 14 June on imports of foreign waste, apply to the proposed import of American waste into Warrington.

Mr. Moynihan: No. My right hon. Friend's letter referred to imports from overseas of special wastes which are for specialist treatment or incineration. I made clear on 29 June, at column *501*, the Government's reservations about the proposed import of household waste from the United States of America, which is quite different in scale and nature.

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment he has made of possible dangers to public health arising from the proposed importation of American waste into Warrington.

Mr. Moynihan: I refer the hon. Member to my answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Warrington, South (Mr. Butler), at column *654*.

Warrington and Runcorn

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when tenants of rented properties owned by Warrington and Runcorn development corporation will be balloted on a choice of future landlord.

Mrs. Roe: Tenants will be consulted as soon as practicable about the ultimate transfer of ownership.

In Warrington, the earliest date is likely to be spring 1990, given the need for legislation to enable Warrington borough council to acquire the houses on the same terms as other prospective approved landlords and to establish a new financial regime for local authority housing. It is essential that tenants can make an informed choice. They will need to know what future rent levels will be and what they can expect in terms of services from prospective landlords before they decide. The borough council will not be able to give tenants definite assurances on these until they have fully digested our proposals on finance.

In Runcorn, where Halton borough council is not interested in acquiring the housing, the tenants will be consulted on whether they wish their homes to be transferred to RUNHAG, the consortium of local housing associations. A fair price for the houses must first be agreed. An independent valuation is expected later this year. Consultation should be possible early in 1989.

Rating Reform

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment he has made of the effect of the passage of the Local Government Finance Bill on garden rates as set out in the Kensington Improvement Act 1851; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: Garden square committees established under this Act currently raise money by a levy on the Borough council. They will be able to continue to make such levies under the provisions of clause 88 of the Local Government Finance Bill.

Homelessness

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on Her Majesty's Government's plans to make future provision for facilities for single homeless men.

Mrs. Roe: I have nothing to add to the reply my hon. Friend gave to the hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody) on 18 May, at column *929*.

Laing Easiform Houses

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what advice the Building Research Establishment is able to offer to owners and lending institutions on the structural condition of Laing Easiform houses.

Mr. Waldegrave: The BRE's report on "The structural condition of Easiform cavity-walled dwellings" is published today. Its conclusions are reassuring. Many of the houses inspected were 60 years old, but in none of them was the stability or integrity of the structure in doubt. The incidence and structural significance of faults reported appears to be no greater than those in traditional cavity-walled dwellings of the same age. The Easiform house is a robust and substantial form of construction which is unlikely to be significantly affected by minor variations in workmanship or isolated cracking in the concrete.

The report also contains much useful information on Easiform construction which should be particularly helpful to lending institutions and their surveyors when considering mortgage applications, and also to local authorities and private owners when approaching the repair and maintenance of these dwellings.

Advertisement Regulations

Mr. Brandon-Bravo: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether, following consideration of the response to his Department's consultation paper issued last October, he will announce his intention to amend the control of advertisement regulations so as to permit certain types of illuminated advertisements to be displayed with deemed consent on business premises and in retail parks.

Mr. Waldegrave: After careful consideration of the responses to the consultation paper, we have decided to amend the Control of Advertisements Regulations so as to provide for two new classes of illuminated advertisements to be displayed with "deemed consent" on specified "business premises" and in "retail parks". Each new class will be subject to carefully framed limitations to safeguard amenity and minimise any risk to public safety. In response to expressions of concern that the original proposals were likely to prove harmful to amenity if illuminated signs were displayed in conservation areas without the local planning authority's specific consent, we have decided to exclude these areas for the time being. Land and premises situated in national parks, areas of outstanding natural beauty and areas of special control of advertisements will also be excluded from the new provisions.

The type of illuminated advertisements for which consent will be granted will be specifically limited to those in which each letter or character is internally illuminated, with any background remaining unilluminated; the maximum luminance levels for any advertisement displayed with deemed consent will have to conform to the recommendations of the Institution of Lighting Engineers for appropriate areas; advertisements which include any intermittent light source, moving feature or animation, or any exposed neon tubing will not be permitted by the consent; and certain height limits and maximum areas will be specified. We are satisfied that these conditions and limitations are essential in the interests of amenity and public safety.

My right hon. Friend intends in due course to lay before Parliament amendment regulations (under section 63 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1971) to give effect to these proposals; to make the further amendments to improve and simplify the practical operation of the advertisement control regime which I announced in my written answer on 28 October 1987, at column *280*; and to consolidate all the earlier amendments to the Control of Advertisements Regulations 1984 (SI 1984/No. 421).

Where those providing comments on the consultation paper have given their consent, copies of the responses are being placed in the Library in the usual way.

Water Authorities

Mr. Onslow: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what ceiling his Department has set on the capital expenditure of each water authority in England and Wales for the year ahead; and what were the corresponding figures for each of the past five years, expressed in constant prices.

Mr. Moynihan *[holding answer 1 July 1988]:* The capital allocations given to each of the English regional water authorities for 1988-89 are set out in the adjoining table. These allocations relate to water services for which the Department is responsible and do not include flood defence works, which are the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. Allocations for Welsh water are a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales. In the last five years we have exercised an indirect control over capital expenditure and not made formal capital allocations. The allocations for 1988-89 are as follows:

	£ million
Anglian	135·0
Northumbrian	34·5
North West	214·0
Severn-Trent	171·0
Southern	81·0
South West	50·0
Thames	175·0
Wessex	64·5
Yorkshire	132·0

These allocations are being reviewed in the current round of corporate plan discussions.

Coast Protection

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much was spent on coastal protection and sea defences for each year since 1980.

Mr. Gummer: I have been asked to reply because my Department has responsibilities with regard to capital spending on coast protection and sea defences.

The figures are as follows:

Capital spending on coast protection and sea defences

	£ millions
1980-81	27·3
1981-82	30·3
1982-83	36·4
1983-84	39·0
1984-85	35·4
1985-86	34·6
1986-87	38·6
1987-88	42·1

Swimming Facilities

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he is taking to introduce private management of local authority swimming facilities; and what representations he has received on the matter.

Mr. Moynihan *[holding answer 1 July 1988]:* I refer the hon. Member to the statement made on Friday 1 July, at columns 652-65.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Education Reform

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland on what grounds home economics and business studies/commercial subjects, have been reduced to minority status subjects in the Government's education proposals for Northern Ireland.

Dr. Mawhinney: The proposals for a common curriculum for Northern Ireland, published in the consultation document, are not meant to be closely prescriptive, but rather are intended to represent what would be acceptable as the basic components of a broad and balanced curriculum necessary to enable young people to develop to their full potential. The absence of home economics or business studies from the proposed foundation subjects does not mean that they are held in any less esteem, and time will be available outside the foundation curriculum for schools to devote to other important subjects such as these.

Irish Language

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what are his estimates of the percentage of people in Northern Ireland who *(a)* use the Irish language as their first language and *(b)* have a fluent knowledge of the Irish language.

Dr. Mawhinney *[holding answer 27 June 1988]:* Information on the use of Irish as a first language is not currently available. Data collected in the continuous household survey in 1987 suggest that some 3·7 per cent. of the people of Northern Ireland have an elementary fluency in the Irish language and 0·55 per cent. have full fluency.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Alcohol Counselling

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what grants are available to voluntary organisations providing a pre-sentencing alcohol counselling and assessment service to magistrates courts; and what is the current spending on supporting such projects.

Mr. John Patten: Voluntary organisations which provide alcohol advice and counselling services receive grants from local authorities, health authorities and other sources. The probation service may co-operate with these organisations when preparing social inquiry reports for the courts on offenders with alcohol problems. No information is available centrally about the level of financial support which such organisations receive from public funds.

Prison Officers' Houses (Culcheth)

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department which company has purchased the empty prison officers houses in Culcheth; whether all the houses have now been sold; whether the hostel has been sold; what price was paid for the properties; and what arrangement was reached with Warrington borough council regarding the roads and services.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Agreement has been reached to sell these properties to the firm which submitted the highest tender but completion has yet to take place. This awaits the conclusion, which is expected shortly, of negotiations between the prospective purchaser and Warrington borough council on proposals made for minor changes to the layout of the roads. The specifications for the works to be undertaken by the purchaser to secure adoption of the roads and services have been agreed with Warrington borough council.

The name of the prospective purchaser and the price to be paid cannot be made public until the sale has been completed.

Trials (Merseyside and Liverpool Crown Court)

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects the time limit of 110 days between arrest and being brought to trial will apply to Merseyside and the Liverpool Crown court.

Mr. John Patten: We plan to extend custody time limits to other areas next year but it is too early to say whether Merseyside will be among them. We hope time limits will be in force throughout England in 1990.

Immigration and Nationality Department

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will specify the latest average waiting times for applicants for all application categories dealt with by the immigration and nationality department; and what changes have taken place in waiting times in each of the last five years on a quarterly basis.

Mr. Renton: Annual information is given in the following table for the major areas of work undertaken by the immigration and natonality department: the figures for extensions of stay and settlement and for refugee status involves a degree of approximation such that any quarterly fluctuation would not be of significance.

Average length of time between the receipt of an application and the decision, for cases decided during the year

Months

	1983	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*
Applications for extension of stay or settlement[1]	n/a	2	2	2	3
Applications for refugee status or asylum[2]	6	9	13	14	15
Applications for citizenship[3]					
—naturalisation	17	15	16	14	17
—registration	13	13	10	5	6

[1] Cases decided by caseworking groups and Public Enquiry Office.

[2] Some refugee cases are also included within the figures for extension of stay or settlement.

[3] Average for cases decided in June.

n/a—not available.

London Passport Office

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department pursuant to the reply of 27 June, if he will list the names of the agencies accredited by the London Passport Office for the lodging of bulk applications.

Mr. Renton: The agencies are as listed:

Advisory and Travel Service
Afro Asian Advisory Service
Amathus (UK) Ltd.
Amazon Travel Ltd.
American Express IBC
Apollo Travel Service
Aquarius Travel
Automobile Association
Ayscough Travel Ltd.
Aero-Speedway Travel Centre
Albany Foremost Travel Ltd.
Alecos Tours Ltd.
American Express International Banking Corp.
American Express Travel Division
APV Hall International Ltd.
A T Mays
Avisa Passport and Travel Service

Baldwins Travel Agency Ltd.
Balfour Beatty Construction Ltd.
Barclays Bank International Ltd.
Beck and Pollitzer Construction Ltd.
Blair Consular Services Ltd.
Borax Holdings Ltd.
BP Minerals International Ltd.
British Airways Travel Centre
British-American Tobacco Co. Ltd.
Babcock and Wilcox Ltd.
Bales Tours Ltd.
Bank Line Travel Ltd.
Baxter Hoare Travel Ltd.
Benmar Passport Services
Blue Star Travel
Born Free
Britannic Travel

British Airways London Gatwick
British Broadcasting Corp.
British Oxygen Co. Ltd.

Camberley Travel Centre
Central Electricity Generating Board Travel Section
Commonwealth Development Corp.
Convoy Travel Service
Cunard Shipping Services Ltd.
Cyprus Travel (London) Ltd.
Cable and Wireless Ltd.
Capital
Cleopatra Travel
Compass Travel Ltd.
Cox and Kings Ltd.
Cyplon Travel Ltd.

Davies Turner Travel
Depike Engineers Ltd.
Davids Travels Ltd.
Dalgety World Travel
Diplomat Travel

Embassy Travel Ltd.
Esso Petroleum Co. Ltd.
Euro-Cyp Travel Ltd.
Excor Travel Division
Expotel Executive Travel
Equatoria Associates Ltd.
Eupo-Air Travel Service Ltd.
Ever Travel
Executive Travelcair Ltd.
Express Boyd Ltd.

Fairways and Swinford (Travel) Ltd.
Fitstravel Ltd.
Foster Wheeler Ltd.
Fregata Travel Ltd.
Furness Travel Ltd.
Fishley Sebley Associates (Travel) Ltd.
Forbes Campbell (Travel) Ltd.
Frames Tours Ltd.
Fryer Travel Ltd.

Gemini Travel
Grayson Travel Ltd.
Gellatly Travel
Gray Dawes Travel Ltd.
Groutas Tourist Agencies Ltd.

Haden International Ltd.
Hanson Travel Service Ltd.
Hep Travel Ltd.
Hillgate Travel (London) Ltd.
Hogg Robinson Travel Ltd.
Hampden Travel
Happy Days Travel
Hercules Travel Ltd.
Messrs C. Hoare and Co.
The Hong Kong Bank Group

I. E. L. Travel Ltd.
Instone Travel Services Ltd.
International Aeradio Ltd.

Jebsens Travel Ltd.
Johnson's Travel Agency Ltd.

Kendall Globe Ltd.
Kodak Ltd.
Kuoni Travel Ltd.
Keith Prowse Travel
K and M Services Ltd.
Kowloon Travel Service
Kypros Travel and Tours Ltd.

Larnax Travel Agency
LD Travel Services Ltd.
Livingstone Williams and Grant
The Lummus Co. Ltd.
Lazard Brothers and Co. Ltd.
LEP Travel Ltd.
Louis Tourist Agency Ltd.
Lysander Travel Service Ltd.

Magnet World Travel Ltd.
Malibu Travel
Mark Allen Travel Ltd.
G Maunsell and Partners
Melosun Travel
Modernline Travel Ltd.
Monteith Travel Services Ltd.
Magnum Travel Co. Ltd.
Marathon Tours
Matthew Hall Engineering Co.
Meadows Travel Service Ltd.
Metropolitan Travel
Molins Ltd.
Musgrove and Watson (Overseas) Ltd.

National Westminster Bank Ltd.
Nicholas Brothers (Travel) Ltd.
The New Bengal Travel Services Ltd.

Overseas Chinese Service
Orient Travel Services
Oceanair Aldgate
Overseas Containers Ltd. (P and O)
Othello Travel

J F Padwick Ltd
Paris Travel Service
Patrick Business Travel Ltd.
Peltours Ltd.
Pickfords Business Travel
Powell Duffryn Travel
Pullman Kellog Ltd.
Padwick's Travel (Wembley) Ltd.
Passport and Visa Services
Patsalides Travel (London) Ltd.
Philips Travel
P and O Travel
Professional World Travel
PVS (UK) Ltd

RAC
M A Rahman
Rea Brothers (Travel) Ltd.
Reigate Travel Ltd.
Rolls Royce Ltd.
Royal Bank of Scotland Ltd.
Reed and Mackay Travel Ltd.
Renown Travel Service Ltd.
Ross Consular Services Ltd.
R T Z Services Ltd.

Sadi Travel
The Services Sound and Vision Corp.
S and H Travel
Shears Travel Bureau Ltd.
Shell UK Administrative Services
Spurs Travel
Statesman Travel Ltd.
Salvation Army Travel Service
Sevenoaks Travel Ltd.
Sheba World Travel Services Ltd.
Shell Tankers (UK) Ltd.
S P Travel
Standard Chartered Bank Ltd.
Stephenson and Ephgrave (Travel) Ltd.

Tarmac International Ltd.
Thomas Cook Ltd.
Thomson Travel Ltd.
Townsend Travel
Travcour (UK)
Travel Elite
Travel Trade Services
Truva Travel and Tourism Ltd.
T and D World Travel Ltd.
Thames Thornton Ltd.
Tiltons and Son Ltd.
R H Thornton
Transworld Technical Services
The Travel Company
Travel Places
Triaena Travel
Turner Executive Travel

UAC Ltd.

Uniroyal Ltd.
Unilever Ltd.
Unitage World Travel

Vardon Travel
Visa Shop Ltd.
VIP Travel Ltd.
Vistra Services

W F and R K Swan Ltd.
West End Travel Ltd.
Westminster Dredging Co. Ltd.
George Wimpey and Co. Ltd.
World Travel
Wellings and McMillan Ltd.
Western Geophysical
Williams and Glyn's Bank Ltd.
W B Woolley (1978) Ltd.

Zenon Travel and Tours Ltd.
Zodiac Travel Service

A number of the companies listed have several branches accredited separately as agents. The list does not include Government Departments, which also have agency status at the Passport Office.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the reply of 27 June, if he will list the direct telephone numbers of his Department's caseworker staff with whom applicants and their representatives may check the progress of applications; and if he will also specify the times when such calls may be made.

Mr. Renton: No. If applicants or their representatives already have correspondence from case-working staff on which, as should generally be the case, a telephone number has been included, they may call that number to check on progress. Otherwise, telephone inquiries about immigration, nationality and passport matters should be made to the telephone inquiry bureaux for those departments. Telephone inquiries about other matters for which the Home Office is responsible should be made either to the number listed in the telephone directory for the office concerned, or to the general number for the Department's headquarters' offices.

Leeds Prison

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will supply figures for *(a)* the establishment and *(b)* actual staffing levels for medical staff at Leeds prison.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The figures are as follows:

Grade	*(a) Complement*	*(b) Staff in post*
Senior Medical Officer	1	1
Medical Officers	3¼	4
Prison Service Grade V (Hosp)	1	1
Prison Service Grade VI (Hosp)	2	2
Prison Service Grade VII (Hosp)	4	4
Prison Service Grade VIII (Hosp)	18	18

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will list the occasions, and the reasons, for closures of the medical wing at Leeds prision during the last 12 months; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The medical accommodation at Leeds prison provides a total of 58 beds. On a total of 17 occasions between July 1987 and June 1988 local management decided that there were insufficient staff available to enable part of that accommodation, the 18-bedded observation ward, to be used. Over that period and for that reason the ward was taken out of use for a total of 12½ days.

The shortage of staff arose from the actual strength of hospital officers being at times two below the complement of 18, absences because of sick and annual leave, and the occasional need for hospital officers to be deployed on escort duties. There were also occasions when the use of the ward was retained by its manning with discipline officers. Since February the number of hospital officers in post has matched the authorised complement.

DNA Tests

Mr. Dennis Howell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department in how many recent cases involving applications to enter this country as relatives of British citizens already resident here DNA tests have been used; and in what percentage of these cases the results upheld the claims of the applicants.

Mr. Renton: This information is not available.

Mr. Randall: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects the reports of DNA testing to be published; and if he will make a statement on the reasons for the delay.

Mr. Renton: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Bradford, West (Mr. Madden) on Thursday 16 June at columns *200-201*.

Asylum Seekers

Mr. Randall: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list what statistics can be produced by his Departments's computer on asylum seekers.

Mr. Renton: The refugee index computer records personal information about asylum seekers and their families, and details of their applications. In due course the outcome of each application is recorded, though this may be some considerable time later. A statistical bulletin aggregating some of this information is published annually by the Home Office. Home Office statistical bulletin 16/88, "Refugee Statistics, United Kingdom 1987" is the most recent version. Copies are available in the Library.

Mr. Randall: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will estimate how often statistical reports produced on his Department's computer on asylum seekers have been sent to the United Nations High Commission for Refugees; how much time, in man hours, is needed to input the data on asylum seekers to his Department's computer; and how many staff are competent to do the data input.

Mr. Renton: There is no record of the number of occasions that statistics have been sent to UNHCR. UNHCR is sent copies of the annual Home Office statistical bulletin on refugees and we respond whenever practicable to ad hoc requests. From this year we have agreed to provide UNHCR with information quarterly but the first quarter's statistics have been delayed because the figures initially produced were incomplete.

We have no accurate estimates of the time taken to enter information on the computer. Details of a single case can be entered in minutes but in 1987 there were some 4,500 applications and 3,000 decisions. This work is done by 11 administrative officers in the refugee unit, all of whom have other responsibilities.

Mr. Randall: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if, pursuant to his answer of 7 June, *Official Report,* columns 442-4, he will publish such information on the number of asylum seekers *(a)* refused leave to enter and removed from the United Kingdom, *(b)* refused leave to enter and detained, *(c)* refused leave to enter and granted temporary admission and *(d)* granted temporary admission pending a decision, for the London airports and Dover seaports as is available to him from the weekly returns IS/86 38/20/1.

Mr. Renton: No. It would be misleading to do so since the limited information on the outcome of cases contained in these returns is accurate only at the point they are compiled. It is not updated to take account of subsequent action and so would not give a meaningful picture.

Mr. Goodlad: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether discussions between his Department, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the United Kingdom Immigration Advisory Service about referral procedures for asylum applications have reached a conclusion; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: Following lengthy and constructive negotiations between Home Office officials, the office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the United Kingdom immigrants advisory service, I have written to the London representative of UNHCR setting out new arrangements for the referral of asylum cases to UKIAS. These arrangements will commence on 1 September. A copy of the letter has been placed in the Library.

Filipino Domestic Workers

Mr. Randall: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will estimate how many Filipino domestic workers were admitted into the United Kingdom for each of the last three years outside the provisions of the immigration rules.

Mr. Renton: Domestic servants engaged abroad and accompanying their employers here may be admitted outside the provisions of the immigration rules. However, the numbers involved cannot be separately identified in the statistics of passenger admissions.

Visa Applications

Mr. Dicks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the practice, when another country approaches Her Majesty's Government indicating that an individual applying for a visa to enter the United Kingdom may be a security risk to that other country, with regard to making inquiries to check the accuracy of that information; and what account is taken of such information in determining an individual's visa application.

Mr. Hurd: Any information relevant to a visa application is carefully considered and given due weight in reaching a decision on the application.

Mr. E. Dhillon

Mr. Dicks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will state, with regard to the application of Mr. E. Dhillon for leave to enter the United Kingdom, what was the nature and source of the information that came to light between May 1987 when he was last allowed to enter the United Kingdom and August 1987 when entry was refused.

Mr. Hurd: I was aware of Mr. Dhillon's previous visits to the United Kingdom when I decided to exclude him on grounds that for reasons of national security his presence would not be conducive to the public good. It would be contrary to long-standing practice to comment on the information which led me to that decision.

Data Protection Act 1984

Mr. Greg Knight: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he has any plans to undertake a review of the Data Protection Act 1984; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hurd: It has always been our intention to review the Act once it was fully in force and experience gained of its practical operation. We have now established an interdepartmental review committee, chaired by the Home Office for this purpose. The committee has been asked to review the implementation of the Act, particularly with regard to the impact on data users of the registration requirements, and to make recommendations.

As part of his general responsibility to monitor the operation of the Act, the Data Protection Registrar has, independently, recently begun a consultative exercise in order to help him assess the experience of those affected by the legislation. I have asked the registrar to make available the results of his consultation exercise to the review committee.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Institute of Hearing Research

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the progress of the work of the Institute of Hearing Research.

Mr. Jackson: I understand from the Medical Research Council that the programme of research at its institute of hearing research continues to progress well. The research conducted at the institute was last formally revised in 1985 when its work was found overall to be of a very high standard. The next formal review is due to take place early in 1989.

A-level Examination

Mr. Hawkins: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will place in the Library his letter commissioning Professor Gordon Higginson to look into the future of the A-level examination system in the United Kingdom.

Mrs. Rumbold: My right hon. Friend published the terms of reference of the committee on A-levels on 25 February 1987, at columns *131-32* in reply to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey).

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Toronto Summit

Mr. Jack: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what foreign policy initiatives were discussed at the Toronto Heads of Government meeting.

Mrs. Chalker: I refer my hon. Friend to the statement made by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister on 23 June, at column 1259.

Edward Besprozvany

Mr. Dykes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will raise with the Soviet authorities the case of Edward Besprozvany, who has been offered a place at the London School of Economics but who has been refused an exit visa.

Mr. Mellor: We were not hitherto aware of this case which I understand is being pursued by the Student and Academic Campaign for Soviet Jewry. We regularly raise similar cases with the Soviet authorities. The recently established mechanism of bilateral human rights talks will provide further opportunities to make our concerns known.

Anguilla

Mr. Bernie Grant: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 28 June, who is responsible for the police force on Anguilla; what instructions have been given them in relation to the threat to public safety posed by wild dogs; what representations have been received by the Governor seeking action on this matter; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: Operational control of the police force in Anguilla is a responsibility reserved to Her Majesty's Government through the Governor, although day-to-day management of the force is delegated to the island's commissioner of police. Neither the Governor nor the Anguilla Minister of Agriculture, whose Ministry is responsible for the control of pests, is aware of any threat to public safety by wild dogs and no instructions in this regard have therefore been issued to the police.

Except for a conversation recently with Mr. Albert Lake, which took place in the hon. Member's presence during the latter's visit to the island in early June, no representations have been made to the Governor seeking action on this matter. However, we understand the Minister of Agriculture has received several complaints about this problem and has organised control programmes.

Iran

Mr. Dicks: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether any person connected with the Church of England has made contact either in the United Kingdom or elsewhere during the past year with any representative of Her Majesty's Government regarding the admission to the United Kingdom of Iranian nationals; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: The admission of foreign nationals to the United Kingdom is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary, not the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. But my hon. Friend may have in mind representations made by a representative of the Church of England last year concerning a possible application for entry into the United Kingdom of Mohammed Rahmani Tabor for urgent medical treatment. We are always prepared to consider such humanitarian cases sympathetically, and, where possible, we try to process such applications speedily. However, there can be no question of any Iranian national entering the United Kingdom without valid entry clearance, and no discussions along these lines took place. In the event, Mr. Rahmani Tabor did not submit an application.

Mr. Dicks: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list all third parties used by Her Majesty's Government in its dealings with the Iranian Government; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: Britain maintains diplomatic relations with Iran and all communications with the Iranian Government are conducted through conventional diplomatic channels. In the absence of British representation in Tehran, our interests there are looked after by the Swedish embassy.

Departmental Staff

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has as to the proportion of civil servants at grade 3 and above in his Department who were educated in *(a)* private schools and *(b)* state schools.

Mrs. Chalker *[holding answer 20 June 1988]:* Approximately 70 per cent. of senior grade officers in the diplomatic service were educated at private schools and the remainder at state schools.

Customs Restrictions

Mr. Nicholas Baker: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will bring forward proposals in the EEC for the repeal of directive 69/169 with effect from 1 January 1993 so as to remove restrictions upon the right of citizens of the United Kingdom to bring without restriction into the United Kingdom goods purchased elsewhere in the European Community.

Mr. Lilley: I have been asked to reply.

The Commission has already submitted to the Council a proposal to complete and amend directive 77/338 for the removal of fiscal frontiers within the European Community. This proposal includes a provision to repeal directive 69/169 on 31 December 1992 in respect of intra-Community traffic.

It is now the subject of discussion in the Economic and Financial Affairs Council as one of the measures put forward for the completion of the single market.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Illegal Radio Stations

Mr. Cox: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what is the maximum penalty that can be imposed on people running illegal radio broadcasting stations.

Mr. Butcher: The maximum penalty under the Wireless Telegraphy Act 1949 for the unlicensed use of a radio transmitter is a fine of £2,000 and/or three months' imprisonment.

Mr. Cox: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will list the names of the illegal radio stations operating in the London area, and the number of times such stations have been raided by officers of his Department in each of the last three years.

Mr. Butcher: The following is a list of unlicensed broadcasting stations raided by my Department's radio investigation service during 1988 together with the number of times they were raided in each of the preceding three years.

	Times raided			
Station	*1988*	*1987*	*1986*	*1985*
Britannia Radio	3	—	—	—
City Radio	2	4	—	—
Classic Radio	4	—	—	—
Faze One	7	14	—	—
Fresh	6	4	—	—
GCR	20	59	2	—
Girls FM	1	3	—	—
Gremlins	1	—	—	—
Grooves FM	1	—	—	—
Hits FM	1	—	1	—
Ice House Radio	2	—	—	—
Kiss FM	3	18	11	11
London 88	7	—	—	—
London Irish Community Radio	1	—	—	—
LWR	15	15	14	14
NMR	1	1	—	—
Passion	2	2	—	—
Playback	4	1	—	—
PRS	3	—	—	—
Raiders FM	2	1	—	—
Ramjam	1	—	—	—
RJR	1	20	—	—
Rock to Rock	4	3	1	—
Roots FM	1	—	1	—
Sangam Radio	9	1	—	—
Sina Radio	11	7	3	4
Sky Radio	7	4	—	—
Solar	3	13	2	12
Starpoint	3	5	10	—
Traffic Jam	2	1	—	—
Time FM	4	4	2	—
TKO	8	8	11	1
WNK	1	4	—	—

A further eight unidentified stations have been raided on 27 occasions so far during 1988.

Enterprise and Deregulation Unit

Mr. Cran: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, pursuant to his answer of 20 June, *Official Report*, column *407*, with which organisations representing small businesses the enterprise and deregulation unit has contact; and how frequently such contact takes place.

Mr. Maude: The enterprise and deregulation unit has contact with the following organisations which particularly represent small businesses:

Alliance of Small Firms and Self Employed People
Association of British Chambers of Commerce
Association of Independent Business
Confederation of British Industry and its Small Firms Directorate
Engineering Industries Association
Forum of Private Business
Smaller Practitioners Committee of the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales
Institute of Directors
National Chamber of Trade
National Federation of the Self-Employed and Small Businesses Ltd.
Retail Consortium
Union of Independent Companies

Contact occurs whenever the unit or any one of these organisations wishes to consult the other about an issue, and the frequency therefore varies.

Mercury Soaps (Prohibition Order)

Mr. Madden: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will name the company exporting mercury soaps from the United Kingdom, which has been served under the Consumer Protection Act 1987 with a prohibition order; and if he will state what subsequent action has been taken by his Department.

Mr. Butcher: The manufacturers of mercury soap on whom I served the prohibition notice were Shakespeare Soap and Beauty Products Ltd. of Stockport. At my Department's request, trading standards officers of Cheshire county council have since visited the firm to ensure that it has stopped supplying mercury soap for export.

Nicaragua

Ms. Fyfe: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will list the categories of goods currently imported from Nicaragua; and if he will state whether there are any quota or other restrictions placed thereon.

Mr. Alan Clark: In the first five months of 1988, statistics show significant imports from Nicaragua of coffee, oilseeds, organic chemicals and textiles. None of these products is subject to quantitative restrictions on import from Nicaragua.

Unichem Ltd.

Mr. John Townend: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster whether, in view of the financial losses that are being sustained by other companies as a result of the scheme in question, he will instruct the Director General of Fair Trading to expedite his consideration of alleged breaches by Unichem Ltd. of the Competition Act.

Mr. Maude: No. The conduct of investigations under the Competition Act is a matter for the Director General of Fair Trading. However, I understand that the Director General is fully aware of the need for urgency and is consequently proceeding with all possible speed.

Westland plc

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when the permanent secretary of his Department last met representatives of Westland plc, what matters were discussed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Sir Brian Hayes' last meeting with representatives of Westland plc was on 17 October 1986. The purpose of the meeting was to give the Department an account of the company's progress.

British Airways and British Telecom

Mr. Wray: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what is the percentage increase in the price to domestic and commercial consumers of the services of (i) British Airways and (ii) British Telecom for each year since their privatisation.

Mr. Butcher: British Telecom's licence provides for a system of control of annual price changes on certain basic network services (that is, business and residential line rentals and directly dialled inland calls) which together make up a basket. The aggregate level of prices of services within the basket cannot be increased by more than RPI-3 percentage points (where RPI is the general rate of inflation as measured by the retail prices index). Table 1 in the Director General of Telecommunications' consultative document of January 1988, "The Regulation of British Telecom's Prices," a copy of which is in the Library, provides a summary of price changes controlled by the licence since privatisation. Not all of British Telecom's services are covered by the basket.

Questions concerning British Airways should be addressed to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport. I understand that the British Airways annual report gives information on the yields on scheduled services.

North Peckham Task Force

Ms. Harman: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what representations have been received about the competence and financial integrity of David Levy, project leader of the north Peckham task force.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: None.

Ms. Harman: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster why the contract of Mr. David Levy, north Peckham task force leader, was ended prematurely.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Daniel Levy is not leaving the North Peckham task force prematurely. He was not engaged for any fixed term and he has decided that he would now like to return to private consultancy. I am grateful for his work in north Peckham and I think he is entitled to regard his tenure of a difficult post as a success.

Trade Surpluses and Deficits

Mr. Wray: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what is, for each year since 1974, the variation in trade surplus or trade deficit of the following countries *(a)* Belgium, *(b)* Canada, *(c)* Denmark, *(d)* France, *(e)* the Federal Republic of Germany, *(f)* Italy, *(g)* The Netherlands, *(h)* Norway, *(i)* Sweden, *(j)* the United States of America and *(k)* the United Kingdom, both in percentages and in pound sterling of 1988.

Mr. Alan Clark: As the sign of the balance can vary from year to year, it is not appropriate to measure changes in the balance of trade in percentage terms. Data in constant value terms are not readily available.

Balances in sterling terms at current prices and exchange rates are in the following table.

Crude Balance of Visible Trade

£ billion

	Belgium/ Luxembourg	*Canada*	*Denmark*	*France*	*Federal Republic of Germany*	*Italy*	*Norway*	*Netherlands*	*Sweden*	*USA*	*United Kingdom*
1974	−0·6	+0·2	−0·9	−3·0	+8·6	−4·5	−0·9	−0·3	+0·0	−1·1	−6·7
1975	−0·9	−0·7	−0·7	−0·9	+7·1	−1·6	−1·1	−0·3	−0·3	+4·8	−4·4
1976	−1·4	+0·4	−1·8	−4·8	+7·9	−3·6	−1·8	−0·7	−0·4	−3·8	−5·9
1977	−1·6	+1·2	−1·8	−4·0	+9·9	−1·4	−2·4	−1·1	−0·6	−15·9	−4·2
1978	−1·8	+1·4	−1·5	−2·7	+11·2	−0·2	−0·7	−1·5	+0·6	−15·4	−4·2
1979	−2·0	+1·1	−1·8	−4·2	+6·5	−2·7	−0·1	−1·7	−0·5	−11·9	−6·3
1980	−3·1	+2·6	−1·1	−10·1	+2·5	−9·4	+0·7	−1·3	−1·1	−8·8	−1·9
1981	−3·1	+2·0	−0·8	−9·5	+6·2	−7·6	+1·1	+1·3	−0·2	−13·4	−0·0
1982	−3·1	+7·8	−0·9	−13·2	+12·2	−7·2	+1·2	+2·1	−0·5	−18·1	−1·3
1983	−1·5	+8·2	−0·2	−9·1	+11·1	−5·0	+3·0	+2·6	+0·9	−37·9	−5·0
1984	−2·7	+8·3	−0·5	−7·7	+14·2	−8·2	+3·8	+2·7	+2·2	−80·7	−8·4
1985	−1·8	+8·1	−0·9	−7·8	+19·8	−9·3	+3·4	+2·4	+1·4	−101·9	−6·6
1986	+0·1	+4·1	−1·1	−6·5	+35·9	−1·7	−1·5	+3·5	+3·1	−104·1	−12·7
1987	−0·1	+4·2	+0·1	−8·8	+40·6	−5·2	−0·7	+0·9	+2·3	−93·4	−14·2

Note: Exports are valued free on board, imports inclusive of insurance and freight charges, except for the USA and Canada for which both exports and imports are valued free on board.

Source: OECD Series 'A'.

Monthly Review of External Trade Statistics.

Securities and Investments Board

Mr. Cran: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what resources are available to the Securities and Investments Board to carry out investigations under the powers given it by the Financial Services Act 1986; and what use has been made of those powers since the board was created.

Mr. Maude *[holding answer 1 July 1988]:* This is a matter for the board.

ENERGY

Combined Heat and Power (Leicester)

10. **Mr. Vaz:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what plans he has to visit Leicester to discuss the development of combined heat and power.

Mr. Peter Morrison: I visited Leicester Energy Ltd. last autumn to discuss its planned combined heat and power and district heating scheme and my officials maintain close contact with it on factors affecting the implementation of this project.

Private Coal Mining

13. **Mr. Watts:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he has any plans to relax restrictions on private coal mining.

Mr. Michael Spicer: We are considering changing the statutory limits on the size of private sector mining; no decisions have yet been made.

Gas and Electricity (VAT)

14. **Mr. Teddy Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what discussions he has had with British Gas and the electricity boards about the implications of the recent decision of the European Court of Justice about value added tax; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Morrison: None. However, I can assure my hon. Friend, that the Government intend to consult all interested parties on how the judgment can best be applied in practice.

Solar Energy

15. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy how much energy he expects to be generated from solar sources during the current year; what was the comparable figure five years ago; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Passive solar design of buildings is the best way to utilise solar energy in the United Kingdom. My Department is supporting a major research and development programme aimed at encouraging the take-up of the technology by the building industry.

Electricity Industry (Privatisation)

16. **Dr. Reid:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what guarantees will be given to consumers on price increases following privatisation of the electricity industry.

Mr. Parkinson: As the hon. Member will be aware from the answer he received on 23 November 1987 at col. *21*, the Government believe that privatisation, by introducing competition and increasing efficiency, will exert a downward pressure on costs and prices.

17. **Mr. Andrew Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what representations he has received in the last month on the privatisation of electricity generation and supply.

Mr. Parkinson: I continue to receive a large number of representations.

20. **Mr. Rost:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he has any plans to meet the Major Energy Users Council to discuss electricity privatisation.

Mr. Parkinson: I have no such plans at present; but I have received representations from a number of groups representing electricity consumers, and will consider them in preparing plans for privatisation.

29. **Mr. Livsey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if his Department has conducted a detailed study into the likely effects of electricity privatisation on employment in the coal industry; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Parkinson: The employment consequences of electricity privatisation for the coal industry will depend on the terms for the supply of coal, which will be a commercial matter for negotiation between British Coal and the privatised electricity generating companies.

30. **Mr. French:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on operating costs in the electricity supply industry after privatisation.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Operating costs after privatisation will be a matter for the companies concerned. Competitive pressures and the regulatory regime will protect the interests of customers, including the prices they are charged.

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on the implications for privatisation of electricity of the outcome of recent discussions in the European Community on the issue of flue gas desulphurisation of United Kingdom electricity-generating plant.

Mr. Peter Morrison: Privatisation will make no difference to the environmental standards that the electricity industry has to meet.

Energy Efficiency

22. **Mr. John M. Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what steps he is taking to promote energy efficiency among British cooling and freezing technology manufacturers.

Mr. Peter Morrison: My energy efficiency office has provided £3·4 million for research and development and demonstration projects on new energy efficient refrigeration technologies and the closely allied technologies of heat pumps. It has also published technical advice for users of refrigeration plant and supported development of a monitoring and targeting system for refrigerated food factories.

28. **Mr. Jack:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on energy efficiency initiatives in the public sector.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The energy efficiency office supports a number of initiatives to improve energy management in the public sector. For example, I recently met energy managers from Government Departments. I told them I strongly supported their work, which presently includes the development of annual energy reports.

As Departments become more fully responsible for energy management and other accommodation matters, and gain access to other sources of expertise as well as the Property Services Agency, they will have a greater incentive to exercise effective control over their progress. I believe this must be a positive development.

British Gas

23. **Mr. Barron:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what representations he has received seeking amendment of the licence issued to British Gas in respect of the debt repayment provisions; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Morrison: Any amendment to the authorisation to British Gas is in the first instance a matter for the Director General of gas supply.

Coal Industry (Privatisation)

24. **Mr. Lofthouse:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he has any plans to discuss the privatisation of the coal industry with the chairman of British Coal.

Mr. Parkinson: The Government have made clear their ambitions to return the coal industry to the private sector. However, we have no plans to do so before the next general election and no detailed discussions have therefore taken place with the British Coal Corporation.

Mersey Barrage

25. **Mr. Wareing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what progress is being made towards the proposed Mersey barrage project; and what contribution his Department is making towards its achievement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I recently announced an extended second phase of the Mersey barrage feasibility studies costing £1·3 million, jointly funded with the Mersey Barrage company. This brings the total Government support for the project to £951,000. The studies will further examine engineering, economic and environmental aspects and will be completed in about two years.

Central Electricity Generating Board

26. **Ms. Ruddock:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he next plans to meet the chairman of the Central Electricity Generating Board; and what topics he plans to discuss.

Mr. Parkinson: I meet the chairman of the CEGB from time to time to discuss various matters relating to the privatisation of the electricity supply industry.

Sizewell B

27. **Mr. Matthew Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is the basis of calculation carried out by his Department's economists and statisticians referred to in the Secretary of State's decision letter of 12 March 1987 to the chairman of the Central Electricity Generating Board, regarding the board's application to construct Sizewll B.

Mr. Parkinson: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by my hon. Friend the Member for Worcestershire, South (Mr. Spicer) on 11 May 1988 at cols *111-112*.

Opencast Coal Mining

18. **Mr. Harry Barnes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what estimate he has of the anticipated annual effect on the output from opencast coal production from the operation of the Department of the Environment and Welsh Office circular MP93, up to the year 2000.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The effects of the Department of the Environment's new guidance circular on coal production will depend on the decisions of the mineral planning authorities. It is neither possible nor desirable to anticipate these decisions.

Mr. Skinner: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will list the number of licences granted for opencast mining projects in the last five years.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The British Coal Corporation is responsible for the issue of licences for private opencast mining operations. I will ask the chairman to write to the hon. Member.

Mr. Skinner: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will give the figures for opencast coal production for the last five years.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Figures for British Coal's opencast coal production are shown in its annual report and accounts. Information on licensed opencast production would have to be sought from the corporation.

Oil-related Industries

19. **Mr. Kennedy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on the current and proposed levels of activity in the United Kingdom oil-related fabrication sector.

Mr. Peter Morrison: Following the recovery from the oil price fall of 1986 there is now renewed confidence in the future of the offshore oil-related fabrication sector. I have approved a total of 14 projects this year so far with a total capital cost in excess of £1·65 billion (at 1988 prices). Orders for these projects and for those approved last year are already coming through.

Alternative Energy Sources

21. **Mr. Chapman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he plans any further initiatives relating to funding of research into alternative and renewable forms of energy.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Energy Paper number 55 "Renewable Energy in the UK: The Way Forward" has recently been published. It gives our view of the development strategy for renewable energy to the year 2000, together with an estimate of support to be shared between Government and industry on an increasing level of collaboration.

Electricity Prices

31. **Mr. Yeo:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what recent representations he has received regarding electricity prices.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I have received a number of such representations.

Fusion

32. **Mr. Wallace:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what are his future plans for funding the research and development of fusion, in the light of recent statements by the European Parliament's scientific and technical options assessment unit.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The United Kingdom is making a major contribution to the Community fusion programme, including the joint European torus project at Culham, whose life is to be extended to 1992. It is common ground between the United Kingdom and its partners that any decision on whether to proceed to a detailed engineering design (next European Torus) cannot be made before 1990 or without a thorough independent evaluation of the Community fusion programme.

British Coal (Ambulance Service)

Mr. Skinner: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will now issue a direction to British Coal instructing it to cease any further cuts in British Coal's ambulance service; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: No. The management of its ambulance service is a matter for British Coal, subject to statutory regulations which come under the supervision of the Health and Safety Executive.

Hinkley Point C

33. **Mr. Prescott:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy whether any new assessment of the health, environmental and economic implications of nuclear power that takes into account factors that have emerged since the Sizewell public inquiry, will be given by his Department to the Hinkley Point C inquiry.

Mr. Parkinson: As required by the procedure rules governing this inquiry I have made a statement of those matters which appear to me to be relevant to my consideration of the CEGB's application. These concern economic, safety, environmental and planning matters and were reported to the House in my answer of 21 March 1988 to the hon. Member for Wells (Mr. Heathcoat-Amory) at columns *21-22*.

A Department of Energy witness will appear at the inquiry to clarify the Government policies referred to in paragraph (1) of my statement. The Department of the Environment, the Department of Transport and the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food have also offered witnesses to clarify relevant Government policies for which those Departments are responsible. The nuclear installations inspectorate of the Health and Safety Executive will give independent expert evidence on safety aspects.

The conduct of the inquiry is the responsibility of the inspector, who is able to invite expert witnesses to give evidence on any relevant matters which, in his view, might not otherwise be properly covered.

Superconductivity

Sir Trevor Skeet: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what steps his Department is taking to ensure that the electricity supply industry reduces the loss of electricity in transmission and promotes increased research into superconductivity.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Transmission and distribution losses are discussed regularly with the electricity supply industry, which seeks to keep such losses to the economic minimum. The industry's research proposals are considered each year by my right hon. Friend's Advisory Council on Research and Development. The current research programme includes work on superconductivity and various other techniques for reducing system losses.

Indonesia (Nuclear Energy)

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if, during his recent visit to Indonesia, he met the Indonesian Finance Minister to discuss the economic benefit for Indonesia of nuclear energy.

Mr. Parkinson: I met Professor Dr. Sumarlin, but this issue was not one of those discussed.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if, during his recent visit to Indonesia, he discussed the export opportunities for Britain's nuclear industry with the Indonesian Mines and Energy Minister and officials from Indonesia's National Atomic Energy Agency.

Mr. Parkinson: In my meeting with Mr. Ginandjar, I spoke of the United Kingdom's experience of nuclear power. I am not aware of having met any official of the agency mentioned.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if, during his recent visit to Indonesia he discussed the prospects of British assistance with nuclear power with officials of Indonesia's National Electricity Company.

Mr. Parkinson: No.

Indonesia (Environmental Problems)

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if, during his recent visit to Indonesia, he met officials of Walhi, the Indonesian environmental forum, to discuss energy supply and associated environmental problems.

Mr. Parkinson: No.

Hong Kong

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy (1) if, during his recent visit to Hong Kong, he discussed with the nuclear safety authorities the dangers posed to the Crown colony by the operational and safety record of the near-by Nanwung twin 951 MW pressurised water reactor nuclear plant on Taiwan;

(2) if, during his recent visit to Hong Kong, he discussed with the relevant local authorities the construction delays with the Daya bay nuclear plant.

Mr. Parkinson: I had no formal meetings during my short stay in Hong Kong, and these topics were not discussed.

Daya Bay (Nuclear Plant)

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if, during his recent visit to Hong Kong and the People's Republic of China, he discussed with the authorities in charge of the Daya bay pressurised water reactor nuclear plant the involvement of three Taiwanese nuclear experts in the on-site contruction of the nuclear plant.

Mr. Parkinson: No.

China (Nuclear Energy)

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if, during his recent visit to the People's Republic of China, he discussed with his counterpart the potential benefits of amending the restrictive arrangements for information disclosure set out under article III(i) of the Anglo-Chinese agreement on the co-operation in the peaceful uses of nuclear energy, dated 3 June 1988.

Mr. Parkinson: No.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if, during his recent visit to the People's Republic of China, he made any attempts to update the Anglo-Chinese agreement on the co-operation in the peaceful uses of nuclear energy dated 3 June 1988.

Mr. Parkinson: No.

China (Power Generation Aid)

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if, during his recent visit to the People's Republic of China he discussed with his counterpart in the Chinese Government specific assistance projects for power generation, technology and equipment under article X of the protocol on the agreement on scientific and technological co-operation between the Governments of the United Kingdom and the People's Republic of China, dated November 1978.

Mr. Parkinson: No.

Kalpakkan Nuclear Plant

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if his Department has received any representations from the Indian Atomic Energy Board seeking technical assistance from United Kingdom nuclear experts at the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority to resolve the problem of jellyfish clogging the coolant water inlet and outlet ducts at the Kalpakkan nuclear plant.

Mr. Michael Spicer: No.

Flue Gas Desulphurisation

Mr. Alan W. Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what studies have been carried out to consider whether the Wellman-Lord regenerative process for flue gas desulphurisation is a viable and feasible option in helping to reduce sulphur dioxide emissions from Great Britain's coal-fired power stations.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I am informed that the Central Electricity Generating Board has, as part of its investigations into flue gas desulphurisation, examined a detailed study of the Wellman-Lord technology. Decisions about its commercial application in power stations are a matter for the CEGB and its successor companies.

British Coal

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he or his Department have had any discussions with prospective purchasers of British Coal mining interests in the north of England.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The Government have made clear their ambition to return the coal industry to the private sector, but there are no plans to do so in the present Parliament. Therefore the Department of Energy is not in a position to enter into any substantive discussions about sales of mining assets.

Lead-free Petrol

Mr. Holt: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy how many refineries in the United Kingdom have the capacity to produce lead-free petrol

Mr. Peter Morrison: All 10 United Kingdom refineries supplying the United Kingdom petrol market have the capacity to produce unleaded petrol.

Oil and Pipelines Agency

Mr. Franks: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if, in the light of the Government's decision to end the trading activities of the Oil and Pipelines Agency, he will describe what discussions he proposes to have with those concerned as to the best method of achieving this; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Morrison: Discussions will be held with the industry on the proposed ending of participation agreements. Legal notices announcing termination of OPA's trading activities were issued to all licensees on 22 June.

Coal Production (ECSC Levy)

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what has been Britain's contribution in each year since 1973 to the ECSC budget by way of the levy made on coal production.

Mr. Michael Spicer *[holding answer 22 June 1988]:* United Kingdom contributions to the ECSC levy on coal production since 1973 have been:

Calender Year	*ECSE coal levy £ million*
1973	0·7
1974	2·0
1975	3·0
1976	3·7
1977	5·6
1978	6·4
1979	7·1
1980	7·5
1981	7·9
1982	9·3
1983	11·0
1984	10·0
1985	4·0
1986	11.0
1987	14·0

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what has been the levy per tonne set each year since 1973 on coal production for the ECSC budget; and how much was raised each year by the levy on production in *(a)* British Coal NCB deep mines, *(b)* opencast sites and *(c)* licensed mines.

Mr. Michael Spicer *[holding answer 22 June 1988]:* The rate levied since 1973 has been:

Calendar year	*Rate*	
1973	0·0219	£/tonne
1974	0·0285	£/tonne
1975	0·0331	£/tonne
1976	0·0880	ECU's
1977	0·102	ECU's
1978	0·112	ECU's
1979	0·121	ECU's
1980	0·140	ECU's
1981	0·164	ECU's
1982	0·197	ECU's
1983	0·219	ECU's
1984	0·228	ECU's
1985	0·236	ECU's
1986	0·253	ECU's
1987	0·254	ECU's
1988	0·241	ECU's

N.B. Since 1975 all rates have been set in European Currency Units, the present value of which is £0·64.

The amount levied on production for British Scales deep-mines and opencast mines since 1973 has been:

£ thousand

Financial year	*Deep-mines*	*Opencast mines*
1972-73	594	41
1973-74	1,833	158
1974-75	2,759	202
1975-76	3,287	288
1976-77	5,098	485
1977-78	5,676	684
1978-79	6,302	754
1979-80	6,885	759
1980-81	6,503	910
1981-82	7,914	1,026
1982-83	9,555	1,255
1983-84	9,192	1,292
1984-85	2,943	1,368
1985-86	10,390	1,458
1986-87	11,871	1,717
1987-88	11,106	1,902

Figures for licensed mines are not available, but a number are thought to fall below the threshold for paying the levy. The total contribution would be small as licensed mines produce less than 2·5 million tonnes of coal per annum.

SCOTLAND

Audiological Centres

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what information he has as to the number of people waiting for appointments at audiological centres in Scotland.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: This information is not available centrally.

Ear, Nose and Throat Patients

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what changes there have been in the numbers on ear, nose and throat in-patient waiting lists in Scotland between 1982 and 1987.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The number of persons on ENT in-patient waiting lists for NHS hospitals in Scotland at 30 September in each year is as follows.

Year	*Number*
1982	13,352
1983	14,598
1984	13,918
1985	13,659
1986	14,786
1987	13,811

Capital Expenditure (Glasgow)

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received about problems faced by Glasgow district council following the change of definition of capital expenses, and the implication for the council's ability to finance vehicle and equipment purchases; if he will agree to make a further permanent adjustment to the council's basic capital allocation to take account of the different treatment of such expenditure in the council's accounts of previous years.

Mr. Lang: Glasgow district council and the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities have made representations about the Definition of Capital Expenses (Scotland) Order 1987. Glasgow district council's capital consent allocation for 1988-89 takes account of such capital expenses financed from current revenues as the district council itself reported in earlier years. I have explained to the council and to the convention that we have applied this procedure consistently to all authorities. In Glasgow the amounts involved were small, and the previous practice irregular. Any increase in Glasgow's capital allocation for 1988-89 now would be at the expense of other authorities and I cannot see any justification for that.

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what were the net capital expenditure allocations including capital met from current revenue for general services in each of the years 1985-86 to 1988-89 expressed per head of population for *(a)* Glasgow district council, *(b)* the average Scottish district and *(c)* the district with the highest figure.

Mr. Lang: The information is set out in the table.

Capital consent allocation expressed per head of population for:

	1985-86 £	1986-87 £	1987-88 £	1988-89 £
(a) Glasgow district council	6·54	5·86	5·45	5·87
(b) The average figure for Scottish district councils[1]	7·177	7·60	7·74	7·96
(c) The district with the highest per capita figure	15·91	17·35	19·10	19·10

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[1] Total of final allocations to district councils, divided by Scottish population (less islands councils' populations) at 30 June in each year.

Health Authorities (Nurses)

Ms. Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the names and addresses of *(a)* all nurse members on health authorities and special health authorities and *(b)* generalist members on health authorities who are nurses.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information requested is as follows:

Argyll and Clyde Health Board
Mr. J. D. Barnett, Lochgilphead—generalist member

Borders Health Board
Mrs. F. M. Nisbet, Innerleithen—nurse member

Dumfries and Galloway Health Board
Miss A. C. Kelly, Dumfries—nurse member

Fife Health Board
Miss M. M. Nelson, Cupar—nurse member

Forth Valley Health Board
Mrs. M. R. Ferguson, Stirling—nurse member

Grampian Health Board
Mr. G. S. Peterkin, Elgin—generalist member
Mr. J. Murison, Peterhead—nurse member

Greater Glasgow Health Board
Miss E. Donnachie, Johnstone—nurse member

Highland Health Board
Miss M. T. Hadden, Inverness—nurse member
Mrs. C. B. Fraser, Strathpeffer—generalist member (retired nurse)

Lanarkshire Health Board
Miss J. E. Jarvie, Carluke—nurse member
Miss J. Rutherford, Hamilton—generalist member (retired nurse)

Lothian Health Board
Mrs. E. Burnett, Uphall—nurse member

Orkney Health Board
Mrs. M. Porteous, Stromness—nurse member
Mrs. E. M. Street, Kirkwall—nurse member

Shetland Health Board
Mr. D. M. Sinclair, Lerwick—nurse member

Tayside Health Board
Miss A. Allan, Dundee—nurse member

Western Isles Health Board
Mrs. G. N. MacKillop, Lochmaddy—nurse member

State Hospital Management Committee
Mrs. M. E. Haggart OBE, Edinburgh—Formerly Chief Area Nursing Officer Tayside Health Board
Mr. J. G. Sutherland OBE, Stirling—Chief Area Nursing Officer Forth Valley Health Board
Mr. M. McBrien, Edinburgh—Departmental Nursing Officer

Myalgic Encephalomyelitis Association

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish in the *Official Report* the total number of written representations he has received in support of the Myalgic Encephalomyelitis Association's application for a revenue grant under section 10(1) of the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968; and whether his Department has yet reached a decision.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 4 July 1988]:* I have received 22 letters about the funding of the Myalgic Encephalomyelitis Association in Scotland in the last few months. The association already knows that it has not proved possible to pay a grant in 1988-89, but the case for the following financial year will certainly receive careful consideration if an application is made at the appropriate time.

Fish Farms (Pesticides)

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland on how many occasions the pesticide Nuvan 500 EC was used on salmonid fish farms in each of the past five years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 16 June 1988]:* No records are maintained centrally of the level of use of pesticides on fish farms.

DEFENCE

United States Forces

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) if he will list the United States forces locations in the United Kingdom which are, or will be, connected to the digital European backbone system, indicating which will be user sites and which will be repeater sites;

(2) if he will list all United States unmanned military facilities similar to that at Rugby in the form of his answer to the hon. Member for Leyton of 20 June, *Official Report*, columns *431-32*.

Mr. Freeman: The digital European backbone microwave communications system is a defence communications system for United States forces supporting NATO. It also provides communications for other allied nations, including the United Kingdom. However, on security grounds, I am not prepared to list all the sites in the system.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what role does the unmanned United States relay station at Rugby play within NATO.

Mr. Freeman: I have nothing to add to my answer of 23 June 1988 to the hon. Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short), at column *716*.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list those military facilities in the United Kingdom which are under joint United Kingdom-United States command.

Mr. Ian Stewart: There are no military bases or facilities in the United Kingdom under joint United Kingdom-United States command.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the military construction projects at installations in the United Kingdom used by United States forces for which he has been informed that funding in fiscal year 1988 has been given.

Mr. Ian Stewart: I understand that funding in fiscal year 1988 has been given for the following United States military construction projects:

RAF Alconbury:
Squadron operations facility—chemical warfare protection
Installation of fire suppression system

RAF Bentwaters:
Office accommodation
Medical logistics storage

RAF Chicksands:
Communications upgrade

RAF Croughton:
Alter/add to water distribution system

RAF Lakenheath:
Base operations building
Control Tower
Combat arms range
Base supply storage
Post Office

RAF Welford:
Air based ground defence munitions storage

RAF Wethersfield:
Communications upgrade
Medical logistics storage

RAF Woodbridge:
Accommodation for unaccompanied enlisted personnel

Arms Exports

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence why the Government will not disclose any information on specific arms export contracts.

Mr. Sainsbury: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Members for Blyth Valley (Mr. Campbell) and for Glasgow, Maryhill (Mrs. Fyfe) on 28 June 1988.

Chile (Arms Sales)

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what steps have been taken to ensure that arms purchased by the Chilean Government at previous Army equipment exhibitions have not subsequently been used against the civilian population in Chile; if he will make it his policy that the Chilean Government are not represented at this year's exhibition; what representations he has received on this matter; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: Human rights considerations are taken fully into account before a decision is made on whether or not a proposed sale to Chile or any other country should go ahead. We take great care to ensure that we do not supply items that in our judgment are likely to be used for internal repression; and we are not aware of any British defence equipment being used for this purpose in Chile. A number of representations have been received expressing concern about invitations to the British Army equipment exhibition issued to individuals from countries with questionable human rights records. However, it has been the policy of this and previous Administrations not to release details of invitations to individuals or their countries.

Low Flying

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what is the minimum permitted height for fixed-wing military aircraft operating over the landward portions of *(a)* the Garvie Island danger area, D 803, *(b)* the Barry Budon danger area, D 604 and *(c)* the Lulworth danger area, D 026;

(2) what is the minimum permitted height for fixed-wing military aircraft operating in the Salisbury Plain danger areas, D 123, D 124, D 125, D 126 and D 128.

Mr. Freeman: The information requested is as follows:

a. when the range is active at Garvie Island, aircraft with the exception of those participating in the exercise must not fly below 40,000 ft;

b. when the danger area is activated at Barry Buddon training area, a minimum operating height exists of 1,500 ft, except for parachute flying, where drops from 500 ft may be authorised by the range commandant;

c. from Monday to Friday, between 0800 and 1800, when the Lulworth range danger area is activated, aircraft must fly above 15,000 ft;

d. on Salisbury Plain danger area D 123, the minimum is 50,000 ft when activated; for area D 124 no one may enter the area from 0800 to 2000 from Monday to Friday as the danger height is unlimited when the area is active from 2000 to 0800 the minimum height is 30,000 ft when in use; for area D 125 the minimum is 50,000 ft when active; area D 128 has a minimum operating height of 1,400 ft when in use.

The information given in my reply to the hon. Member on 23 June, at column *717*, relating to minimum separation distance and to transit of the areas with prior authority is equally applicable to all the above areas. However, on some ranges, aircraft may descend below the 250 ft MSD during their approach to a target.

NATO

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list those United Kingdom forces specified in NATO force goals but not assigned to NATO command in time of crisis or war; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ian Stewart: Details of NATO force goals are classified.

USAF (Flight Diversions)

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the reasons for the diversion of flights by United States air force F-111s from RAF Upper Heyford over the village of Steeple Aston.

Mr. Freeman: I have nothing to add to the answer I gave the hon. Member for Banbury (Mr. Baldry) on 20 June 1988, at column *221*.

Central Ordnance Depot, Donnington (Fire)

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he now expects to receive the report of his Department's inquiry into the fire at Central Ordnance Depot, Donnington.

Mr. Freeman: The board of inquiry has been tasked with producing its report by 15 August. However, progress is dependent on that of the inquiries of the civil police and there is therefore a possibility that the board may not be able to report by that date. I expect to receive a copy of the report soon after its completion.

Michael Tighe

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what requests have been received from the coroner for Armagh for the attendance of *(a)* military and *(b)* civilian personnel as witnesses and for the production of written or taped evidence in connection with the inquest into the death of Michael Tighe in 1982; what response has been made to those requests; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ian Stewart: My Department has received no such requests.

Military Stores (Fires)

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence which recommendations arising from inquiries into fires at military stores since 1979 have not yet been fully implemented, giving the reasons in each case.

Mr. Freeman *[holding answer 20 June 1988]:* A comprehensive programme of fire protection improvements has been developed for military stores. These include dispersal of the more valuable stocks and compartmentation of storage buildings together with the introduction of enhanced detection and suppression systems, although the value of the latter would be limited in buildings where the contents are stacked intensively with high racking.

EMPLOYMENT

Caravans and Home Parks

Mr. Patnick: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many jobs are provided by the caravans and home parks industry.

Mr. Lee: Information relating specifically to the number of jobs provided by the caravans and home parks industry is not available. However, figures are available for all tourist or short-stay accommodation other than hotels, which includes caravans and home parks. The number of jobs in the industry is highly seasonal and to reflect this the following table gives the information at quarterly intervals during 1987.

Employees in employment in all tourist or short-stay accommodation other than hotels:

1987	*Number*
March	14,000
June	32,000
September	33,000
December	13,000

Notes:

1. The estimates shown in the table are subject to considerable potential estimation errors due to the relatively small number of employees in the industry.
2. The estimates include all employees in camping and caravan sites, holiday camps and other tourist or short-stay accommodation. (SIC 80 Activity Heading 6670).

In addition to the estimates given above, the census of employment showed that there were 4,000 employees employed in caravan manufacture in September 1984. Later estimates are not available.

Beach Erosion

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what studies he has conducted into the economic impact on tourism of beach erosion; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: I understand that my right hon. Friend the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food has commissioned research on the economic impact of coastal erosion. This research includes an investigation into the effects on tourism.

Management Extension Programmes

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many management extension programmes were organised by the Manpower Services Commission in Keswick during 1987; which host firms participated; how many weeks each management extension programme lasted; how many participants found permanent employment within six months of completing their management extension programmes; and how many participants found permanent employment with their host firm.

Mr. Cope *[holding answer 29 June 1988]:* No management extension programmes were organised in Keswick during 1987.

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people participating in management extension programmes organised by the Manpower Services Commission found employment with their host firms since management extension programmes began.

Mr. Cope *[holding answer 29 June 1988]:* The management extension programme started in 1980. The statistics requested are only available for the years from 1985-86 and are set out below.

Years	*Persons*
1985-86	108
1986-87	138
1987-88	84

Up to September 1987.

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) how many host firms have participated in the management extension programmes organised by the Manpower Services Commission in each year since management extension programmes began;

(2) what is the total number of host firms which have participated in management extension programmes organised by the Manpower Services Commission since management extension programmes began.

Mr. Cope *[holding reply 29 June 1988]:* These statistics are not held centrally, and could only be obtained at a disproportionate cost.

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many management extension programmes organised by the Manpower Services Commission have lasted for 12 weeks for each year since management extension programmes began.

Mr. Cope *[holding reply 29 June 1988]:* This information is not held centrally and could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) what was the total number of management extension programmes organised by the Manpower Services Commission in each year since management extension programme began;

(2) how many people have participated in management extension programmes organised by the Manpower Services Commission since management extension programmes began.

Mr. Cope *[holding reply 29 June 1988]:* The total number of people who have participated in management extension programmes in each year since the programme began is

Years	*Persons*
1980-81	50
1981-82	32
1982-83	123
1983-84	493
1984-85	764
1985-86	1,695
1986-87	2,470
1987-88	2,198

A separate programme is organised for each participant in the management extension programme.

Employment Training

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether, pursuant to his answer of 27 May, *Official Report,* column *393,* the maximum disregarded sum of £250 and the weekly premiums of £10 to £12 will be treated as income for tax purposes when assessing the tax status of a claimant entering employment subsequent to finishing employment training.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I have been asked to reply.

I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to her on 21 June at column *508.*

SOCIAL SERVICES

Housing Benefit

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what estimate he has made of those qualifying for transitionsl protection under the housing benefit scheme who will not apply therefor; what publicity he has undertaken to maximise take-up; how much of that has been made available in minority languages; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: We have not estimated what the level of take-up will be. Leaflet RR4 ("Housing Benefit—New Rules") is available from a number of agencies including the transitional payments unit, DHSS local offices, local authorities and post offices. This leaflet explains who can qualify and it contains an application form for dispatch by Freepost to the unit. A national press advertising campaign was carried out during the week commencing 23 May which, as well as explaining the transitional payments scheme, publicised the Freepost and Freeline services. I am considering a further campaign this month.

The material has been published in English only.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give details of the number of students affected during the academic year 1987-88 by changes in housing benefit regulations and the average amount of benefit lost per student.

Mr. Portillo: We published estimates of the impact of the social security reforms in October 1987. There is no analysis of the impact on students specifically.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) how many voluntary advice agencies in Bradford, which have contacted the special Glasgow housing benefit unit for supplies of application forms for those wanting help after losing more than £2·50 a week, have received the quantity of forms requested;

(2) what discussions are taking place with local authorities, housing associations and other organisations, about the distribution of application forms for help to those who have lost more than £2·50 in housing benefit; and why the Glasgow unit was unable to supply Bradford council with a request for 17,000 application forms it required to circulate to Bradford people it had identified as being eligible for help.

Mr. Michael Portillo *[holding answer 22 June 1988]:* The transitional payments unit in Glasgow is able to issue application forms in response to requests from individuals through the Freepost and Freeline services. At the beginning of June we issued all local authorities with an initial supply of leaflets and at the same time we informed them of the address of the marketing firm from which further copies could be obtained. This address was given to local authorities again in circular HB88(7) which was issued to all local authorities on 1 June.

No record is held of the number of leaflet requests received from advice agencies in Bradford but all are being met in full with no restriction on the numbers issued; 17,000 leaflets were issued to Bradford council on 29 June 1988.

As made clear in previous answers and in the press campaign, the application form for transitional payments (leaflet RR4: "Housing Benefit—New Rules") is available from a variety of sources including DHSS offices, local authorities and post offices.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will arrange an early media advertising campaign to advise people who have lost more than £2·50 housing benefit a week and eligible for assistance what action they need to take to apply for help; and if he will ensure that newspaper media advertising includes coupons for an applicant to send to his Department to apply for help.

Mr. Portillo *[holding answer 22 June 1988]:* A national press publicity campaign was carried out during the week commencing 23 May. These advertisements gave details of the transitional payments and the changes to capital rules as well as announcing the availability of leaflet RR4 ("Housing Benefit—New Rules"), which contains an application form. I am considering a further campaign this month.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many leaflets have been printed giving advice about how people who have lost more than £2·50 housing benefit can apply for help; how many application forms applicants are required to complete; how many forms of each type have been printed; how many such forms have been supplied to the Glasgow unit; how many forms have been despatched by the Glasgow unit; and what arrangements have been made for more application forms to be printed.

Mr. Portillo *[holding answer 22 June 1988]:* A total of 8·5 million copies of leaflet RR4 ("Housing Benefit—New Rules"), which gives information about housing benefit transitional payments, and contains an application form, have been printed. Each person is required to complete only one application form and return it to the transitional payments unit in Glasgow. Copies of the leaflet are available from the unit but also from local DHSS offices, local authorities, post offices and voluntary agencies. 60,000 copies of leaflet RR4 have been supplied to the unit and 37,000 have been issued. As current stocks are plentiful, there are no plans to reprint the leaflet at present.

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services when the special unit set up to handle claims for discretionary payments in respect of his Department's claimants who have lost more than £2·50 weekly as a result of the housing benefit reforms is now expected to be fully operational; when constituents in South Hams will be able to claim; where the unit will be based; how long the claims will take to process; whether they will be backdated to 1 April; and what factors have delayed the establishment of the unit.

Mr. Portillo *[holding answer 27 June 1988]:* I expect the transitional payments unit in Glasgow to be fully operational this month and the first payments issued will include arrears from April. Leaflets RR4 ("Housing Benefit—New Rules") have been available for several weeks from DHSS local authorities, local authorities, post offices and through our Freepost and Freeline services. These contain an application form to be returned to the unit. The processing time will depend upon the rate and number of applications received.

War Widows

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will instigate the automatic award of war widows' pensions to the widows of all men who are in receipt of a war disablement pension and who die aged 70 years or over leaving a widow aged 65 years or over.

Mr. Scott: War widows pensions are awarded where the husband's death was due to or substantially hastened by service in the armed forces. War widows are paid significantly higher rates of pension than other widows and also receive age allowances and other preferential treatment. This can only be justified where the cause of death is clearly related to service in the forces.

Competitive Tendering

Mr. Rost: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what steps have been taken to implement the recommendation of the National Audit Office's 1987 report on competitive tendering for support services in the National Health Service, that his Department should ensure that factors which could restrict the scope for competition in laundry tendering, are identified.

Mrs. Currie: Detailed guidance has been issued to health authorities by the Department, most recently last November, which seeks to ensure that all tendering for laundry and other services is carried out even-handedly and in a way that encourages fair competition. Copies have been placed in the Library. Where complaints of unfair competition arise, they will be followed up in the first instance by the appropriate regional health authority, and will then come to the Department if unresolved.

Mr. Rost: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services to what extent health authorities are required to publish the criteria by which they evaluate proposals for competitive tendering; and what steps he has taken to assess whether such criteria are generally reasonable.

Mrs. Currie: Departmental guidance to health authorities includes the framework to be used for the comparison of the costs of tenders received, and the other action to be taken, and factors to be considered, in the overall evaluation of tenders. Copies of the most recent guidance have been placed in the Library. Authorities are expected to brief unsuccessful tenderers as fully as possible on how the contract decision was reached, and why their bids were not successful. Regional health authorities need to be informed of cases where the lowest tender is not accepted, and will consult the Department where any doubt arises over the decision taken.

Benefits

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on the number of applications for *(a)* invalid care allowance, and *(b)* family credit received daily at the invalid care allowances unit, Palatine house, Lancaster road, Preston and the family credit unit, Government buildings, Warbreck house, Blackpool, respectively; what is the average length of time taken to process a correctly completed application form at each office; and what is the total number of applications for these benefits currently waiting to be processed.

Mr. Scott: The information requested is shown in the table.

Benefit/ Allowance	*Average daily intake*[1]	*Average clearance time*[1]	*Claims awaiting decisions*[2]
Invalid care allowance	228	20·3 weeks	[3]25,956
Family credit	2,500	5·1 weeks	[4]74,500

[1] At May 1988.

[2] At 24 June 1988.

[3] Includes some 5,025 cases awaiting decision on the disabled person's entitlement to attendance allowance.

[4] Includes some 35,000 claims where initial action has commenced and replies to enquiries are awaited.

Departmental Rent Arrears

Mr. Soley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will provide a current estimate of the rent arrears owed by his Department to charitable and voluntary organisations providing hostel accommodation for the single homeless.

Mr. Portillo: I regret the information requested is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Retinitis Pigmentosa

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what treatments are available for Retinitis pigmentosa; what advice his Department has given to general medical practitioners about this disease; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: Treatment of retinitis pigmentosa, which is a congenital degenerative disease of the eye, will be for the clinical judgment of the consultant in charge of the individual patient's case. This is not a matter on which the Department would give advice.

Audiological Consultants

Mr. Beith: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what information he has as to the number of audiological consultants currently employed by the National Health Service, by region.

Mr. Newton: The latest available information is set out in the table.

Table: Consultant staff in audiological medicine, England (NHS paid and honorary) as at 30 September 1986

Region	*Number*
Northern	—
Yorkshire	—
Trent	1
East Anglian	—
North West Thames	3
North East Thames	5
South East Thames	1
South West Thames	2
Wessex	—
Oxford	—
South Western	—
West Midlands	—
Mersey	—
North Western	1
SHAs for the London postgraduate teaching hospitals	2

Physiological Measurement Technicians

Mr. Beith: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the number and location of physiological measurement technicians (audiology) for the latest date for which figures are available.

Mr. Newton: The information is show in the table.

Northern Regional Health Authority
Physiological Measurement Technicians (Audiology)
at September 1986

District Health Authority	*Whole-time equivalents*
Hartlepool	2
North Tees	1
South Tees	9
East Cumbria	7
South Cumbria	4
West Cumbria	—
Darlington	5
Durham	3
North West Durham	—
South West Durham	—
Northumberland	1
Gateshead	3
Newcastle-upon-Tyne (T)	10
North Tyneside	—
South Tyneside	—
Sunderland	8
Northern Regional Total	52

Yorkshire regional health authority
Physiological measurement technicians (audiology)
at 30 September 1986

District health authority	*Whole-time equivalents*
Hull	9
East Yorkshire	—
Grimsby	2
Scunthorpe	—
Northallerton	—
York	5
Scarborough	6
Harrogate	2
Bradford	8
Airedale	—
Calderdale	7
Huddersfield	6
Dewsbury	—
Leeds Western (T)	3
Leeds Eastern (T)	10
Wakefield	—
Pontefract	1
Yorkshire regional total	59

Trent Regional Health Authority
Physiological Measurement Technicians (Audiology)
At 30 September 1986

District Health Authority	*Whole-time Equivalents*
North Derbyshire	5
South Derbyshire	6
Leicestershire (T)	10
North Lincolnshire	3
South Lincolnshire	4
Bassetlaw	—
Central Nottinghamshire	3
Nottingham (T)	19
Barnsley	3
Doncaster	4
Rotherham	3
Sheffield (T)	9
Trent Regional Total	69

East Anglian Regional Health Authority
Physiological Measurement Technicians (Audiology)
at 30 September 1986

District Health Authority	*Whole-time equivalents*
Cambridge (T)	5
Peterborough	5
West Suffolk	1
East Suffolk	5
Norwich	6
Great Yarmouth and Waveney	—
West Norfolk and Wisbech	2
Huntingdon	2
East Anglian Regional Total	25

North West Thames Regional Health Authority Physiological Measurement Technicians (Audiology) at 30 September 1986

District Health Authority	*Whole-Time Equivalents*
North Bedfordshire	5
South Bedfordshire	6
North Hertfordshire	2
East Hertfordshire	1
North West Hertfordshire	4
South West Hertfordshire	—
Barnet	4
Harrow	8
Hillingdon	7
Hounslow and Spelthorne	6
Ealing	3
Brent	5
Paddington and North Kensington (T)	2
Riverside	7
North West Thames Total	58

North East Thames Regional Health Authority Physiological Measurement Technicians (Audiology) at 30 September 1986

District health authority	*Whole-time equivalents*
Basildon and Thurrock	3
Mid Essex	3
North East Essex	5
West Essex	1
Southend	5
Barking/Havering/Brentwood	2
Hampstead (T)	2
Bloomsbury (T)	21
Islington	—
City and Hackney (T)	4
Newham	3
Tower Hamlets (T)	5
Enfield	5
Haringey	5
Redbridge	1
Waltham Forest	3
North East Thames Total	69

South east Thames regional health authority Physiological measurement technicians (Audiology) at 30 September 1986

District health authority	*Whole-time equivalents*
Brighton	4
Eastbourne	1
Hastings	2
South East Kent	2
Canterbury and Thanet	3
Dartford and Gravesham	2
Maidstone	8
Medway	—
Tunbridge Wells	5
Bexley	3
Greenwich	2
Bromley	4
West Lambeth (T)	2
Camberwell (T)	6
Lewisham and North Southwark (T)	7
South East Thames Total	50

South West Thames Regional Health Authority Physiological Measurement Technicians (Audiology) at 30 September 1986

District Health Authority	*Whole-time Equivalents*
North West Surrey	*
West Surrey and N E Hants	—
South West Surrey	10
Mid-Surrey	*
East Surrey	1
Chichester	—
Mid-Downs	2
Worthing	4
Croydon	4
Kingston and Esher	2
Richmond, Twickenham and Roehampton	5
Wandsworth (T)	4
Merton and Sutton	4
South West Thames Total	37

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Wessex regional health authority Physiological measurement technicians (Audiology) at 30 September 1986

District health authority	*Whole-time equivalents*
East Dorset	3
West Dorset	4
Portsmouth and South East Hampshire	5
Southampton and South West Hampshire (T)	4
Winchester	5
Basingstoke and North Hampshire	1
Salisbury	5
Swindon	6
Bath	5
Isle of Wight	3
Wessex regional total	41

Oxford Regional Health Authority Physiological Measurement Technicians (Audiology) at 30 September 1986

District Health Authority	*Whole-time Equivalents*
East Berkshire	4
West Berkshire	9
Aylesbury Vale	3
Wycombe	1
Milton Keynes	1
Kettering	2
Northampton	4
Oxfordshire (T)	6
Oxford Regional Total	28

South Western Regional Health Authority Physiological Measurement Technicians (Audiology) at 30 September 1986

District Health Authority	*Whole-Time Equivalents*
Bristol and Weston (T)	15
Frenchay	—
Southmead	3
Cornwall and Isles of Scilly	4
Exeter	10
North Devon	4

District Health Authority	*Whole-Time Equivalents*
Plymouth	7
Torbay	3
Cheltenham	2
Gloucester	6
Somerset	6
South Western Regional Total	59

West Midlands Regional Health Authority
Physiological Measurement Technicians (Audiology) at 30 September 1986

District Health Authority	*Whole-time equivalents*
Bromsgrove and Redditch	1
Herefordshire	3
Kidderminster and District	—
Worcester and District	5
Shropshire	9
Mid-Staffordshire	2
North Staffordshire	5
South East Staffordshire	2
Rugby	—
North Warwickshire	—
South Warwickshire	3
Central Birmingham (T)	4
East Birmingham	1
North Birmingham	1
South Birmingham	2
West Birmingham	21
Coventry	9
Dudley	13
Sandwell	5
Solihull	2
Walsall	6
Wolverhampton	3
West Midlands Regional Total	96

Mersey regional health authority
Physiological measurement technicians (Audiology) at 30 September 1986

District health authority	*Whole-time equivalents*
Chester	5
Crewe	6
Halton	1
Macclesfield	3
Warrington	5
Liverpool (T)	5
St. Helens and Knowsley	7
Southport and Formby	1
Sefton south	3
Wirral	6
Mersey regional total	42

North Western regional health authority physiological measurement technicians (Audiology) at 30 September 1986

District health authority	*Whole-time equivalents*
Lancaster	4
Blackpool, Wyre and Fylde	8
Preston	7
Blackburn, Hyndburn and Ribble Valley	6
Burnley, Pendle and Rossendale	5
West Lancashire	3
Chorley and South Ribble	—
Bolton	9
Bury	3
North Manchester	8
Central Manchester (T)	7
South Manchester (T)	6
Oldham	6
Rochdale	10
Salford (T)	12
Stockport	4
Tameside and Glossop	5
Trafford	3
Wigan	6
North Western Regional total	110

London postgraduate special health authority
Physiological measurement technicians (Audiology) at 30 September 1986

	Whole-time equivalents
Hospitals for sick children	1
National Hospital for Nervous Diseases	1
Moorfields Eye Hospital	—
Bethlem Royal and Maudsley Hospitals	—
National Heart and Chest Hospitals	—
The Royal Marsden Hospital	—
Hammersmith Hospital	—
Queen Charlotte's Hospital	—
The Eastman Dental Hospital	—
TOTAL	2

Source: DHSS Annual Census of National Health Service Non-Medical Manpower.

Note: All figures are independently rounded to the nearest whole-time equivalent.

* Indicates less than 0·5.
— Indicates NIL.
T Indicates Teaching District.

Audiological Centres

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what information he has as to the number of people waiting for appointments at audiological centres, by regional health authority;

(2) what information he has to the average waiting time for an appointment at a specialised audiological centre.

Mr. Tony Newton: I regret that the information is not available centrally.

Single-parent Families

Mr. Ralph Howell: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many *(a)* single parents, and *(b)* persons in single-parent families there were in (i) 1979 and (ii) in the current year; and how many in *(a)* and *(b)* were dependant on state or family support.

Mr. Portillo: The figures show the most recent information available. Details of the number of persons in single parent families are not available by benefit but the average number of dependent children per family in lone parent families is estimated at 1·6 for 1982-84.

	1979	*1984*
Number of lone parent families[1]	815,000	940,000
Number of lone parent families receiving supplementary benefit or FIS at 31 December[2]	363,000	598,000
[Number of lone parents receiving one-parent benefit	381,000	517,000]

[1] Based on a sample survey from the GHS and averaged over the appropriate three years (see "One Parent Families in GB" Population Trends 45 pp 5-13 HMSO 1986.)

[2] Extracted from information in "Social Security Statistics"—1980 and 1985.

Dental Hospitals (Funding)

Dame Jill Knight: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what steps are being taken to ensure that funding identified for dental hospitals under the service increment for teaching allocation is reaching the teaching hospitals concerned.

Mr. Newton: The service increment for teaching is separately identified as a cash sum in regional health authority allocations. It is for the regions to determine how their SIFT allowances should be apportioned between districts, as part of the wider process of planning and funding the full range of teaching districts and teaching hospital activity within their region.

Benefit Claimants

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will express the number of unemployed claimants and their dependants as a percentage of all claimants for each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Portillo: The table shows the number of unemployed supplementary benefit claimants and their dependants as a percentage of all supplementary benefit claimants and their dependants.

Year	*Percentage*
1977	30·25
1978	27·22
1979	25·52
1980	34·11
1981	43·18
1982	46·99
1983	47·71
1984	47·92
1986	47·67
1987	44·05

Source: annual statistical inquiries.

There was no annual statistical inquiry in 1985; the one due in December that year was deferred until February 1986.

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the total number of claimants and dependants on supplementary benefit at the latest available date.

Mr. Portillo: In May 1987, the latest date for which this information is available, 4,896,000 claimants had a total of 3,309,000 dependents.

Source: Annual statistical inquiry.

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the number of claimants dependent on supplementary benefit for five years or more for each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Portillo: The information is as follows:

Year	*Thousands*
1977	1,301
1978	1,303
1979	1,287
1980	1,305
1981	1,367
1982	1,398
1983	1,404
1984	1,449
1986	1,561
1987	1,692

Source: Annual statistical inquiries.

There was no annual statistical inquiry in 1985: the one due in December that year was deferred until February 1986.

Health Authorities (Nurses)

Ms. Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the names and addresses of *(a)* all nurse members on health authorities and special health authorities and *(b)* generalist members on health authorities who are nurses.

Mrs. Currie: The names of nurse members of regional health authorities and of the special health authorities for the London postgraduate teaching hospitals are listed as follows. It is not our practice to disclose other personal information.

We do not systematically update information about the occupation of health authority members. I am unable therefore to supply details of any other members who may have a nursing background.

District health authority members are appointed by the relevant regional health authority and information about them is not held centrally. The hon. Member should, however, be able to obtain the information sought from the regional health authority chairman concerned.

Northern RHA
Kilvington Miss. J. M.
Yorkshire RHA
Endean Mrs. I.
Trent RHA
Birch Dr. J. A.
East Anglian RHA
Vacancy
North west Thames RHA
Goodwin Ms. S.
North east Thames RHA
Lavender Mrs. J. K.
South east Thames
White Miss. E. M.
South west Thames RHA
Rye Mr. D. H.
Wessex RHA
Vacancy
Oxford RHA
Poole Mr. D. L.
South western RHA
Maisey Mrs. M.
West midlands RHA
Mottram Mr. J.
Mersey RHA
Rowlands Miss. J.
North western RHA
Proctor Mrs. J.
Hospital for sick children SHA
Dr. E. R. Bendall
National hospitals for nervous diseases SHA
Miss. A. Philips
Moorfields eye hospital SHA
Miss. A. M. West
Bethlem royal and Maudsley hospitals SHA
Mr. D. S. Coleman
Royal Marsden hospital SHA
Prof. J. Wilson-Barnett

Hammersmith and queen Charlotte's hospital SHA
Miss. N. Esterson
National heart and chest hospitals SHA
Miss. G. F. Schofield
Eastman dental hospital SHA
Miss. S. A. Rumney

Intensive Care Nurses

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) how many nurses with special skills required for children's intensive care are employed in each of the regional health authorities, and by hospital; how many posts are funded, region by region; and how many of those are currently unfilled;

(2) what he has done to encourage trained children's intensive care nurses who have left the profession to return; how many of those currently employed have returned; and what special arrangements have been agreed to provide transport, flexible working hours and child care facilities.

Mr. Newton: Nationally, the recent pay awards and the new clinical grading structure should encourage specialised nurses who have left the profession to return and a NHS/DHSS working group on equal opportunities for women will in particular be making recommendations on managing the career break. Information on the number of nurses who have returned to the service is not available centrally.

We are encouraging health authorities to be more flexible in their working arrangements, but it is for the individual authorities to decide what facilities need to be provided for their staff in the light of the local situation.

Information on the number of nurses holding specific qualifications and the number of funded and unfilled posts is not collected centrally. A survey of nurses in high technology care, which includes paediatric intensive care and special care baby units is currently being carried out by the Department and will provide additional information later this year. The total number of nursing and midwifery staff working in paediatric intensive care units and special care baby units in regional health authorities and special health authorities in England is given in the table. Information by hospital could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

NHS Nursing & Midwifery Staff working in Paediatric Intensive Care and Special Care Baby Units (SCBUs) As at 30 September 1986

Whole time equivalent

Region	*Intensive Care Paediatrics*	*SCBU Nursing*	*SCBU Midwives*
England	360	1,940	920
Northern	40	120	40
Yorkshire	50	120	100
Trent	30	280	70
East Anglia	10	90	30
North West Thames	*	140	60
North East Thames	*	60	60
South East Thames	10	140	70
South West Thames	20	60	30
Wessex	20	110	60
Oxford	20	120	50
South Western	20	120	70
West Midlands	20	280	110
Mersey	50	70	50
North Western	30	190	110
SHAs	20	30	10

Source: DHSS (SR7) Annual Census of NHS Non-Medical Manpower.

Notes: 1. Figures have been independently rounded to the nearest 10 whole time equivalents.
2. * Less than 5 whole time equivalents.

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services why he has postponed the commencement of the Birmingham training course for intensive care nurses for children from July, as agreed in February, to autumn 1988.

Mr. Newton: The start of the training course has not been postponed. In February this year I informed the hon. Member that the start date had been brought forward from January 1989 to October 1988. The course requires approval by the English National Board for Nursing, Midwifery and Health Visiting, which I am glad to say was given on 15 June.

Orthopaedic Waiting List (Oswestry)

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people from North Staffordshire district health authority are on the orthopaedic list at Oswestry hospital; and what is the average length of time for waiting.

Mrs. Currie: The information requested is not collected centrally. The hon. Member may wish to write to the chairman of the Shropshire health authority for the information.

Office of Population Censuses and Surveys (Disablement)

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services when he received the first report of the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys survey of disablement; and whether he will place a copy in the Library forthwith.

Mr. Scott: The Department received at the end of May the first report by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys on its surveys of disablement. I refer the hon. Member to my replies to her on 21 January at column *850*and on 7 June at column *575* so far as the availability of the report is concerned.

NHS (School Leavers)

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what percentage of school leavers were recruited by the National Health Service in 1987-88, or the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Newton: Details of the number of school leavers who enter the NHS directly from school are not available centrally.

Information by age distribution of under 18 and 18 to 20-year-olds employed in the NHS is shown in the table together with the number of school leavers expected to be available for employment. (Both Great Britain).

NHS non-medical manpower statistics 30 September 1986
Great Britain

	Numbers
Total non-medical staff	1,107,882
Under 18	4,693
18-20	62,954

Source: DHSS Annual (SR7) Census of NHS Non Medical Manpower, Welsh Office, Scottish Common Services Agency.
Note: Medical and Dental staff are excluded from the above figures.

School leavers expected to be available for employment
Great Britain
Academic year of leaving school

	1986-87	*1987-88*
All leavers	840,000	800,000
Leavers available for employment	580,000	550,000

Source: Employment Gazette, September 1986.

Family Practitioner Services

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what was the cost per head of the population of family practitioner services in 1987-88, or the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Newton: Gross expenditure on family practitioner services, including the costs of administration, is estimated to have amounted to £91 per head of population in England in 1987-88.

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what percentage of the total cost of family practitioner services was attributable to management and administration in 1987-88, or the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Newton: It is estimated that 2·3 per cent. of gross expenditure on the family practitioner services in England in 1987-88 was accounted for by the related administration costs, which comprises those of the associated administrative bodies (mainly family practitioner committees, the Prescription Pricing Authority and the Dental Estimates Board).

Hospital and Community Health Services

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what percentage of the total cost of hospital and community health services was attributable to management and administration in 1987-88, or the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Newton: Following is information for hospital and community health services derived from annual accounts submitted to the Department for 1986-87 (the latest year available):

Expenditure on headquarters administration £000	*As a proportion of total current expenditure per cent.*	*As a proportion of total expenditure (Current and Capital) per cent.*
434,739	4·21	3·86

Figures for 1987-88 will be available in the autumn.

Source:

Annual financial accounts of regional and district health authorities in England and those of the special health authorities for the London postgraduate teaching hospitals.

Notes:

1. Hospital and community health services includes ambulance, blood transfusion, mass radiography and other services.

2. Expenditure on headquarters administration includes all current expenditure on the pay and pay related costs of staff of all disciplines (including general managers) employed at headquarters levels and their office costs and overheads. It excludes the cost of clerical and secretarial support staff employed in departments at hospital and unit levels: such costs are regarded as operational.

3. Expenditure by certain bodies and special health authorities providing central services for hospital and community health services (for example, the Central Blood Laboratories Authority and the Netional Health Service Training Authority) is excluded.

District Health Authorities (Spending)

Mr. Jack: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has now received the returns from district health authorities on spending by specialty referred to in his answer of 17 December, *Official Report*, column 709; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: The new annual returns providing information on district health authorities' spending by specialty groups are in course of receipt by the Department along with those authorities' annual accounts and other financial returns for 1987-88. When complete, this material (which is in part subject to audit) will require analysis within the Department and hence information for 1987-88 is expected to be available in the autumn.

I will write to my hon. Friend when the information he seeks is available.

Medical Secretaries (Pay)

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he proposes to take any action to lift the pay levels of medical secretaries; whether he proposes any review to assess the skills of medical secretaries and their importance to the National Health Service; what study he has made of the effects of different pay levels in different areas for medical secretaries with particular regard to Sheffield; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: The pay and conditions of medical secretaries in the NHS are matters for negotiation in the administrative and clerical staffs Whitley Council. On 3 June the staff side agreed to recommend to constituent organisations an offer to increase pay from 1 April and to continue discussions on restructuring which would introduce a facility for some local flexibility in pay. I hope an early settlement will be reached. The grading of posts is a matter for individual employing authorities. In 1987 a working party chaired by the Department's deputy chief medical officer reviewed the secretarial and support services for hospital medical and dental staff, and concluded that the existing grades provided for an adequate reflection of the skills and importance attaching to the duties.

Single Homeless People

Mr. Soley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list in the *Official Report* the voluntary and charitable organisations providing hostel accommodation and support services for single homeless people; and if he will give estimates of Government funding made available to each.

Mr. Portillo: Following is a list of voluntary organisations which receive money from the Department under schedule 5 of the Supplementary Benefits Act 1976 (as amended), and the amounts paid in 1987-88.

	£
The Church of Scotland Board of Social Responsibility Edinburgh	10,350
Stockton Churches Mission to the Single Homeless Ltd. Stockton-on-Tees	5,500
Tyneside Cyrenians	5,500

	£
Roundabout Hostel Sheffield	6,800
Leeds Housing Concern	1,500
Nottingham Help the Homeless Association	4,500
Birmingham Committee for Night Shelter	7,650
St. Anne's Hostel Birmingham	6,250
St. Basil's Centre Birmingham	7,550
Coventry Cyrenians	5,500
Peterloo Housing Association, Manchester	9,500
Potteries Housing Association, Stoke on Trent	4,800
Good Shepherd Group, Wolverhampton	5,950
St. Paul's Hostel, Worcester	4,100
Brighton YMCA	5,500
Cardiff Cyrenians	4,100
Exeter Shilhay Community	18,800
Guildford Cyrenians Ltd.	2,750
Plymouth Council for Christian Care	13,300
The Harbour Community, Portsmouth	2,000
St. Petroc Community Trust, Portsmouth	4,800
Swansea Accommodation for Single Homeless	4,800
Swindon Cyrenians (Agape) Ltd.	3,550
Stonham Housing Association, Gloucester	4,050
Barnabas Housing Association, Yeovil	33,567
Taunton Association for the Homeless	9,500
Bondway Housing Association, London	105,036
Bondway Shelter, London	14,900
Brixton Circle Trust	8,430
CARA, London	13,316
Carr Gomm Society, London	44,995
Centrepoint, London	9,500
Church Army Housing, London	5,765
Circle Trust (Camberwell)	35,389
Circle Trust (New Cross)	17,623
Co-ordinated Accommodation Scheme, London	17;135
Deptford Churches	18,592
Eddie Brindly Project, London	12,929
59 Greek Street Ltd., London	9,250
Hammersmith and Fulham Shared Housing	7,331
Homeless Action AED Ltd., London	4,927
North Lambeth Day Centre	21,160
North West London Housing Association	69,152
Peter Bedford Trust, London	17,714
Riverpoint, London	26,050
St. George's Community Trust, London	44,500
St. Mungo Community Housing Association, London	43,229
St. Mungo Community Trust, London	16,940
Single Homeless Project, London	143,414
Wellclose Square Fund, London	4,917
Cambridge Cyrenians	1,500
Fyffe Centre, Lowestoft	4,100
Oxford Cyrenians	8,150
St. Martins Housing Trust, Norwich	6,800

Mr. Soley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give *(a)* a current estimate of the number of single homeless people who are registered with a history of psychiatric illness and *(b)* estimates for each year since 1983.

Mrs. Currie: Information is not available in the form requested. During the first quarter of 1988 approximately 3 per cent. of the 31,100 households accepted as homeless by local authorities in England were regarded as vulnerable on the grounds of mental illness. This information is not precise enough to enable valid comparisons with earlier years to be made.

Mr. Soley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give an estimate of the funds he has made available for each year since 1983 to provide the single homeless with training and employment incentives.

Mr. Portillo: We make no such provision. Training and employment incentives are the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment.

Single Payments

Mr. Blair: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many applications were made, and how many were successful, for supplementary benefit single payments in May 1985, May 1986 and May 1987, in each of his Department's local offices in the counties of Cleveland, Cumbria, Durham, Northumbria and Tyne and Wear.

Mr. Portillo *[holding answer 27 June 1988]:* Information concerning the number of applications made for single payments is not kept and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. The table includes the number of decisions made and the number of single payments given during the four weeks ending 4 June 1985, 3 June 1986 and 2 June 1987, respectively. The local offices shown are those situated within the counties requested, but office and county boundaries are not conterminous.

	May 1985		*May 1986*		*May 1987*[1]	
	Decisions made	*Payments made*	*Decisions made*	*Payments made*	*Decisions made*	*Payments made*
Cleveland						
Eston	1,225	963	2,203	1,629	1,048	564
Hartlepool	3,155	2,429	2,457	1,684	968	508
Middlesbrough	4,136	3,393	5,079	3,583	2,729	1,469
Redcar	881	737	1,953	1,276	887	531
Stockton	3,867	2,999	2,984	2,213	2,072	1,142
Durham						
Bishop Anckland	1,568	1,164	1,967	1,537	1,221	646
Chester-le-Street	519	408	1,105	865	529	325
Darlington	1,254	957	1,898	1,480	1,341	782
Durham	517	431	465	381	455	228
Peterlee	726	544	621	445	647	316
Seaham	250	232	429	374	256	147
Stanley	1,339	1,040	1,489	1,205	846	525
Northumberland						
Ashington	607	454	409	381	541	327
Berwick	71	65	118	114	76	43
Blyth	555	455	758	558	651	358
Hexham	166	134	146	114	142	71

	May 1985		May 1986		May 1987[1]	
	Decisions made	Payments made	Decisions made	Payments made	Decisions made	Payments made
Tyne and Wear						
Gateshead	2,089	1,766	3,289	2,579	1,656	951
Houghton-le-Spring	499	456	681	570	360	275
Jarrow	948	805	1,318	1,146	830	587
Newcastle St. James	1,761	1,431	1,914	1,678	1,229	680
Newcastle East	1,494	1,261	1,657	1,362	762	458
Newcastle West	1,459	1,207	1,842	1,530	1,117	657
North Shields	943	796	1,606	1,344	784	487
South Shields	1,588	1,279	3,118	2,419	1,291	778
Sunderland North	3,329	2,690	2,980	2,599	1,940	1,104
Sunderland South	1,826	1,495	2,630	2,228	1,382	781
Wallsend	1,134	831	1,160	947	796	412
Cumbria						
Carlisle	611	460	871	637	529	291
Kendal	84	47	110	82	87	50
Workington	678	576	634	506	418	275
Whitehaven	580	492	965	766	368	262
Penrith	88	71	104	66	96	51
Barrow	480	385	514	379	260	161

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[1] The figures for 1987 are provisional and subject to amendment.

Personal Incomes

Mr. Ralph Howell: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people have incomes of less than £150 a week; how many pensioners have incomes of less than £100 per week; and what would be the cost to the Exchequer if the tax threshold for *(a)* a married couple were raised to £120 per week, *(b)* single persons to £80 per week and *(c)* pensioners to £100 per week.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I have been asked to reply.

The latest year for which information from the family expenditure survey is available is 1985. In that year, about 13 million married couples and single people had gross incomes under £136 per week and, of these, about 3 million were pensioners with incomes under £91 per week. These levels of income are broadly equivalent in real terms to those specified in the question for 1988. Gross income includes all sources of income, including social security benefits, and is before deduction of income tax or national insurance.

The direct revenue cost in a full year at 1988-89 levels of income increasing personal tax allowances, above the levels proposed for 1988-89, to the levels specified in the question are estimated to be as follows:

	£ billion
(a) married man's allowance, including age allowances, to £6,240	6
(b) single allowance, including wife's earned income allowance and age allowances, to £4,160	5
(c) further increase in single age allowances to £5,200	0·2

THE ARTS

Leicester

39. **Mr. Vaz:** To ask the Minister for the Arts what plans he has to visit Leicester to discuss funding with local arts organisations.

Mr. Luce: I hope to visit Leicester in the autumn and as part of that visit expect to hold discussions with the director of East Midlands Arts.

Library Sites (Redevelopment)

40. **Mr. Atkinson:** To ask the Minister for the Arts if he has any plans to issue new guidelines to local authorities on the redevelopment of library sites by the private sector.

Mr. Luce: Such developments will be subject to the regulations and guidelines for local authorities issued by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment, and I do not propose to issue separate guidelines.

National Collections

41. **Mr. Heathcoat-Amory:** To ask the Minister for the Arts if he has had further recent discussions with the trustees of the national collections about the display of items held in store.

Mr. Luce: I am presently meeting each of the national museums and galleries in turn to discuss their corporate plans. The question of improving access to their collections, in particular those items in store, is a feature of these discussions.

Regional Arts

42. **Mr. Devlin:** To ask the Minister of the Arts what progress has been made with regard to increasing regional involvement in the arts.

Mr. Luce: The Arts Council promotes arts developments in the regions and the regional arts associations play a leading part in bringing together local authorities, business interests and individuals to foster all art forms. I have recently appointed three regional representatives to the Arts Council, to ensure that regional views are fully represented there.

National Sound Archives (Noise Reduction System)

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Minister for the Arts what have been the total development costs to date of the noise reduction system for the national sound archives; and what is the remit of this development.

Mr. Luce: The CEDAR system at the British Library's national sound archive has cost £40,000. The remit for this development was to obtain the best possible system for preserving the sound content of the collections, and to achieve successful commercial sales of similar equipment for the financial benefit of the archive and the British Library.

National Musem of Photography, Television and Film (Bradford)

44. **Mr. Boyes:** To ask the Minister for the Arts what are the latest figures for attendance at the national museum of photography, television and film in Bradford.

Mr. Luce: The number of visitors to the national museum of photography, film and television in 1987 was 706,319.

Polymer Book Preservation Programme

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Minister for the Arts what have been the total development costs to date of the polymer book preservation programme; and what it the remit of this development.

Mr. Luce: Grants to external contractors for the graft co-polymerisation paper strengthening programme have totalled £290,000. The remit for this development was to satisfy the special conservation needs of the British Library which cannot be met by the use of processes available elsewhere.

National Heritage Memorial Fund

46. **Mr. Burns:** To ask the Minister for the Arts what progress the national heritage memorial fund has made in saving major works of arts for the nation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Luce: Lord Charteris and the trustees of the NHMF are to be congratulated on an outstanding record of achievement to date. The trustees have chosen carefully among the hundreds of applications for assistance. I commend their annual reports to my hon. Friend for the descriptions of the wide range of land, buildings, artefacts and works of art saved for the nation with contributions from the fund. I have every confidence in their continuing success. The table illustrates the major works of art which have been saved with NHMF assistance.

Some of the works of art obtained with the assistance of the National Heritage Memorial Fund

Poussin "The Finding of Moses"
National Gallery/National Museum of Wales

Gainsborough portrait of Captain Wade
Bath City Council

Rysbrack bust of Shakespeare
Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery

The Portland Font
British Museum

Renoir's "La Place [illegible]lichy"
Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge

Bernini bust of Cardinal dal Pozzo
National Galleries of Scotland

Portrait of Captain Cook
National Maritime Museum

Beechey Portrait of Nelson
National Portrait Gallery

Rembrandt's "View on the Amstel"
British Museum

Rysbrack bust of Alexander Pope
National Portrait Gallery

Tillemans' "Battle of Glenshiel"
National Portrait Gallery of Scotland

Turner watercolour "Gibside"
Bowes Museum, Barnard Castle

Bellotto "View of the Castle Konigstein"
Manchester City Art Gallery

Terbrugghen "The Concert"
National Gallery

Spencer Frederick Gore "Balcony at the Alhambra"
York City Art Gallery

Turner "Caerlaverock Castle"
Aberdeen Art Gallery

Two Venetian scenes by Canaletto
Bowes Museum, Barnard Castle

Francis Danby "Sunset at Sea after a Storm"
City of Bristol Art Gallery

Two Gainsborough landscapes
Ipswich Museum and Art Gallery

Two paintings by John E. Ferneley Snr.
Leicester Museums and Art Galleries

Picasso's "Weeping Woman"
Tate Gallery

Poussin "The Triumph of Pan"
National Gallery

Watercolours of Stowe by C. Nattes
Buckinghamshire County Museum

Poussin "The Ashes of Phocium"
Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool

Hogarth "The Wedding Dance"
Tate Gallery

Bellotto "A View of Verona"
National Trust, Powis Castle

Constable "The Opening of Waterloo Bridge"
Tate Gallery

Library Services (Sheffield)

47. **Mr. Flannery:** To ask the Minister for the Arts whether he will visit Sheffield to see the range of services offered by the city council's libraries committee.

Mr. Luce: I have no immediate plans to do so. But the director of libraries at Sheffield is a valued member of my Library and Information Services Council.

Tourism

48. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Minister for the Arts what assessment he has made of the contribution of the arts to inward tourism to the United Kingdom.

Mr. Luce: A full estimate of the contribution of the arts to inward tourism will be published soon by the Policy Studies Institute, as part of a larger study. Its preliminary figures suggest that the level of expenditure by overseas tourists in Britain specifically induced by the arts was £1·5 billion in 1985-86.

Business Sponsorship

49. **Mrs. Virginia Bottomley:** To ask the Minister for the Arts what representations he has received on his plans to encourage business sponsorship of the arts.

Mr. Luce: I have received great support from both the arts and business world, whom I meet at many sponsorship receptions and arts events.

51. **Mr. John Greenway:** To ask the Minister for the Arts what business sponsorship has been received for opera in the regions in the last two years.

Mr. Luce: Figures for all forms of business sponsorship of opera in the regions are not available. Under the business sponsorship incentive scheme, opera in the regions has received £74,568 in awards in the last two years to match £132,000 of new sponsorship.

Museums and Galleries (Opening Hours)

50. **Mr. Bowis:** To ask the Minister for the Arts when he next intends to visit a museum or gallery in London to discuss their opening hours.

Mr. Luce: I am at present undertaking a series of meetings with the national museums and galleries sponsored by my Department to discuss their corporate plans. These discussions cover the full range of each institution's activities. I encourage museums and galleries to extend their opening hours where this is feasible and there have been a number of encouraging developments in this direction.

Scottish Arts Council

52. **Mr. Menzies Campbell:** To ask the Minister for the Arts when he last met the chairman of the Scottish Arts Council; and what topics they discussed.

Mr. Luce: I met the chairman of the Scottish Arts Council during my visit to the Edinburgh international festival in August last year. We discussed arts developments in Scotland and their funding.

Nottingham

53. **Mr. Allen:** To ask the Minister for the Arts what measures he will bring forward to encourage the arts in Nottingham, north.

Mr. Luce: Encouragement of the arts in Nottingham is the responsibility of East Midlands Arts, in partnership with the Arts Council and the local authorities. I support the Arts Council's endeavour to develop the arts in the regions and I hope that arts bodies in Nottingham, as elsewhere in the region, will be able to take full advantage of the council's incentive funding scheme, for which I have made £3·5 million available this year.

Tate Gallery of the North

54. **Mr. Wareing:** To ask the Minister for the Arts what educational and library services will be offered by the new Tate Gallery of the north in Liverpool.

Mr. Luce: The Tate Gallery, Liverpool, offers an extensive and flexible education service accessible to any school or group wanting to use the gallery for educational purposes. The schools programmes have been designed to respond to a full range of curriculum demands. A series of workshops will be offered each term for teachers. Throughout August there will be summer schools for sixth formers. From September a community trailer will tour local schools. The education department is currently developing links with the city college and Liverpool university's adult education programme. A special project on sculpture is planned for the autumn, linked to the gallery's three-year sculpture exhibition. Workshops for the disabled and those with special needs are also planned.

In addition, the education department provides a comprehensive range of literature for exhibition and organises lunchtime and evening lectures.

The gallery's reference library continues to grow and already provides users with a variety of books donated by publishers and an extensive range of catalogues. A video library with five screens is also available.

Apollo Group IV Facsimile System

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Minister for the Arts what have been the total development costs to date of the Apollo group IV facsimile system; and what is the remit for this development.

Mr. Luce: Development of Apollo equipment has been the responsibility of the European Space Agency, not the British Library.

British Library

43. **Mr. Butler:** To ask the Minister for the Arts how much Government funding he now intends to give to the British Library project in the next three years.

Mr. Luce: The funding authorised for 1988-89 is £33·1 million.

Planned funding for 1989-90 and 1990-91 is £41·5 million and £46·2 million respectively.

45. **Mr. Simon Coombs:** To ask the Minister for the Arts what assessment he has made of the benefits arising from the new British Library complex at St. Pancras when it is fully operational.

Mr. Luce: The new building at St. Pancras will bring together under one roof the majority of the British Library's London-based reference collections which now occupy 19 buildings in London. The housing of these priceless collections in a controlled, pollution-free environment for the first time will bring immense benefits in respect of their conservation. It will also bring considerable advantages for scholars who will be able to study different subjects in one building, and will benefit from much quicker delivery systems and modern technological aids. The new building should also enable the Library's management to operate more efficiently, and there will be other savings following the vacation of existing premises.

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Minister for the Arts what has been the total cost to date of automation of the British Library and Copyright Agency.

Mr. Luce: The total cost of automation in the British Library from 1981-82 to 1987-88 inclusive was £29·7 million. Figures for earlier years are not available. The copyright agency is not the responsibility of the British Library.

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Minister for the Arts what has been the total cost of development of, and the return on investment on, the British Library digital rare book copier compatible with Apollo group IV facsimile; and what is the remit for this development.

Mr. Luce: I am informed that the digital book copier is not compatible with group IV facsimile. The development of a group III compatible copier by external contractors cost £187,000. Six machines were produced for assessment and use. No further development is planned. The remit for this research and development project was to satisfy the special needs of the British Library and other research libraries for copying equipment which could not be met by commercially available products at that time.

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Minister for the Arts what were the total development costs and return on investment in the British Library archivist book copier; and what was the remit for this development.

Mr. Luce: The development cost of the archivist book copier was £60,000. Royalties from commercial sales so far total £14,000 and sales are expected to continue for several years. The remit for this development was to satisfy the need for a copier which would minimise damage to the books.

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Minister for the Arts how much new open access accommodation has been provided for British Library readers at Holborn since 1972; and at what cost.

Mr. Luce: An extension to the reading room area of the lower ground floor at Holborn yielded an additional 400 linear feet of shelving and some additional seating at a cost of approximately £19,000 for 1984-85. Approximately 135 linear feet of open access shelving have been added by ad hoc reorganisation since 1985 at negligible cost.

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Minister for the Arts what has been the total cost to date of the first phase of the British Library, corn merchant's store conversion at Boston Spa.

Mr. Luce: The cost of the corn merchant's store conversion was £1·7 million for building and £609,500 for shelving (both including VAT).

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Minister for the Arts how much, and what proportion, of the increase since the original estimate for the costs of the British Library's St. Pancras site buildings is attributable to *(a)* changes in value added tax regulations and *(b)* inflation.

Mr. Luce: The proportion and value of the increase (since the original estimate in 1979) for the stage under construction of the new British Library building attributable to *(a)* changes in VAT regulations is 3 per cent. of £3·82 million; and *(b)* inflation is 67 per cent. or £84·6 million.

The remainder of the difference between the two estimates is mainly in respect of design changes and the need to build in a higher risk contingency.

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Minister for the Arts what assessment he has made of the extent to which the British Library's periodical collections meet the minimum documentation rule 34 of the patent co-operation treaty regulations.

Mr. Luce: The science reference and information service of the British Library takes all the periodicals in the list published in the "World International Patents Organisation Handbook on Patents Information and Technology" as updated to October 1987.

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Minister for the Arts if he will itemise the total investment by the British Library in compact disc with read only memory technology.

Mr. Luce: The British Library has spent approximately £108,000 on CD-ROM equipment.

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Minister for the Arts why details of open access provisions to the science and technology holdings in the new British Library have not been made publicly available.

Mr. Luce: The final extent of open access provision for the science reference and information service (SRIS) in the British Library's new building will depend upon ministerial decisions about further construction. This is the subject of a feasibility study currently being undertaken.

Open access provision for the SRIS in the stage which has been authorised and is currently under construction will be 13 km of shelving and 178 reader seats.

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Minister for the Arts when the British Library's plans for business information will be published; and under what authority this collection has been formed.

Mr. Luce: The British Library's plans for business information will be published as part of the science reference and information service overall information plan in the context of the library's new strategic plan which is due for publication in 1989. General authority for the formation of the collection lies in clause 1(2) of the British Library Act which requires the board to manage the library as a national centre for reference, study, and bibliographical and other information services. Specific authority is derived from the recommendations of a working party on business information in 1980. Its membership comprised mainly external experts in the business field and the report was entitled "Business Information: the Role of the British Library". A revised edition was published by the British Library in 1982.

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Minister for the Arts if he will take steps to ensure that the British Library provides date-stamped printed publications and abstracts of journals.

Mr. Luce: Publications (or in the case of patent specifications, registers) are stamped with the date of shelving at the science reference and information service (SRIS) as a service for those who need to be aware of the earliest dates of availability upholdable in courts of law. The service is particularly used in connection with novelty of patent applications. All journals including abstract journals received by the SRIS are date stamped and are generally shelved within 24 hours.

CIVIL SERVICE

Agencies

59. **Mr. Knapman:** To ask the Minister for the Civil Service whether any further potential agencies have been identified in the Civil Service.

Mr. Luce: I will report on the progress of the next steps initiative before the summer recess.

Offices (Ministerial Visits)

60. **Mr. Nicholas Bennett:** To ask the Minister for the Civil Service which Civil Service offices outside London he has visited in the last 12 months.

Mr. Luce: I am pleased that I have been able to visit nine Civil Service offices outside London in the period 30 June 1987 to 30 June 1988, details of which are as follows:

C88/3230

Civil Service Offices outside London visited by the Minister for the Civil Service between 30 June 1987 and 30 June 1988

	1987
Cabinet Office, Civil Service Commission, Basingstoke	15 July
Her Majesty's Treasury, Central Computer and Telecommunications Agency, Norwich	17 July
Cabinet Office, Civil Service College, Sunningdale	12 October (also 9 November)
Department of Health and Social Security, National Health Service Auditors Office, Bristol	11 November
	1988
Her Majesty's Customs and Excise, VAT Central Unit, Southend	13 April
Department of Employment, Local Office, Birmingham (Kingsheath)	14 April
Royal Mint, Llantrisant	18 May
Scottish Office, Department of Agriculture and Fisheries, Aberdeen	17 June
Department of Health and Social Security, Integrated Local Office, Leeds, East	30 June

Departmental Staff

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Minister for the Civil Service if he will issue guidance to the Departments of Trade and Industry, Employment and Health and Social Security on the efficient maintenance of staff records, so as to enable them to answer parliamentary questions on the educational background of senior civil servants without involving disproportionate cost, in a manner similar to other Government Departments.

Mr. Luce: No. This is a matter for individual Departments.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Agricultural Development Advisory Service

Dr. Reid: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what plans he has to make a statement about the future of the Agricultural Development Advisory Service.

Mr. Donald Thompson: I have no plans at present to make a further statement.

Fishing Industry

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what discussions he has had with the fishing industry about the future funding of research and development in fisheries.

Mr. MacGregor: I met Dr. Balfour, deputy chairman of the Sea Fish Industry Authority, on 13 April when she and other senior figures from levy-funded bodies came to discuss industry funding of research in agriculture, fisheries and food.

Television Advertising (Levy)

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations he has received from the fishing industry regarding the proposed SFIA levy to fund television advertising.

Mr. Gummer: The Sea Fish Industry Authority proposes to increase its levy with effect from 1 April 1989. It is currently discussing its ideas with the sea fish industry before making a firm proposal in the autumn. I shall be informed of the industry's views once a formal proposal is made.

Farming Practices (Environmental Improvement)

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement concerning recent European Community proposals for environmental improvements in farming practices.

Mr. MacGregor: The EC Commission recently published a document entitled "Environment and Agriculture", which aims to establish guidelines for the development of future policies. At the Council of Agriculture Ministers on 13-17 June, the Commission invited Agriculture Ministers to consider the document. While acknowledging that a number of measures have already been adopted in the agricultural sector which serve to protect and enhance the environment, the Commission states its intention to bring forward additional proposals before the end of 1988.

Set-Aside

Mr. Cran: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what has been the response from the agricultural industry to his set-aside announcement.

Mr. MacGregor: My proposals have been broadly welcomed.

Organic Farming and Horticulture

Mr. Jack: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what further proposals he has in relation to the future role of organic farming and horticulture.

Mr. Gummer: The future role of organic farming and horticulture will depend on demand in the market place. This is why the Government have placed particular emphasis on the setting of production standards for organic produce which, once agreed, are likely to exert a significant influence on retail sales. In addition, the needs of such production will continue to be considered alongside those of more conventional production systems.

EC Internal Market

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what preparations his Department is making for the operation of the internal market in the European Community; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. MacGregor: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given on 9 June to my hon. Friend the Member for Portsmouth, South (Mr. Martin) at column *675*.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) whether he has made an assessment of how the completion of the internal market in the European Community will affect the agricultural industry; and if he will make a statement;

(2) whether he has made an assessment of how the completion of the internal market in the European Community will affect the food industry; and if he will make a statement;

(3) whether he has made an assessment of how the completion of the internal market in the European Community will affect the agricultural supply trade; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. MacGregor: There is much still to be done before the arrangements for the operation of a single market are fully in place, but the new market will clearly offer both wider opportunities and a challenge. It is too early to make a proper assessment, but the Government are encouraging all sectors of the industry to continue to make thorough policy to capitalise on the opportunities which will be provided by the single market.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is his assessment of the impact of the movement towards the internal market on the agromonetary system of the European Community; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. MacGregor: I strongly support the Commission's objective of removing all mcas by 1992, since they are incompatible with a common internal market. The Commission and the Council have affirmed that the devaluations agreed at the recent price fixing are a first stage in that process, and the Commission has agreed that it will report in the autumn on the most appropriate means of completing it.

Food Prices

Mr. Madel: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what estimates his Department will be making of the effect of the current drought in the United States of America on British food prices, between now and 5 April 1989; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: My Department monitors continuously developments in agricultural and food markets. The drought in the United States is clearly severe, and is already affecting world commodity prices. It is, however, much too soon to be certain of the full impact on product markets given the existence of substantial stocks of some commodities.

In the case of cereals, price levels under CAP regimes remain substantially above those obtaining on world markets and this will insulate the United Kingdom market from much of the impact of firmer world prices. Higher soya bean prices are likely to affect the cost of feeding stuffs although the consequences for food retail prices will take time to work through the chain. Overall, the impact on the food retail prices index is likely to be modest over the next few months although for the longer term much will depend on the duration of the drought.

EC Price Review

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what additional spending was transferred from the European Economic Community to member states in consequence of the price review agreement; and if, in particular, he will explain the nature and extent of the additional direct payments to be made to sugar refiners.

Mr. MacGregor: The price review does not transfer any additional financial responsibility from the Community to member states. There are two new provisions for sugar cane refiners. One is for an aid (initially about 52p per tonne) which replaces a temporary compensation scheme and is wholly funded by the Community. The other authorises the United Kingdom to supplement the margins of its cane refiners further by up to about £3·28 per tonne of sugar imported under preferential terms from the African, Caribbean and Pacific countries. This aid is discretionary and therefore only 25 per cent. funded by the Community.

Common Agricultural Policy

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if the Commission has revealed the nature and extent of the management economies it intends to introduce as a means of keeping common agricultural policy expenditures in 1989 within the guidelines agreed at the European Council; and if it will be reporting to the Council on the implementation of these measures.

Mr. MacGregor: The Commission has reduced by 12½ per cent. the rates of aid payable on skimmed milk used in animal feed and to manufacture casein. It has also cut the minimum level of skimmed milk powder incorporated in animal feed from 60 per cent. to 45 per cent. The Commission estimates that these measures will produce savings of 285 mecu (£191 million) in 1989. In addition, the Commission has reduced the provision for expenditure on export credits for sales of agricultural products to developing countries by 24 mecu (£16 million). The Commission is obliged by the new arrangements for tighter budget discipline to report monthly to the Council and European Parliament on developments in expenditure for each major agricultural product.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what increase in common agricultural policy expenditure has been estimated by the Council to take place in 1989 in consequence of the price review; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. MacGregor: The Commission estimates that the price review will add 289 mecu (£194 million) to expenditure in 1989 compared to the proposals which were originally forwarded to the Council, but these additional costs will be more than offset by management economies.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the budgeted and actual expenditure on the common agricultural policy in 1987; and what is the budget figure for 1988 and 1989, respectively.

Mr. MacGregor: Expenditure on the guidance and guarantee sections of the common agricultural policy, including fisheries, is:

	mecu
1987 Supplementary and Amending Budget	24,101
1987 Outturn	[1]23,996
1988 Budget	[2]31,104
1989 Preliminary Draft Budget	[3]32,340

Notes:

[1] 4,535 mecu of guarantee expenditure in November and December 1987 could not be met from the 1987 Budget and will fall on the 1988 Budget.

[2] Covers guarantee expenditure from November 1987 to 15 October 1988. Includes provision of 1,240 mecu for depreciation of old stocks and a monetary reserve of 1,000 mecu.

[3] Covers guarantee expenditure from 16 October 1988 to 15 October 1989. Includes 640 mecu for depreciation of old stocks, 800 mecu for reimbursement of butter disposals in 1987-88 and a monetary reserve of 1,000 mecu.

Sources:

1987 Supplementary and Amending Budget.
EAGGF Financial Reports (draft).
Report on Implementation of the Budget.
1988 EC Commission Statistics.
1989 Preliminary Draft Budget ("Popular Version").

Trees (Storm Damage)

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what measures he is taking to ensure that trees planted with the recently announced increased incentive payments for storm-damaged woodland replanting are appropriate replacements for those lost.

Mr. Gummer: All applications for grant-aid are carefully considered to ensure that the nature of the planting is appropriate to the site.

Rights of Way

Mr. Pike: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what advice he is giving farmers about the maintenance of public rights of way in the countryside.

Mr. Gummer: My Department sent a booklet called "The Ploughing Code" to all farmers in England and Wales in 1986. This booklet sets out farmers' rights and responsibilities in relation to rights of way and forms the basis of the Agricultural Development and Advisory Service's advice to farmers. It was published jointly with the Countryside Commission.

Public Houses (Tenant Security)

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what action he intends to take following the representations of the Sheffield and District Licensed Victuallers Association with regard to the current lack of tenant security of those living in public houses.

Mr. Donald Thompson: I refer the hon. Member to the reply which I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, North-West (Dr. Hampson) on 14 June at column *135*.

Wet Land Grazing

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many hectares of land were converted from arable production to wet land grazing since 1985 under the Broads grazing land (Halvergate) conservation scheme.

Mr. Gummer *[holding answer 30 June 1988]:* Five hectares of land were converted from arable production to permanent grassland within the area of the Broads grazing marshes conservation scheme 1985-87. However, the main objective of this experimental scheme was halting the conversion of grassland to arable and this was achieved. In the Broads environmentally sensitive area, which succeeded the experimental scheme, applications have been received to convert 83 hectares of arable land to grassland within the area covered by the earlier scheme.

EC Prices

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Southend, East of 27 June, if he will publish the statement made by the Commissioner to the effect that the recent agreement on prices will conform to the 1989 guidelines; what is the size of the management economies which will be required to ensure this; and if these economies will include transferring financial responsibilities to member states.

Mr. MacGregor *[holding answer 30 June 1988]:* The statement was:

> "The Commission states that it is in a position to comply with the 1988 budget and the 1989 preliminary draft budget, and therefore the guideline, thanks to management measures such as, for example, less use of skimmed milk powder in animal feed."

The Commisson is now amending the 1989 preliminary draft budget to take account of the price package and savings from management economies which together will reduce expenditure by 20 mecu (£13·4 million). Management economies total 309 mecu (£207 million) and will not involve a transfer of financial responsibilities to member states.

EC Council (Price Cuts)

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Southend, East of 27 June, if he will publish a list of the price cuts agreed at the recent Council meeting which were agreed to ensure that the guidelines of the European Council will be adhered to; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. MacGregor *[holding answer 30 June 1988]:* The price package includes a cut of 5·2 per cent. in the durum wheat intervention price as well as reductions in monthly increments for cereals rice and oilseeds. In addition, weakening of arrangements for beef intervention is estimated to be equivalent to a 4 to 5 per cent. price cut.

Green Pound

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will publish a table showing the various green pound charges agreed at the recent meeting of the council.

Mr. MacGregor *[holding answer 30 June 1988]*: The green pound changes being proposed to take effect from 1 January 1989 are:

Sector	*Existing green rate (1 ecu = £. . .)*	*New green rate (1 ecu = £. . .)*
Crops	0·656148	0·675071
Pigmeat	0·704020	0·725849
Sheep	0·652575	0·671291
Other livestock products except beef	0·665557	0·685035

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is his estimate of the additional costs stemming from the green pound changes agreed at the recent meeting of the Council; and to what extent these will be borne by the European Economic Community member states and consumers, respectively.

Mr. MacGregor *[holding answer 30 June 1988]*: Changes to the green pound decided at the Council on 23-34 June will add 31 mecu to the Community budget in 1989, and increase United Kingdom public expenditure by about £5 million in 1988-89 and by about £50 million a year thereafter. The effect on consumers, which will be from the package as a whole, will be an increase in the retail prices index of about 0·04 per cent., once all the effects have worked through.

Organic Food

Mr. Allen McKay: To ask the Minister of Agriculture Fisheries and Food, if in considering measures being taken to help the farming industry, he will give financial support to encourage organic food production and sales.

Mr. Gummer *[holding answer 28 June 1988]*: This Department is already encouraging the development of organic food production in a number of ways; through our initiative on the United Kingdom register of organic food standards in setting production standards, through the provision of specialist advice; and through our general research programme which includes topics such as nitrogen fixation and biological control as well as specific projects on organic farming. We are also studying the scope for the implementation of the EC extensification scheme where conversion to organic farming may be a possible option. In addition, those farming organically benefit in the same way as other farmers from the various agricultural support measures.

Civil Servants (Conferences)

Mr. John: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Pontypridd, *Official Report*, 20 June, column *426*, what is his policy in respect of civil servants addressing conferences and expressing views on agricultural matters which are not consonant with Her Majesty's Government policies.

Mr. MacGregor *[holding answer 1 July 1988]*: This is a matter for the internal management of my Department.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Civil Service (Recruitment)

61. **Mrs. Virginia Bottomley:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will take steps to promote late recruitment of university teaching and research staff into the Civil Service.

Mr. Brooke: University teaching and research staff can enter all competitions run by the Civil Service Commission on behalf of Government Departments, provided they meet the eligibility criteria established for individual schemes. All recruitment competitions are widely advertised and candidates are selected on merit, on the basis of fair and open competition. The Civil Service advertises vacancies in many disciplines, including lecturer and research officer, without an age limit.

Charitable Donations

62. **Mr. Yeo:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many civil servants are now using the payroll donation schemes for the purpose of making charitable donations.

Mr. Brooke: Two thousand one hundred and fifty.

Taxation Changes

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will identify the benefits to *(a)* single men and *(b)* married men with two children as a result of changes in taxation since 1979.

Mr. Norman Lamont: A single person on average male earnings pays £16·01 a week less in income tax than he would have had the 1978-79 income tax regime been kept in place and simply indexed for inflation. On the same basis, a married man on average male earnings pays £15·62 less. Child tax allowances are not included in the indexed 1978-79 income tax regime as they were being phased out.

Child Benefit

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate how many, and what proportion of, families with children receive more in child benefit than they pay out in income tax.

Mr. Norman Lamont: It is estimated that, in both 1987-88 and 1988-89, about 2 million families, between a quarter and a third of the total number of families claiming child benefit, will receive more in child benefit than they pay in income tax.

Postmasters

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will introduce legislation to remove the liability to tax of gratuities for retiring postmasters; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I assume that the hon. Member has in mind sub-postmasters rather than postmasters. The gratuity received by sub-postmasters when they retire is taxable because it forms part of their pay.

Income Tax

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the reduction in income tax liability for each year since 1979 of the *(a)* top 1 per cent., *(b)* top 5 per cent., *(c)* top 10 per cent., *(d)* bottom 70 per cent., *(e)* bottom 60 per cent., *(f)* bottom 50 per cent., *(g)* bottom 30 per cent. and *(h)* bottom 10 per cent. of taxpayers.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The latest estimates are given in the table. For each financial year shown in the table, the yield from the tax regime in that year is compared with the yield under the 1978-79 tax regime. All estimates are based on a provisional 1988-89 income base projected from the 1985-86 survey of personal incomes and all tax regimes are indexed to 1988-89 levels according to the statutory formula. The comparison therefore allows for budgetary changes in income tax since 1978-79 but not for changes in definition or any other factors which might affect the income base.

Reductions (+)/increases (−) in income tax compared with 1978-79 indexed regime (£ billion)

Point of income distribution in 1988-89[1]	*Number of units paying tax in 1988-89*[2] *(millions)*	*1979-80*	*1980-81*	*1981-82*	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	*1984-85*	*1985-86*	*1986-87*	*1987-88*	*1988-89*
Top 1 per cent.	0·21	2·40	2·20	1·90	2·00	2·10	2·70	2·70	2·70	2·80	4·70
Top 5 per cent.	1·05	3·90	3·50	2·60	2·70	3·20	4·10	4·20	4·40	4·80	7·50
Top 10 per cent.	2·10	4·70	4·20	2·90	3·00	3·80	4·90	5·10	5·40	6·20	9·30
Bottom 70 per cent.[3]	14·70	2·60	1·60	−0·40	−0·20	1·00	1·80	2·50	3·20	4·50	6·20
Bottom 60 per cent.[3]	12·60	2·00	1·20	−0·50	−0·30	0·70	1·30	1·90	2·40	3·40	4·70
Bottom 50 per cent.[3]	10·50	1·40	0·80	−0·60	−0·40	0·40	0·90	1·40	1·70	2·40	3·40
Bottom 30 per cent.[3]	6·30	0·60	0·30	−0·50	−0·40	0·03	0·30	0·60	0·70	1·00	1·50
Bottom 10 per cent.[3]	2·10	0·20	0·07	−0·30	−0·20	−0·03	0·10	0·20	0·20	0·30	0·40
All	20·90	9·00	7·20	3·00	3·50	5·90	8·20	9·50	11·00	13·90	20·00

[1] Based on 20,900,000 single people and married couples expected to pay tax in 1988-89 and excluding 1,100,000 who would pay tax under the revalorised 1978-79 regime.

[2] All information is in terms of tax units, i.e. married couples are counted as one and their incomes combined.

[3] Including reductions and/or increases for those paying tax in 1988-89 and reductions for other units who would pay tax under the revalorised regime for the year specified or 1978-79.

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will give *(a)* the number and proportion of people of pensionable age who are liable for income tax, *(b)* the total tax yield from people of pensionable age, *(c)* the average income of people of pensionable age before and after tax and *(d)* the average percentage of income paid in tax by people of pensionable age.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Provisional estimates for 1988-89 are given in the table. They refer to married couples in which at least one partner is aged 65 or over and single people aged 65 and over. All figures are based on a projection of the 1985-86 survey of personal incomes.

Tax liability of aged married couples and single people, 1988-89

	Amount
Aged taxpayers liable to income tax	[1]2,350,000
Aggregate tax liability	£4·8 billion
Average income before tax[2]	£11,560
Average income after tax[2]	£9,530
Percentage of income paid in tax[2]	17·5 per cent.

[1] About one third of the total number of aged married couples and single people.

[2] By reference to those liable to income tax.

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many people eligible for, or in receipt of, age allowances are *(a)* on high marginal tax rates, *(b)* on basic rate tax or *(c)* pay no income tax.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Provisional estimates for 1988-89 are as follows:

Married Couples and Single People Eligible for Age Allowance

	thousands
Liable at higher rate of tax	170
Liable at basic rate of tax only	2,180
Not liable	4,500

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will give the reduction in income tax liability on unearned income that will result from the Budget measures for *(a)* the top 1 per cent., *(b)* the top 5 per cent., *(c)* the top 20 per cent., *(d)* the bottom 70 per cent. and *(e)* the bottom 50 per cent. of taxpayers in 1988-89.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 10 June 1988]:* Provisional estimates are given in the table. All estimates are uncertain because they are based on a projection of the 1985-86 survey of personal incomes. Also, the data on investment income from the survey have been adjusted to allow for investment income not reflected in the survey in some cases where basic rate liability is satisfied by deduction of tax at source. Figures for the top 20 per cent. and bottom 70 per cent. and 50 per cent. are particularly tentative.

Reduction in income tax liability on investment[1] *income compared with the indexed 1987-88 tax regime*

Range of quantiles[2] *of the income tax distribution*	*Reduction in tax on investment income (£ billion)*
Top 1 per cent.	0·7
Top 5 per cent.	0·9
Top 20 per cent.	1·0
Bottom 70 per cent.[3]	0·2
Bottom 50 per cent.[3]	0·1
All taxpayers	1·2

[1] Investment income has been treated as the top slice of income and all investment income taxed as though it were received gross and subject to the individual's appropriate marginal rate of tax.

[2] Based on the distribution of income tax under the proposed 1988-89 tax regime.

[3] Includes 240,000 single people and married couples taken out of tax by increases in allowances over indexation.

Mortgage Interest Tax Relief

Mr. Ralph Howell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what savings would be made if all mortgage interest relief was abolished; how many tax units receive mortgage interest tax relief; and what is the average cost per unit.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The cost of mortgage interest relief in 1988-89 is estimated to be about £4,250 million. About 8·6 million tax units benefit from this relief and the average value of the relief is £490.

The Exchequer savings which would arise from the abolition of all mortgage interest relief would depend on the behavioural response of mortgagors.

Tourism

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what estimate he can give of the net deficit on the tourism and travel account in 1988-89 on the first three months' figures; and what has the outturn balance on the travel and tourism account in each financial year since 1980.

Mr. Major: It is too early to say with any confidence what the balance on the travel account in the balance of payments will be in 1988-89.

The latest figures relate to the final quarter of 1987-88. These, together with quarterly information back to 1980, can be obtained from the Central Statistical Office's databank which is available in the Library.

VAT

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Mr. Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment he has made of the revenue implications of an extension of value added tax exemption to memorial headstones expressed *(a)* as a percentage of total value added tax receipts, and *(b)* in cash.

Mr. Lilley: I regret that information is not available on which to base an estimate.

Privatisation

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing for the end of each year from 1979 to the year before privatisation in each case *(a)* the major public corporations reclassified to the private sector since 1979, and *(b)* the contribution of each to the totals of public corporations' (i) tangible assets (ii) financial assets and (iii) financial liabilities, as shown in table 11·6 of the United Kingdom National Accounts 1987 edition, breaking down the figures for financial assets and liabilities between *(y)* claims on or liabilities to central Government and *(z)* other claims or liabilities.

Mr. Major: The information requested is supplied to the Central Statistical Office in commercial confidence by the companies concerned.

Gross Domestic Product

Sir Ian Gilmour: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if, in the light of the recent publication by his Department of the medium term financial strategy assumptions since 1980 relating to money gross domestic product, he will provide all the parallel assumptions relating to real gross domestic product, personal consumption, manufacturing and total private investment, the balance of payments and unemployment.

Mr. Major: Medium term financial strategy assumptions since 1980 for the growth of real gross domestic product can be found in successive financial statement and budget reports, which also include short term forecasts for, inter alia, consumers' expenditure, investment and the current account of the balance of payments. Unemployment assumptions based on the convention of a flat path over the medium term have been published in successive public expenditure White Papers.

Small Companies (Business Expansion Scheme)

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) how many small companies in Wales are receiving help through the business expansion scheme;

(2) how many small companies in each region of England are receiving help through the business expansion scheme.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The table gives estimates of the number of companies raising money through the business expansion scheme. Information on the size of such companies is not available.

	1985-86	[1]*1986-87*
South East	342	343
East Anglia	43	36
South West	64	53
West Midlands	51	36
East Midlands	29	19
Yorkshire/Humberside	35	48
North and Northwest	56	67
England	620	602
Wales	19	17

[1] Provisional. Final figures are expected to be slightly higher.

Welsh Business Men (Tax Relief)

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many Welsh business men are eligible to claim tax relief under the business expansion scheme.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Tax relief is available to any investor making investments in qualifying companies up to a limit of £40,000 per year. I regret that information on the number of people in Wales claiming relief is not available.

European Commission (Cash Position)

Mr. Wood: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement about the European commission's latest cash position and the implications for the United Kingdom.

Mr. Brooke: The European Commission estimates that its spending obligations this month will exceed the own resources available in July under the adopted budget for 1988. The Commission has therefore informed us that it expects to have to overdraw its accounts with member states this month in accordance with article 12(2) of Council regulation 2891/77. The outstanding amount of the overdraft for the United Kingdom by the end of July is expected to be around £136 million. As I explained to the House on 19 May, at column 1151, the Government are obliged to meet an article 12(2) request provided that it is genuinely needed to cover a prospective cash deficit and that it would not involve exceeding the own resources known to be available for the year. The Government will therefore meet this request directly from the Consolidated Fund in accordance with section 2(3) of the European

Communities Act 1972. Repayment of any drawing under this facility will be made by deduction from future own resources payments.

The article 12(2) facility does not affect the total amount which the Community is authorised to spend during the year. The Commission's request does not, therefore, involve any net addition to public expenditure.

Incomes

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will give for each of the *(a)* top 1 per cent., *(b)* top 5 per cent., *(c)* bottom 90 per cent., *(d)* bottom 60 per cent., *(e)* bottom 50 per cent., *(f)* bottom 30 per cent. and *(g)* bottom 25 per cent. of taxpayers the total amount of income before and after tax for 1988-89, giving for the bottom 25 per cent. and bottom 30 per cent. the equivalent figures for 1978-79 and 1987-88.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 7 June 1988]:* Estimates for 1978-79 and provisional estimates for 1987-88 and 1988-89 are given in the table. All estimates are based on information reported to tax offices and collected through the annual surveys of personal incomes. Estimates for 1978-79 exclude employees' contributions to occupational pension schemes and some investment income on which tax is deducted at source.

Taxpayers[1] Income in 1988-89

Group of taxpayers[1]	*Income before tax (£ billion)*	*Income after tax (£ billion)*
Top 1 per cent.	18·2	12·4
Top 5 per cent.	48·5	35·9
Bottom 90 per cent.	202·1	175·6
Bottom 60 per cent.	98·6	87·7
Bottom 50 per cent.	74·7	67·1
Bottom 30 per cent.	36·2	33·5
Bottom 25 per cent.	28·5	26·6
Taxpayers[1] Income in 1987-88 and 1978-79		
1987-88		
Bottom 30 per cent.	32·6	30·0
Bottom 25 per cent.	25·6	23·8
1978-79		
Bottom 30 per cent.	14·5	13·2
Bottom 25 per cent.	11·4	10·5

[1] Married couples and single people.

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) if he will give (i) the total unearned and (ii) the total earned income of *(a)* the top 1 per cent., *(b)* the top 5 per cent., *(c)* the top 20 per cent., *(d)* the bottom 70 per cent. and *(e)* the bottom 50 per cent. of taxpayers for 1978-79 and 1988-89, at constant prices;

(2) if he will give the average unearned income of *(a)* taxpayers and *(b)* non-taxpayers for 1979 and 1988 at constant prices; and what is the average unearned income for 1988-89 of someone in: the top 1 per cent., *(b)* the top 5 per cent., *(c)* the top 20 per cent., *(d)* the bottom 70 per cent. and *(e)* the bottom 50 per cent. of taxpayers in 1988-89.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answers 10 June 1988]:* Estimates are given in the tables. Those for 1988-89 are based on a projection of the 1985-86 survey of personal incomes and are provisional. All estimates are subject to a large degree of uncertainty since some investment income on which tax is deducted at source is not reflected in the survey.

Average Investment Income Received per tax unit[1]

Group of Income Tax payers 1988-89	*£ per year*
Top 1 per cent.	22,450
Top 5 per cent.	8,140
Top 20 per cent.	3,250
Bottom 70 per cent.	440
Bottom 50 per cent.	410
All taxpayers	1,050
Non-taxpayers	less than 10
1978-79 at 1988-89 price levels	£ per year
All taxpayers	500
Non-taxpayers	less than 10

[1] married couples and single people.

Total investment income and earned income at 1988-89 price levels (£ billion)

Group of income tax payers	*Investment 1978-79 income*	*Earned income*	*Investment 1988-89 income*	*Earned income*
Top 1 per cent.	2·5	8·0	4·7	13·5
Top 5 per cent.	4·9	26·3	8·5	39·9
Top 20 per cent.	7[illegible]	74·9	13·6	103·6
Bottom 70 per cent.	3·1	103·5	6·5	120·2
Bottom 50 per cent.	2·2	61·1	4·2	70·4

Income Tax and National Insurance

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the average income tax and national insurance paid per tax unit in *(a)* 1978-79 and *(b)* 1988-89 at 1988-89 prices; and what is the average percentage of income paid in (i) income tax and (ii) national insurance in 1988-89.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 14 June 1988]:* In each of the years 1978-79 and 1988-89, about 22 million married couples and single people (including over 2 million elderly) are estimated to be liable to pay either income tax or national insurance contributions or both. Their average liability, at 1988-89 prices, increased from £2,340 in 1978-79 (equivalent to 24·1 per cent. of income) to £2,750 in 1988-89 (equivalent to 21·4 per cent. of income). In 1988-89, their average income tax liability is 15·8 per cent. of income and their national insurance contribution is 5·6 per cent. of income. All estimates for 1988-89 are provisional.

Private Medical Insurance

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) if he will give the estimated cost of tax relief on premiums on private medical insurance if the private medical sector were to achieve a turnover of *(a)* £0·7 billion, *(b)* £1 billion, *(c)* £2 billion, *(d)* £3 billion *(e)* £4 billion per year;

(2) if he will give the estimated cost of full tax relief on all existing private medical insurance over and above that already granted tax relief;

(3) if he will give a table showing the number of tax units, by marginal rate of tax, at present in receipt of private medical insurance paid for *(a)* in whole or *(b)* in part by their employer;

(4) if he will give a table showing the average value of private medical insurance by marginal rate of tax for those in receipt of medical insurance as a fringe benefit and the cost of introducing full tax relief on insurance at each of these marginal rates.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 13 June 1988]*: The table shows the estimated number of directors and higher paid employees (ie those whose earnings plus benefits exceed £8,500 per year) receiving the benefit of employer-paid private medical insurance benefits, the average value of this benefit and the direct revenue cost which would arise if this benefit were exempt from tax.

Net private medical insurance benefits provided by employers—1988-89

	Number (thousands)	*Average value of benefit £*	*Cost of exemption (£ million)*
Basic rate taxpayers	530	280	37
Higher rate taxpayers	255	430	43
TOTAL	785	330	80

A reliable breakdown of the number of recipients of this benefit between those for whom the employer pays all of the premiums and those where only part of the premium is paid is not available since information on employer-paid premiums which are reimbursed in whole or in part by the employee is not reported to the Inland Revenue in all cases.

The cost of granting tax relief on private medical insurance premiums paid by individuals, assuming no behavioural changes, is estimated to be about £150 million in a full year at 1988-89 levels. The cost of relief for private medical insurance premiums at the various alternative levels of turnover for the private medical sector suggested by the hon. Gentleman would depend on the distribution of the alternative level of premiums between policies paid by individuals and by employers and also on the marginal tax rate of the individuals and employers.

Public Expenditure

Mr. Cran: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much public expenditure, expressed in per capita terms, was devoted to Scotland in each of the past 10 years, and what were the comparable per capita figures for *(a)* England, and *(b)* Yorkshire and Humberside.

Mr. Major: The following table shows identifiable public expenditure, expressed in per capita terms, for Scotland and England:

£ per head

	Scotland	*England*
1982-83	1,965·8	1,544·8
1983-84	2,077·9	1,647·9
1984-85	2,200·8	1,758·2
1985-86	2,332·3	1,844·7
1986-87	2,518·5	1,967·7

The term "identifiable expenditure" refers to expenditure that can be identified from official records as having been incurred in a particular country. Total identifiable expenditure accounts for just over 80 per cent. of total public departmental expenditure: it excludes expenditure on defence, overseas aid and other overseas services which are deemed to have been incurred on behalf of the United Kingdom as a whole. It also excludes Government net lending to, and the market and overseas borrowing of, the public corporations (including nationalised industries), due to the difficulty of allocating this finance to expenditure in a particular country.

Figures prior to 1982-83 are not available on a consistent basis because of changes in definition that have taken place between different public expenditure White Papers. Figures for Yorkshire and Humberside are not available.

Mr. Madel: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he expects to alter his Budget strategy and his proposed public expenditure targets for 1988-89 and 1989-90 because of the likely effect of the present drought in the United States of America on British food prices; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Major: No.

Tax Reductions

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will give the percentage and numbers of tax units in each region of Britain that will gain *(a)* less than £1, *(b)* £1 to £2, *(c)* £2 to £3, *(d)* £3 to £5, *(e)* £5 to £10 and *(f)* over £10 per week in 1988-89 in real terms from the measures announced in the Budget.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 10 June 1988]*: Estimates of gains from the Budget changes in income tax allowances, rates and thresholds for the United Kingdom are given in the table. I regret that separate estimates for each region are not available. Estimates are based on a projection of the 1985-86 survey of personal incomes and are provisional.

Number of tax units[1] who gain from the Budget proposals for income tax rates and allowances

Gain per week[2]	*Thousands*	*Percentage*
Up to £1	2,040	10
£1 to £2	4,640	22
£2 to £3	4,220	20
£3 to £5	5,710	27
£5 to £10	3,210	15
Over £10	1,330	6
Total	21,150	100

[1] Married couples and single people.

[2] Compared with the 1987-88 regime indexed by the statutory formula.

Capital Gains Tax

Mr. Marlow: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment he has made of the likely effect on the level of sales and marketability of non-corporate assets, excluding personal homes, of the increase in capital gains tax proposed in the Finance Bill.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 20 June 1988]*: The changes to capital gains tax proposed in the Finance Bill represent a decrease in the CGT rate for basic rate tax payers, and an increase for those who pay tax at the higher rate. In addition, sales of assets are likely to be affected by the reduction in the annual exempt amount, by the rebasing of capital gains to March 1982, by the extension of retirement relief and by the introduction of independent taxation of married couples from April 1990. The net effect of these changes to CGT on sales of assets, other than houses, by the non-corporate sector is estimated to be very small, and negligible in relation to the size of the markets. The marketability of these assets will be unaffected.

Shareholders

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what information he has as to the number of shareholders in each of the last 20 years.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 20 June 1988]*: Surveys carried out by NOP on behalf of the Treasury and stock exchange estimate that 9 million adults owned shares in 1988 and 8½ million adults owned shares in 1987. Figures for earlier years are not available on exactly the same basis, but I understand that surveys carried out by Target Group Index, using a wider definition than the NOP survey, estimated ownership of stocks and shares for 1974 onwards as follows:

Year	*Million adults*
1974	2·2
1975	2·7
1976	2·9
1977	2·7
1978	3·2
1979	3·0
1980	2·9
1981	3·1
1982	2·7
1983	2·5
1984	2·5
1985	4·4
1986	5·3

I have no comparable information for the years before 1974.

TRANSPORT

Drinking and Driving

Sir Bernard Braine: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the mean blood alcohol concentration of drivers killed in road traffic accidents in England and Wales.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The mean blood alcohol concentration of drivers/riders killed in road traffic accidents in England and Wales in 1986, the latest year for which figures are available, was 49 mg/100 ml.

Over 65 per cent. of the driver-rider fatalities had little or no blood alcohol while 17 per cent. had blood alcohol concentration over 150 mg/100 ml.

The illegal level for drivers is 81 mg/100 ml.

Sir Bernard Braine: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the mean blood alcohol concentration of pedestrians killed in road traffic accidents in England and Wales.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The mean blood alcohol concentration of pedestrians killed in road traffic accidents in England and Wales in 1986, the latest year for which figures are available, was 62 mg/100 ml.

Over 60 per cent. of the pedestrian fatalities had little or no blood alcohol while 23 per cent. had a blood alcohol concentration over 150 mg/100 ml.

Fishing Vessels (Light Dues)

Mr. Gregory: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how much money was raised from imposing light dues of fishing vessels during the year ended 1 June; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: Payments of light dues in respect of fishing vessels amounted to some £30,000 up to 1 June. Some £1 million of invoices remain outstanding. I understand that Trinity house is now planning to pursue cases in the courts, and I urge fishing vessel owners who are delaying payment to settle their bills and meet what is a statutory obligation on them.

Channel Tunnel

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a further statement about proposed direct rail links between the Channel tunnel and the north-west.

Mr. David Mitchell: I have nothing to add to the answers I gave my hon. Friend on 22 February 1988, at column *78*, and 2 March 1988, at column *600*.

British Rail (Investment)

Mr. Knapman: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how much British Rail has invested since 1979.

Mr. David Mitchell: The British Railways Board's total investment since 1979 amounts to some £4·2 billion at today's prices; £3·7 billion of that has been invested in the railways.

Departmental Telephone Numbers

Sir Trevor Skeet: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will indicate the reasons for the change in his Department's telephone numbers and what steps have been taken to inform hon. Members in advance of the changes.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The Department of Transport's telephone system is being modernised as part of the wider scheme to modernise the telephone network linking Government offices in the Whitehall area.

The existing large exchange which serves the Department of Transport and others is being phased out and replaced by a number of modern digital exchanges situated in the buildings they serve.

In some cases it has been necessary to keep both the old and the new exchanges running in parallel and when this has happened a new telephone number has been required for Departments.

The switchboard supervisor at the House was informed of new ministerial office numbers in the first week after the change. Arrangements have also been made to direct incoming telephone calls on old numbers to appropriate new numbers.

I regret that no steps were taken to inform Members individually.

On-train Customs Clearance

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is his policy towards the use of on-train customs clearance; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: Section 12 of the Channel Tunnel Act 1987 requires on-train controls on Channel tunnel trains to and from destinations to the north of London, on condition that British Rail provides facilities which are acceptable to the frontier control authorities. For those trains which will terminate at Waterloo, the Government's view is that the most convenient and practicable option will be a quick and effective airport-type control at Waterloo.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if his Department has made an assessment of the economic impact of disallowing the use of on-train customs clearance for trains using the Channel tunnel.

Mr. David Mitchell: The Government are in no position to disallow on-train controls for those trains serving destinations to the north of London, provided that the conditions in section 12 of the Channel Tunnel Act are met.

M23-M27 Link

Mr. Ward: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects the motorway link between the M23 and M27 to be completed.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The Compton to M27 section of the M3 motorway should be completed in 1991. The timing of the final section between Bar End and Compton will depend on the outcome of the recent public inquiry, on which the inspector's report is awaited.

European Community Transport Ministers

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he last met his counterparts from the other European Economic Community states; and what matters were discussed.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: On 20 and 21 June at a formal meeting of Transport Ministers. A major measure to liberalise international road haulage from 1993 was agreed. Other matters discussed were: shipping, including cabotage; road haulage drivers' hours; vehicle weights and dimensions; roadworthiness testing; taxation of goods vehicles; access to the occupations of road haulage and passenger transport operators; road haulage tariffs; the granting of aids to transport; rail transport; and inland waterways transport. Outside the Council meeting there was an informal discussion of air traffic control.

M23

Mr. Higgins: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the answer of 24 June to the right hon. Member for Worthing, *Official Report,* column *772,* regarding the M23, if he will explain what steps were taken by the police and county council between 11.30 am on 10 June and the road inspection on 11 June to arrange for traffic to be diverted or advised not to leave the M25 for the M23, so that the delay to motorists could be avoided.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I have asked for a report. I shall write to my right hon. Friend.

Bus Companies

Mr. John: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many persons are currently employed in each area office in England and Wales to monitor the performance of local bus companies and to follow up any suspected infractions of their licences.

Mr. David Mitchell *[holding answer 1 July 1988]:* The staff effort (expressed as man-years) involved in each traffic area in 1987-88 in licensing bus operators, including monitoring and checking registered local services, and the traffic examiner support for this, is as follows:

#	*Newcastle*	*Leeds*	*Manchester*	*Birmingham*	*Nottingham*	*Cambridge*	*Cardiff*	*Bristol*	*Eastbourne*	*London*	*Total*
Indoor staff	2·4	3·2	4·7	3·3	4·0	1·3	2·4	3·1	3·7	3·4	31·5
Outdoor staff	1·7	9·0	3·0	4·2	1·5	1·4	2·9	1·9	3·2	4·2	33·0
Total	4·1	12·2	7·7	7·5	5·5	2·7	5·3	5·0	6·9	7·6	64·5

There has been no significant overall change in the staffing arrangements since then.

Written Answers to Questions

Tuesday 5 July 1988

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

High Technology (US Control)

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what specific steps he has recently taken to limit extraterritorial control over United Kingdom high technology by the United States Government; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Clark: There is no extraterritorial control on United Kingdom high technology as such. But when an element of United States origin, either physical or intellectual, is present the United States Government make claims, which we have rejected on many occasions, on the ground that United Kingdom sovereignty is infringed. We have made representations on the extraterritorial aspects of United States export controls on technical data, in connection with the review currently being undertaken by the United States Department of Commerce. We have also reached an understanding with the United States on export controls for supercomputers which respects our position on extraterritoriality.

Latin America

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what was the value of total United Kingdom corporate investment in Latin America in *(a)* 1980 and *(b)* the latest year for which figures are available; and in which five Latin American countries most investment was held, in each year.

Mr. Alan Clark: The only available information on United Kingdom corporate investment overseas in particular countries relates to foreign direct investment. Figures giving the book value of direct investment overseas are compiled and published trienally in *Business Monitor* MO4 (Census of Overseas Assets). The latest data, for end-1984, and figures for earlier years are shown in table 2 of that publication. Figures prior to 1984 excluded the direct investment by oil companies. The five Latin American countries in which most United Kingdom foreign direct investment was held at end 1984 were:

Brazil
Mexico
Argentina
Chile
Colombia

South Africa

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what is his Department's detailed assessment of the likely effect of comprehensive economic sanctions against South Africa in regard to *(a)* living standards and prospects for living standards of black South Africans and *(b)* British trade.

Mr. Alan Clark: Assessments indicate that comprehensive economic sanctions against South Africa would be damaging to the interests of all South Africans, irrespective of colour, and to Britain's economy.

Manufactured Goods

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what has been the change in the manufacturing trade balance since 1979; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Clark: Trade in manufactures on a balance of payments basis was in surplus by £2·8 billion in 1979 and in deficit by £6·5 billion in 1987.

Regional Aid

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he has any plans to introduce new measures to boost industry in Britain's regions.

Mr. Atkins: My Department already offers a range of incentives under its recently launched enterprise initiative designed to encourage business development in all areas of the country. Regional selective assistance is available for investment projects undertaken by firms in assisted areas; regional enterprise grants are available for firms in development areas with fewer than 25 employees to support investment and innovation projects; and in all assisted and urban programme areas DTI will pay two thirds of the cost of consultancy projects designed to improve key management functions.

Unleaded Petrol

Mr. Holt: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what percentage of cars imported in each of the past three years are capable without adaptation of using unleaded petrol.

Mr. Alan Clark: The information is not available.

Savoy Hotel plc

Mr. Tim Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will appoint inspectors under section 432 of the Companies Act 1985 to investigate whether the affairs of Savoy Hotel plc are being or have been conducted in a manner which is unfairly prejudicial to some part of its members.

Mr. Maude: I know of no reason for doing so.

Business Development Consultancy Service

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will give the amount of money spent or committed from the business development consultancy service initiative, introduced on 31 March for each standard region in the period 31 March to the most recent date for which information is available.

Mr. Atkins: The business planning and financial and information systems consultancy initiatives were launched on 29 March 1988. So far no consultancies under either initiative have been completed. In the period from 31 March to 17 June 821 cases have been referred to the scheme contractors who are managing the two initiatives. The actual cost to the Department can only be known when the consultancies have been completed but estimates of the commitment for each DTI region* and for Scotland and Wales are as follows:

DTI Region/Country	*Commitment (£,000)*
North East	145
North West	504
Yorkshire and Humberside	252
West Midlands	192
East Midlands	183
South West	113
South East:	
Cambridge	132
London	406
Reading	107
Reigate	151
Scotland	164
Wales	117
Total	2,466

*Data are collected by DTI regions and for Scotland and Wales. DTI regions are similar to standard economic regions except that DTI north-west includes Cumbria and the High Peak district which are in the north and east midlands standard regions respectively and DTI south-east includes the East Anglia standard region.

Export Credits

Miss Lestor: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will list the developing countries which are eligible for export credits from the Export Credits Guarantee Department.

Mr. Alan Clark: On the list of developing countries accepted by the Development Assistance Committee of the OECD, ECGD offers some cover against credit risks in all of the following:

Cyprus
Gibraltar
Greece
Malta
Portugal
Turkey
Yugoslavia

Algeria
Egypt
Morocco
Tunisia

Angola
Benin
Botswana
Burkino Faso
Burundi
Cameroon
Cape Verde
Central African Republic
Chad
Congo
Djibouti
Equatorial Guinea
Ethiopia
Gabon
Ghana
Ivory Coast
Kenya
Lesotho
Madagascar
Malawi
Mali
Mauritania
Mauritius
Namibia
Niger
Nigeria
Rwanda
St. Helena
Sao Tome and Principe
Senegal
Seychelles
Swaziland
Togo
Zimbabwe

Brunei
China
Hong Kong
Indonesia
Korea, Republic
Macao
Malaysia
Mongolia
Philippines
Singapore
Taiwan
Thailand

Afghanistan
Bangladesh
Bhutan
Burma
India
Maldives
Nepal
Pakistan
Sri Lanka

Cook Islands
Fiji
Kiribati
Mauru
New Caledonia
Niue Island
Pacific Islands (United States)
Papua New Guinea
Polynesia, France
Solomon Islands
Tokelau Islands
Tonga
Tuvalu
Vanuatu
Wallis and Futuna
Western Samoa

Anguilla
Antigua
Cayman Islands
Dominica
Grenada
Montserrat
St. Kitts-Nevis
St. Lucia
St. Vincent
Turks and Caicos Islands
British Virgin Islands

Brazil
Chile
Colombia
Ecuador
Falkland Islands
Guiana, French
Paraguay
Peru
Suriname
Uruguay
Venezuela

Bahrain
Iran
Iraq
Israel
Jordan
Kuwait

Oman
Qatar
Saudi Arabia
United Arab Emirates
Yemen Arab Republic
Yemen, PDR

Aruba
Bahamas
Barbados
Belize
Bermuda
Costa Rica
Dominican Republic
Guadeloupe
Guatemala
Honduras
Jamaica
Martinique
Mexico
Netherlands Antilles
Panama
St. Pierre and Miquelon
Trinidad and Tobago

British Steel (Privatisation)

Mr. Page: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when the Government expect to publish the articles of association that will apply to British Steel plc after privatisation.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: A draft of the post-privatisation articles of association has been placed in the Library. It should be noted that the wording may be subject to change; the articles have, for example, yet to be submitted to the stock exchange for approval.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Immigration Appeals System

Mr. Sayeed: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will give the cost to his Department of the immigration appeals system for the last five years.

Mr. Renton: The cost of immigration department staff engaged in preparing and presenting appeals is not separately identifiable. Other associated costs were as follows:

	1983-84 £'000	*1984-85 £'000*	*1985-86 £'000*	*1986-87 £'000*	*1987-88 £'000*
Immigration Appellate Authority	1,307	2,038	2,105	2,290	[1]39
Grant-in-Aid to the United Kingdom Immigrants Advisory Service	767	801	833	943	961

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[1] Responsibility for the immigration appellate authority transferred on 1 April 1987 to the Lord Chancellor's Department. The figures shown relates to residual expenditure from 1986-87.

David Gorton

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department why David Gorton, W90252-D1-28, is being denied normal rights of a remand prisoner at Strangeways prison, Manchester.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Mr. Gorton is not being denied his rights as a remand prisoner. However, because he is in the highest security category, category A, he cannot for security reasons be offered the full range of privileges available in Manchester prison.

Burglary and Violent Crime

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what proportion of *(a)* 17 to 20-year-olds, and *(b)* adults were sentenced to immediate custody for burglary and violence against the person in magistrates' and Crown courts, by police force area in 1986.

Mr. John Patten: Information by police force area about the proportion of offenders aged 17 to 20 and 21 and over sentenced for offences of burglary and violence against the person receiving immediate custody is given in the following table:

Percentage of persons aged 17 and over sentenced for selected indictable offence groups who received immediate custody by police force area, type of court and age group

England and Wales 1986 — *Percentage of total persons sentenced*

	Magistrates' courts				*Crown court*			
	Burglary		*Violence against the person*		*Burglary*		*Violence against the person*	
Police force area	*17-20*	*21 and over*	*17-20*	*21 and over*	*17-20*	*21 and over*	*17-20*	*21 and over*
Avon and Somerset	15	14	5	4	54	55	45	39
Bedfordshire	15	8	14	7	69	74	65	39
Cambridgeshire	19	25	9	9	75	81	56	45
Cheshire	26	22	13	9	80	77	63	46
Cleveland	24	19	17	8	65	54	59	53
Cumbria	22	25	10	9	72	79	54	50
Derbyshire	15	20	11	10	67	74	48	49
Devon and Cornwall	20	24	11	8	65	71	46	55
Dorset	18	24	6	8	71	69	39	33
Durham	29	17	10	7	52	57	57	48
Essex	12	19	7	7	85	78	69	63
Gloucestershire	11	17	4	3	58	69	20	33
Greater Manchester	23	22	12	9	65	63	61	52
Hampshire	19	13	7	6	52	56	43	50

	Magistrates' courts				*Crown court*			
	Burglary		*Violence against the person*		*Burglary*		*Violence against the person*	
Police force area	*17-20*	*21 and over*	*17-20*	*21 and over*	*17-20*	*21 and over*	*17-20*	*21 and over*
Hertfordshire	16	17	8	3	60	69	48	57
Humberside	20	13	10	4	61	56	41	48
Kent	22	30	7	8	51	65	53	48
Lancashire	24	23	7	9	70	67	53	50
Leicestershire	15	24	11	8	66	62	61	49
Lincolnshire	20	12	11	7	50	72	63	51
City of London	20	33	8	7	50	67	—	16
Merseyside	19	20	9	6	67	67	41	45
Metropolitan Police District	21	21	8	9	59	61	47	46
Norfolk	15	24	7	7	73	68	67	47
Northamptonshire	15	10	5	4	66	63	60	57
Northumbria	21	14	7	7	61	55	51	41
North Yorkshire	20	30	2	5	63	67	57	38
Nottinghamshire	9	12	8	5	74	58	58	42
South Yorkshire	11	12	10	5	56	62	55	48
Staffordshire	18	16	8	4	64	65	46	39
Suffolk	15	13	9	5	64	86	58	59
Surrey	16	18	6	3	65	69	36	28
Sussex	20	29	11	9	63	61	55	53
Thames Valley	16	22	9	6	63	70	70	54
Warwickshire	12	19	5	9	69	77	54	55
West Mercia	21	17	10	5	72	77	49	51
West Midlands	15	15	12	7	65	62	62	51
West Yorkshire	11	16	7	8	61	59	46	44
Wiltshire	13	10	6	3	56	80	70	44
Dyfed-Powys	16	14	2	6	55	68	40	38
Gwent	23	27	8	5	59	64	33	49
North Wales	13	13	10	5	75	82	72	60
South Wales	16	14	9	6	69	68	47	48
England and Wales	18	19	9	7	63	64	52	47

Prevention of Terrorism

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the nationalities and corresponding numbers of all the individuals arrested under the international provisions of the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1984.

Mr. Hurd: Between 22 March 1984, when the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1984 came into effect, and 30 June 1988, there were 220 detentions under the Act and the Prevention of Terrorism (Supplemental Temporary Provisions) Order 1984 of people suspected of being concerned in the commission, preparation or instigation of acts of international terrorism. The nationality of those detained is believed to be as shown in the following table.

Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1984
Persons detained in connection with international terrorism
22 March 1984 to 30 June 1988 by country or nationality

Country	[1]*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	[2]*1988*	*Total*
Algeria	5	—	1	—	—	6
Austria	—	—	—	—	1	1
Bahrain	—	5	—	—	—	5
Belgium	—	—	—	1	—	1
Cyprus	1	1	—	—	—	2
Egypt	—	—	—	1	—	1
France	—	2	2	—	—	4
Great Britain	2	9	2	5	—	18
India	—	18	12	7	—	37
Iran	2	2	2	3	4	13
Iraq	—	6	2	3	2	13
Ireland	—	2	1	—	—	3
Israel	1	—	—	4	—	5
Jamaica	1	—	—	—	—	1
Jordan	1	3	6	3	—	13
Kenya	—	—	—	1	—	1
Kuwait	—	1	3	1	—	5
Lebanon	—	—	9	1	—	10
Libya	17	6	1	2	—	26
Mauritius	—	—	—	2	—	2
Morocco	1	2	—	2	—	5
New Zealand	—	1	—	—	—	1
Nigeria	8	1	—	—	—	9
Norway	—	—	—	2	—	2
Pakistan	—	5	2	—	—	7
Saudi Arabia	1	2	—	1	—	4
Seychelles	—	—	—	1	—	1

Country	[1]1984	1985	1986	1987	[2]1988	Total
Singapore	—	—	—	1	—	1
South Africa	1	—	—	—	—	1
Sri Lanka	—	—	1	—	—	1
Sudan	1	—	—	—	—	1
Syria	—	5	1	—	—	6
Turkey	—	—	5	—	—	5
Tunisia	1	1	3	—	—	5
United Arab Emirates	—	—	1	—	—	1
United States of America	1	1	—	—	—	2
West Germany	—	—	1	—	—	1
Total detentions	44	73	55	41	7	220

[1] From 22 March.

[2] To 30 June.

Barlow Clowes

Mr. Tim Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the chief constable of Greater Manchester on inquiries made by the Manchester regional crime squad into the affairs of Barlow Clowes in early 1987; and if he will ascertain what information was passed on to the Department of Trade and Industry following those inquiries.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The nature of inquiries made by the police as a result of information received is an operational matter for the chief officer of the force concerned. I understand that the question of what information may have been passed to the Department of Trade and Industry is among the matters that will be considered in the course of the investigation which my right hon. and noble Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry has invited Sir Godfray Le Quesne, QC, to carry out into his Department's handling of matters relating to the Barlow Clowes group.

Michael Ryan

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received from third parties concerning delays in completing investigations into *(a)* the shootings by the late Michael Ryan and *(b)* the grant and variations to the firearms certificate of the late Michael Ryan; and what reply he has sent.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We have received no such representations in respect of the investigation.

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will call for a report from Mrs. Vickers of the Police Complaints Authority listing any difficulties and delays, and giving reasons for the delays, she is experiencing in the course of her inquiries into the shootings by the late Michael Ryan and the granting and variations to his firearms certificate;

(2) if he will call for a report from Mrs. Vickers of the Police Complaints Authority as to on what date she commenced investigations into complaints arising out of incidents involving the shooting by the late Michael Ryan, in Hungerford on 19 August 1987; on what date she expects to report on her findings; on what date she commenced investigations into complaints regarding the procedures and the circumstances leading up to the grant and variations to the firearms' certificate of the late Michael Ryan; and on what date she expects to conclude her investigations and issue her report.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: No. These are matters for the Police Complaints Authority. I understand that the authority continues to be satisfied with the co-operation which it is receiving from the officers of Thames Valley police who are carrying out the investigation under the supervision of the authority.

Firearms

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many applications for an appeal against a refusal to grant a section 5 firearms licence have been received in respect of *(a)* individuals and *(b)* dealers in firearms in each of the last three years for which figures are available; for the same years how many (i) individuals and (ii) dealers in firearms have had their licences terminated and of those terminated how many were restored in each case on appeal; and what was the cost to public funds of such appeals.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: There is no right of appeal against the refusal of an application for, or revocation of, a section 5 authority, though any representations are carefully considered. Figures for the number of authorities revoked are not available in the form requested and could be produced only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many applications for section 5 firearms certificates have been received from *(a)* individuals and *(b)* dealers in firearms in each of the last three years; and for the same period how many applications have been made for renewal of such a certificate from (i) individuals and (ii) dealers in firearms.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The information is not available in the form requested and could be produced only at disproportionate cost.

Glasgow Passport Office

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has any proposals to make it easier to contact the Glasgow passport office on the telephone; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: The number of exchange lines for incoming calls is being increased from six to 12 over the next two months. My reply to the hon. Member's question on 23 June, at column *679*, outlined the measures that are being taken to reduce the present delays in handling passport applications which are causing the telephone inquiry system to be overloaded.

Asylum

Mr. Lawrence: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the most recent information he has on the numbers of asylum applicants in Western Europe.

Mr. Renton: The latest information is as follows:

Numbers of asylum-seekers in Western European countries from 1984-87 by country of application

	1984	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*Total 1984-87*
Austria	7,200	6,700	8,650	11,400	33,950
Belgium	3,650	5,300	7,650	6,000	22,600
Denmark	4,300	8,700	9,300	2,100	24,400
France	15,900	25,800	23,400	24,800	89,900
Federal Republic of Germany	35,300	73,850	99,650	57,400	266,200
Netherlands	2,600	5,650	5,850	14,000	28,100
Norway	300	850	2,700	8,600	12,450
Sweden	12,000	14,450	14,600	18,500	59,550
Switzerland	7,450	9,700	8,550	10,900	36,600
United Kingdom	3,850	5,450	4,800	4,500	18,600
Total	92,550	156,450	185,150	158,200	592,350

Life Sentence Statistics

Ms. Gordon: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what proportion of life sentences are mandatory and what proportion are non-mandatory; what is the average length of a mandatory life sentence; what is the average length of a non-mandatory life sentence; and how many people are serving non-mandatory life sentences;

(2) how many people sentenced to non-mandatory life sentences have been in prisons for 10 years but under 12 years, between 12 and 15 years and over 15 years respectively.

Mr. John Patten *[holding answer 20 June 1988]:* Of the 244 offenders given life sentences in 1986, 73 per cent. were convicted of murder, for which life is the mandatory sentence, and 27 per cent. for other offences.

The average time served under sentence in prison department establishments in England and Wales by those released on licence from a life sentence in the three years 1984 to 1986 was about 10⅔ years. The average was fractionally higher for those serving life sentences for offences other than murder, possibly because of the higher risk of reoffending associated with some offences of rape, manslaughter and arson and reflected in the court's original decision to impose a life sentence.

The average figures do not take account of the longest periods being served by some of those given life sentences following the abolition of capital punishment in 1965 who have not yet been released. They also exclude persons who have died in custody or been discharged for other reasons. My right hon. Friend has made it clear that those convicted of the most heinous murders can normally expect to serve at least 20 years in prison and in some cases even longer; and no life sentence prisoner is released, no matter how long he or she has served, unless my right hon. Friend is personally as satisfied as it is reasonably possible to be that there is no risk to the public.

On 31 March 1988, 521 prisoners were serving life sentences for offences other than murder. Information about their time served is given in the following table:

Years spent under sentence[1] for the original life sentence	*Number of prisoners[2]*
Not released on licence	
Under ten	338
Ten and under twelve	63
Twelve up to fifteen	53
Over fifteen	47
Recalled from licence	20

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[1] Excluding any time spent on remand in custody or in non-prison department establishments.

[2] The figures are those recorded centrally and are approximate.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Development Aid

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what was the proportion of the United Kingdom's gross national product devoted to overseas development *(a)* in 1960, and *(b)* for the latest annual period for which figures are available.

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what was the proportion of the United Kingdom's gross product devoted to overseas development *(a)* in 1960 and *(b)* for the latest annual period for which figures are available.

Mr. Chris Patten: The proportion of the United Kingdom's gross national product devoted to official development assistance was 0·56 per cent. in 1960 and 0·28 per cent. in 1987.

Africa

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will restore cuts made since 1980 in the real value of United Kingdom aid to the front-line states and the Southern African Development Co-ordination Conference.

Mr. Chris Patten: We are committed to the maintenance of substantial aid programmes in the region within an overall aid budget that is planned to grow in real terms. Aid expenditure to the member states of SADCC was £106·3 million in 1986 and £129·7 million in 1987.

Rain Forests

Mr. Jack: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on current Government support for programmes designed to protect the rain forests.

Mr. Chris Patten: We are working with others internationally and through our aid programme to promote the sustainable management of this important resource. As I indicated on 9 May, in reply to the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes), at column *9*, our bilateral forestry projects include schemes in Cameroon, Sierra Leone, Ghana, Brazil and the Ivory Coast.

CORRIGENDA

1. *Official Report*, 21 June 1988, Written Answers, c. *483:*
Under the heading "Civil Defence", delete Mr. Redmond's question and substitute the following:

"To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make it his policy to publish the report on the evaluation of the civil defence region No. 2 REGEX exercise."

2. *Official Report*, 23 June 1988, Written Answers, c. *671:*
At line 40, before "Opencast Coal Mining" insert the following:

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many of those declining a YTS place had a benefit reduction on grounds of voluntary unemployment for each month between June 1987 and May 1988; and how many of those leaving YTS early had a benefit reduction on grounds of voluntary unemployment for each month between June 1987 and May 1988.

Mr. Portillo: I have been asked to reply.

The numbers of people who had their supplementary benefit reduced for refusing a youth training scheme place, or for leaving a youth training scheme course early, in each four-week period between 6 May 1987 and 8 April 1988 are as follows:

For 4 weeks ending	*Refusal of place*	*Early leavers*
1987		
2 June	6	85
30 June	9	67
28 July	4	65
25 August	3	80
22 September	2	64
20 October	1	85
17 November	8	94
15 December	10	65
1988		
12 January	6	42
9 February	5	68
8 March	3	59
8 April (see note 3)	—	55

Notes:

1. The figures are provisional and subject to amendment.
2. No figures are available for periods after 8 April 1988.
3. The period to 8 April covers just over four weeks to run to the end of the end of the supplementary benefit scheme.

3. *Official Report*, 23 June 1988, Written Answers, c. *726:*
At end of column, insert the following:

Private Operations

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will place in the Library a copy of the report on certain expenditures by North Staffordshire and Shropshire health authorities on private operations, being prepared for him by his Department's statutory auditor, group 4, Birmingham, when that report is completed; and if he will make a statement.

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give the date of publication of the audit report of the plan by the West Midlands regional health authority for North Staffordshire and Shropshire district health authorities to purchase private operations; and if he will make it his policy to place a copy of the report in the Library as soon as it is available.

Mrs. Currie *[holding answer 7 June 1988]:* The statutory audits of North Staffordshire and Shropshire district health authorities are due to take place over the next few months. Audits take place annually and are not confined to specific areas of expenditure. Statutory auditors' reports normally consist simply of the formal certification of a health authority's annual accounts. They contain additional comments only when the auditors wish to raise matters which they feel are of particular concern. While the audits have yet to take place, there is no reason to believe that the pilot project to make use of the private sector facilities for treatment for National Health Service patients will be one.

The advice issued to health authorities by the Department is that they should normally take any issues raised formally in such reports in open session. We do not consider it necessary, therefore, to place copies of the reports in the Library of the House.

Nurses

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what plans he has to reduce student nurses' registered service contributions on National Health Service wards;

(2) what plans he has made to deal with the staffing gap that will result from making student nurses supernumerary on National Health Service wards;

(3) what percentage of the time student nurses presently spend working directly on wards in National Health Service hospitals is devoted purely to training as opposed to giving patient care; and how this calculation is made;

(4) by what date state enrolled nurse training will be phased out;

(5) whether all those state enrolled nurses eligible for conversion courses to train for qualifications to become state registered nurses will have those courses made available to them on request;

(6) what is the level of the student nurse bursary being proposed in plans to implement Project 2000;

(7) if he will make a statement as to the proposed role, annual remuneration and training programme to be carried out by nurse helpers, as defined in Project 2000.

Mr. Newton: In accepting the broad thrust of the project 2000 proposals put forward by the United

Kingdom Central Council for Nursing, Midwifery and Health Visiting, my right hon. Friend indicated that further work needed to be done before final decisions could be reached on some of the proposals. We need to be satisfied that the UKCC's proposals for widening the entry gate to qualified nurse training and the development of proposals for the new support worker grade will successfully make good the gap in the work force resulting from the fall in school leavers, the cessation of enrolled nurse training and the lower rostered contribution of students.

Implementation of Project 2000 will be phased over a number of years, with the new support worker grade being phased in, in parallel with the phasing out of enrolled nurse training. It is likely that the support worker will undertake a variety of roles, but the exact nature of the work and the training required have yet to be determined.

My right hon. Friend made it clear that agreement to the cessation of enrolled nurse training would be dependent on the successful outcome of the further work that I have referred to. Meanwhile, health authorities will be encouraged to expand the already growing number of courses for enrolled nurses to convert to the first (registered nurse) level.

We shall set the size of the proposed student nurse bursary, having regard to the level of support for other students among other factors, when we have received firm proposals from the statutory nursing bodies as to the duration and shape of the new courses.

In work for the UKCC, management consultants Price Waterhouse estimated the current service contribution of student nurses to be 59 per cent. In arriving at this figure, it took account not only of the time spent in clinical placements as part of the establishment, but the relative efficiency of a student compared with a permanent member of the work force. While Project 2000 will not significantly lessen students' clinical experience, placements in the clinical environment will in future be determined by the educational needs of the students. The detail, and therefore the extent of the reduction in the service contribution which can be rostered and relied upon, has yet to be determined.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

India

Miss Lestor: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs on what basis it was decided to substitute local cost grants to India for debt relief to that country; and if he will give figures for the amounts of such grants for each year between 1978 and the latest year for which figures are available, both the calendar and financial years, and both for commitments and disbursements.

Mr. Chris Patten: As provided for under the terms of UNCTAD resolution 165, Her Majesty's Government and the Government of India agreed in January 1979 that local cost grants should be provided for India as an equivalent measure to the retrospective adjustment of the terms of past British aid loans. This has enabled the British aid programme to finance poverty-alleviating projects and to increase the effectiveness of projects involving British exports. Prior to 1979, no such provision for local costs support existed.

The amounts of such local costs grants, since 1979 when they commenced, and commitments and disbursements, by calendar year are as follows:

£ million

Calendar years	*Local cost grant agreement*	*Commitments*	*Expenditure*
1979	51·2	—	—
1980	33·2	9·5	7·9
1981	37·3	85·1	39·3
1982	39·0	110·6	31·7
1983	38·4	16·4	59·4
1984	37·7	100·4	57·9
1985	36·0	—	51·8
1986	34·0	—	28·9
1987	69·6	43·1	14·8

Only disbursement figures are available for financial years, and the amounts were as follows:

£ million

Financial years	*Disbursements*
1979-80	14·6
1980-81	28·4
1981-82	38·3
1982-83	49·1
1983-84	50·6
1984-85	45·4
1985-86	39·3
1986-87	31·4

Debt Relief

Miss Lestor: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will define and describe the measures classified as debt relief in British aid statistics, and give amounts of debt relief given under each measure in each of the years between 1978 and the latest year for which figures are available, in both calendar and financial years.

Mr. Chris Patten: The measures classified as debt relief in "British Aid Statistics" are defined and described in paragraphs 21 and 22 (p XII) of the "Introduction to British Aid Statistics 1982-86". Figures for debt relief, as published in "British Aid Statistics" on a calendar year basis, are as follows (financial year figures are not readily available and could be provided only at disproportionate cost):

	Debt Cancellation £000	*Debt Rescheduling £000*	*Debt Refinancing £000*
1978	2,100	—	5,818
1979	17,928	—	19,194
1980	68,403	—	7,929
1981	30,377	—	10,158
1982	22,444	—	3,327
1983	23,093	1,002	1,634
1984	26,127	14,192	—
1985	26,463	3,493	1,585
1986	26,660	2,527	—
1987	24,406	—	1,512

PRIME MINISTER

United Nations

Q42. **Mr. Cryer:** To ask the Prime Minister when she next expects to pay an official visit to the United Nations headquarters.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to do so.

Harrow on the Hill

Q71. **Mr. Robert G. Hughes:** To ask the Prime Minister when she next expects to pay an official visit to Harrow on the Hill in the county of Middlesex.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to do so.

Mid-Kent

Q121. **Mr. Rowe:** To ask the Prime Minister whether she has any plans to visit mid-Kent.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to do so.

Engagements

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 5 July.

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 5 July.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 5 July.

Mr. Atkinson: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 5 July.

Mr. Cran: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 5 July.

Mr. Skinner: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 5 July.

Mr. Sumberg: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 5 July.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 5 July.

Miss Lestor: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 5 July.

The Prime Minister: This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House I shall be having further meetings later today.

Special Stamps

Mr. Churchill: To ask the Prime Minister if she will discuss the Post Office Plans to commemorate the 150th anniversary of the British invention of photography by William Henry Fox Talbot in 1839, by the issue of a special set of stamps.

The Prime Minister: Special stamp issues are a matter for the Post Office which, I understand, has decided not to include this event in its special stamp programme for 1989.

Pesticides

Dr. Godman: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list the six Departments whose joint approval is required for pesticides, as indicated in the answer of 27 June, *Official Report,* column *85;* and if she will specify the precise responsibility of each Department concerned.

The Prime Minister: The approval of pesticides under part III of the Food and Environment Protection Act is the joint responsibility of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, the Department of Health and Social Security, the Department of the Environment, the Department of Employment and the Scottish and Welsh Offices.

No precise responsibilities for individual Departments are laid down in legislation, but Departments consider their normal areas of responsibility in exercising their functions in relation to pesticides.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

City Technology Colleges

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will name the companies that have now made definite commitments to fund the establishment of city technology colleges; which individual city technology college or colleges they will be funding; and how much they will pay in *(a)* cash and *(b)* goods and services towards these colleges.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: It is for the sponsors to decide when to make public their commitment to sponsoring a CTC. Those which have already done so and the CTCs concerned are:

Hanson plc, which has pledged £1 million towards the establishment of Kingshurst CTC. A matching contribution of £1 million is being raised by Lucas Industries, and a significant number of other companies.

Sponsorship of £1 million has been provided by Mr. Harry Djanogly for the Nottingham CTC. Additional sponsorship of £0·4 million has already been raised by other companies.

BAT Industries has provided sponsorship of £1 million for a Teesside CTC. Additional financial support is being given by Cameron Hall Developments, British Steel and the Davy Corporation, taking the private sector commitment to nearly £1·7 million.

In addition, Dixons plc, the Philip and Pauline Harris Trust, the Mercers' Company and Thamesmead Town have each announced plans to provide sponsorship of at least £1 million each towards three more CTCs; and the CTC Trust has announced that Mr. Geoffrey Leigh, chairman of Allied London Properties, has made a personal donation towards the establishment of a CTC in Dartford.

Detailed discussions are taking place with a number of prospective sponsors, who are not yet ready to declare their hand, but who are committed in principle to providing financial support of at least £1 million. Altogether about £20 million has been pledged by the private sector to the CTC programme. In addition, the experience of Kingshurst and Nottingham has shown that local companies will come forward to make offers of goods and services following the initial announcements about individual CTCs.

Advanced Polymers

Sir Trevor Skeet: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what funds are spent by *(a)* the Medical Research Council and *(b)* the National Health Service on the development of advanced polymers and polymeric biomaterials for the close and continued association of such materials with human tissue.

Mr. Jackson: The Medical Research Council is not funding any research in this subject. The council is, however, interested in the clinical acceptability and applicability of such materials.

Since 1981 the Science and Engineering Research Council has supported a special programme in medical engineering, costing approximately £900,000 a year. An important component of this programme has been the development and use of polymers, including research on: polymers designed for drug delivery, the haemocompatibility of polymers, to evaluate their potential for use in cardiovascular devices, and the value of using polymeric materials for wound management.

I understand that the DHSS is not aware of any research being funded by the National Health Service in this area.

Foetal Tissue Transplants

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether his Department or the Medical Research Council were in any way involved in the provision of material for use in or financing for recent operations at the Midland Centre for Neurosurgery and Neurology which involved the use of foetal tissue in transplant operations as treatment for Parkinson's disease; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: Neither the Department nor the Medical Research Council was involved in any way with these recent operations at the Midland Centre for Neurosurgery. Both the Department and the MRC are keeping in touch with developments concerning this research.

School Terms and Holidays

Mr. Key: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) if, on the basis of the information available to him, he will list secondary school term and holiday dates for each member state of the European Community; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he has any plans to encourage the harmonisation of school terms and holidays between the United Kingdom and other members of the European Community; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dunn: The information requested is not available. My right hon. Friend has no plans to encourage harmonisation dates within the European Community. In England and Wales, responsibility for determining these matters rests with local education authorities and governing bodies of schools and the Government have no plans to change these arrangements.

Clinical/Medical Research

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what assessment he has made of the implications for funding levels of maintaining simultaneously both a system of clinical/medical research separated from teaching activities and, in certain cases, a system of clinical/medical research linked to teaching in hospitals; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: No assessment has been made of the costs of establishing and maintaining two separate systems of clinical/medical research: one linked with teaching and one not so linked. Under present arrangements the Medical Research Council—and other sponsors of medical research—consider the appropriate location for particular research projects: in university departments; in units and institutes linked with universities; or elsewhere. Medical researchers from all these locations may have teaching responsibilities.

Benefits

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will detail the number of *(a)* claimants and *(b)* dependants claiming each means-tested benefit for which he is responsible.

Mrs. Rumbold: The Department is responsible for the assisted places scheme, the music and ballet scheme and for mandatory awards. The latest available number of pupils and students claiming these benefits are giving in the following table:

Benefit	*Claimants*	*Year*
Music and Ballet	496	1987-88
Assisted Places Scheme	24,696	1987-88
Mandatory Award Holders[1]	403,110	1986-87

[1] Of these about 8,000 claimed additional allowances for dependents.

Local education authorities operate their own schemes of assistance to pupils, for example, school clothing, and are required to offer free school meals to certain pupils. The numbers receiving free school meals in October 1987 were 1,101,132

Details of the take-up of other schemes run by local education authorities are not available.

Research and Development

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement about the future of the Houghton research centre in the light of the working party report on publicly funded R and D, published on 4 March; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: The council of AFRC has over the past months carefully considered advice from a number of sources on the future development of its institute for animal health. At its meeting on 14 June the council decided to consolidate the institute over a five-year period on to one major site at Compton, with a centre for exotic diseases at Pirbright. This decision, which is subject to the provision of adequate restructuring funds, will involve moving poultry disease research from Houghton to Compton. The council believes that this development is essential to enhance scientific and operational efficiency and secure a strong science base for the benefit of the industry and the nation.

SOCIAL SERVICES

AIDS

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he has any plans to step up the campaign to alert the public to the dangers of AIDS and to promote better protective measures; whether he will liaise with the broadcasting authorities to seek to adjust their rules so as to permit the broadcasting of more informative advertisements; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: Responsibility for carrying forward the mass media AIDS public education campaign rests with the Health Education Authority.

The authority's operational plan for 1988-89 includes provision for further campaigns aimed at the general public and specific groups in society. These will build on progress made so far.

The content of advertising is a matter for the broadcasting authority concerned, and I am not aware that the provision of appropriate information is precluded by the existing guidelines.

Child Abuse

Mr. George: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how much is spent by his Department on funding research into child abuse, physical and sexual; how many such projects are funded; and if he will give the figures for each of the last five years.

Mr. Newton: The Department expects to spend a total of £157,200 in 1988 on research into child abuse: £90,600 will be spent on two projects concerned only with child sexual abuse, £16,600 on a project concerned with physical abuse and £50,000 on three projects researching both types of abuse. Figures for the last five years are as follows:

1987 £58,200—2 projects—physical and sexual abuse.
1986 £22,700—2 projects—physical abuse.
1985 £14,000—2 projects—physical abuse.
1984 £10,800—1 project—physical abuse.
1983 £3,200—1 project—physical abuse.

Benefits

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many applications for *(a)* attendance allowance and *(b)* special hardship allowance are received daily at the Department of Health and Social Security centre at Norcross, Blackpool; what is the average processing time for each benefit; and how many applications for each benefit were waiting to be processed on the most recent date for which figures are available.

Mr. Scott: Special hardship allowance was replaced by reduced earnings allowance in October 1986. Claims are dealt with by local offices. The information requested for attendance allowance is in the table.

Attendance allowance: claims at attendance allowance unit, Norcross, Blackpool

	Claims received per day	*Claims awaiting decision (at 26 May 1988)*	*Average processing time (weeks)*
Initial	1,510	[1]64,944	8·1
Renewal	240	10,108	8·0
Total	1,750	[1]75,052	

[1] Includes 55,848 claims undergoing preliminary processing at Regional Offices.

Incomes

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish a table showing the increase in real income between 1981 and 1985 broken down by *(a)* family type and *(b)* economic status for tables A1, 2, 3; C1, 2, 3; D1, 2, 3; and F1, 2, 3, from "Households Below Average Income: A Statistical Analysis".

Mr. Scott *[holding answer 21 June 1988]:* I regret that a substantive reply can be provided only at disproportionate cost.

NHS Scientific Staff

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what steps are being taken to maintain high quality scientific staff in the National Health Service.

Mr. Newton: It is for individual employing authorities in selecting candidates for appointment to ensure that the high quality of their scientific staff is maintained. The management side of the scientific and professional staffs council has agreed to undertake a review of the recruitment and retention of these staff in the light of service needs.

Benefit Appeals

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will list in the *Official Report* for each tribunal area the number of outstanding appeals currently waiting to be heard and the average length of wait for appeals to be heard;

(2) how many people are waiting for their appeal tribunal to be heard; and what is the average length of time before an appeal is heard.

Mr. Portillo: The national administrative statistics for social security appeal tribunals, which are the source for average durations between the lodging of appeals and hearing, are not disaggregated for areas smaller than a social security region. The latest available figures for the quarter ending 30 September 1987 are given in the table.

Social Security Appeal Tribunals—All benefits quarter ending 30 September 1987

	Total number of Appeals held	*Average time from lodgement to hearing (weeks)*
Great Britain	124,027	23·2
North Eastern Region	23,160	22·8
London North Region	12,508	21·1
London South Region	11,303	23·2
Midlands Region	19,171	25·4
North Western Region	19,516	22·7
Wales and South Western Region	11,572	19·6
Scotland	26,797	26·3

Mobility Allowance

Mr. Peter Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will seek to amend the mobility allowance regulations to permit payments to children aged between two and five years.

Mr. Scott: We shall bear in mind the representations which my hon. Friend has made for the reduction of the lower age limit for mobility allowance when we examine the performance of existing benefits in the light of the new information coming from the surveys of disability, undertaken for us by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys. These surveys have covered both adults and children, whether physically or mentally handicapped, and whether at home or in communal establishments, and a series of reports will be published from next September onwards.

Disabled Persons (Legislation)

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services when section 7 of the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986 will be implemented.

Mr. Scott: Officials resumed discussions with local authority representatives on section 7 on 4 July. The timetable for implementation will depend on the outcome of these and subsequent discussions and on discussions with health authority representatives.

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services which parts of the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986 have been fully implemented; and what assessment he has made of the Act's effectiveness.

Mr. Scott: To date sections 5, 6, 9, 10, 16, 17 and 18 have been fully implemented. As part of its current work programme the social services inspectorate is gathering information about the way in which the Act is being implemented by local authorities.

Brain Injury

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what plans he has to ensure that training in brain injury rehabilitation and behaviour modification is included in basic nurse training.

Mrs. Currie: The special requirements of nursing in brain injury form one part of basic nurse training. Additional specialist training is available in neurosurgical and neurological nursing. Twelve centres are currently approved to run those post-basic courses, of which seven provide courses for enrolled nurses.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) whether he has received the report by the Medical Disability Society "The Management of Traumatic Brain Injury"; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what plans he has to ensure the provision of appropriate day care facilities for people recovering from traumatic brain injuries who are living at home;

(3) whether he plans to establish any specialist brain injury rehabilitation units; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: We welcome the report by the Medical Disability Society as an important contribution to the continuing debate about services for brain-injured people. We are aware of concern about existing services for people who have suffered traumatic brain injury. Officials are considering the report's recommendations about those services and examining a number of options regarding the best way to take the matter forward.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) how many full-time specialists, clinical psychologists and nurses are engaged in the rehabilitation of people with traumatic head injuries;

(2) if he will list the special head injury units within the National Health Service;

(3) what information his Department holds on the number of brain injured patients who are routinely cared for in acute surgical wards long after need for surgery has passed.

Mrs. Currie: I regret that this information is not available centrally.

Mentally Ill Patients

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what information his Department holds on the number of mentally ill people who are routinely cared for in acute surgical wards long after their need for surgery has passed.

Mrs. Currie: I regret that this information is not collected centrally.

Independent Living Fund

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the trustees of the Independent Living Fund.

Mr. Scott: The trustees are:

Mr. Peter Cadbury
Dame Mary Donaldson
Miss Elizabeth Gallagher
Mrs. Winifred Tumin
Sir Michael Herries
Mr. Joe Hennessey
Mr. Stewart Lyon
Mr. Jack McGregor
Miss Gillian Micklewright
Miss Pauline Thompson

Foetal Tissue

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make it his policy to ensure that women whose foetuses may be stored in tissue banks following abortions are specifically informed of that fact before the operations is performed.

Mr. Newton: We have no plans to do so, but we will of course consider any recommendations that the committee which has been set up to review the Peel code of practice may make in this respect.

Mr. McLoughlin: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services, pursuant to his reply of 21 June, *Official Report*, columns *541-42*, on how many occasions between February and December 1987, the medical ethical committee to which he refers met to discuss the further information about the proposals before it to use foetal tissue in transplant operations.

Mr. Newton: I understand the ethical committee did not discuss Professor Hitchcock's research except at the meetings referred to.

Mr. McLoughlin: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services whether any formal vote was taken by the medical ethical committee to which he refers in his reply of 21 June, *Official Report*, columns *541-42*, on the question whether permission should be granted to Professor Hitchcock to allow him to use foetal tissue for transplant purposes.

Mr. Newton: No. I understand that the chairman of the committee took the view that a formal vote was unnecessary because there was a clear consensus in favour of granting approval to Professor Hitchcock.

Mr. McLoughlin: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will place in the Library a copy of the minutes of the proceedings of the medical ethical committee to which he refers in his answer to the hon. Member for Derbyshire, West of 21 June, *Official Report*, columns *541-42*, which gave permission for foetal tissue to be used in transplant operations.

Mr. Newton: I refer my hon. Friend to my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Hexham (Mr. Amos) on 14 June at columns *179-80*.

Medical Ethics Committees

Mr. McLoughlin: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services on how many occasions in the last 12-month period for which figures are available, advice or guidance was given by his Department to medical ethical committees about the value or ethical acceptability of proposals put before them.

Mr. Newton: Advice to ethical committees on the ethical acceptability of proposals put before them is a matter for the professions concerned and the appropriate professional bodies. The Department's guidance on the establishment of ethical committees (circular HSC(IS)153, a copy of which is in the Library), endorsed the recommendations on clinical research of the Royal College of Physicians.

Opticians

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if any action will now be taken against those opticians referred to in his answer of 2 February, *Official Report*, column *590*, now that it is known that no procedure exists to pass the matter to the ophthalmic service committee of Manchester family practitioner committee.

Mrs. Currie: The ophthalmic service committee of the Manchester family practitioner committee investigated allegations of breaches of the terms of service involving the opticians referred to in my earlier reply. It found that the opticians were not in breach of their terms of service and their decisions were later endorsed by Manchester family practitioner committee.

Royal Ear Hospital

Mrs. Rosie Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what plans exist to close the royal ear hospital at University hospital London; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: The hon. Member is probably referring to University College hospital. I understand that Bloomsbury health authority is examining the future of the royal ear hospital. One option being considered is the transfer of its services to the royal national throat, nose and ear hospital and to University College hospital. Any proposals will in due course be the subject of public consultation by the health authority: the hon. Member may wish to write to its chairman for further information.

National Insurance Pensions

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will detail on an annual basis the increase in the real value of national insurance pensions over *(a)* the period 1974 to 1979 and *(b)* the period 1979 to 1987.

Mr. Scott: The information requested is in the table.

Real-terms Increase in Retirement Pension at Uprating date 1974 to 1988

Uprating	*Increase (per cent.)*
July 1974	13·7
April 1975	−1·4
November 1975	2·6
November 1976	0·1
November 1977	1·2
November 1978	3·1
November 1979	1·8
November 1980	1·0
November 1981	−2·6
November 1982	4·4
November 1983	−1·1
November 1984	0·2
November 1985	1·4
July 1986	−0·6
April 1987	−2·2
April 1988	0·2

Means-tested Benefits

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will detail the value of *(a)* claimants and *(b)* dependants claiming each of the means-tested benefits for which he is responsible.

Mr. Portillo: Table G of the "Households Below Average Income" (copies of which are in the Library) shows the percentage contribution of income-related benefits to the incomes of individuals within households below various percentiles of the income-distribution. Details are also shown of the particular contributions of supplementary benefit and housing benefit. Similar figures for family income supplement cannot be provided on a statistically reliable basis.

Departmental Offices

Mrs. Maureen Hicks: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if, when he considers the relocation of offices of his Department out of London, he will consider Wolverhampton as a potential location.

Mr. Moore: We will consider all potential locations which will enable us to improve efficiency.

Housing Benefit

Mr. Soley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what was the average housing benefit payment for rent rebates, rent allowances and rate rebates, and the number of recipients in each case, for the years 1979 to 1987; and what is the current estimate for 1988.

Mr. Portillo *[holding answer 10 June 1988]:* The information requested is in the table. Prior to 1982-83 assistance with housing costs was through the supplementary benefit scheme administered by the Department and the rebate and allowance scheme run by the Department of the Environment. Housing benefit from the Department was introduced for some supplementary benefit claimants in November 1982 with full implementation for all claimants following from April 1983. The data for the years before 1982-83 are based upon the rebate and allowance scheme only. The data for 1982-83 combine information from both the old and new schemes.

Housing Benefit: Recipients and Average Amounts 1979-1988

	Rent rebate		*Rent allowance*		*Rate rebate*	
	numbers ('000's)	*amount (£ annum)*	*numbers ('000's)*	*amount (£ annum)*	*numbers ('000's)*	*amount (£ annum)*
1979-80	1,205	197·51	220	181·82	3,065	65·25
1980-81	1,330	238·35	240	200·00	3,350	79·70
1981-82	1,590	312·58	250	200·00	3,700	101·08
1982-83	3,050	304·59	260	284·62	5,320	126·50
1983-84	3,735	530·12	1,015	528·08	7,020	173·79
1984-85	3,745	572·76	1,080	637·04	7,230	188·11
1985-86	3,710	618·33	1,150	726·09	7,020	215·10
1986-87	3,720	650·81	1,180	802·54	7,050	234·04
1987-88	3,760	681·65	1,250	845·60	7,030	250·36
1988-89	3,430	799·43	1,055	1,070·14	5,845	237·49

Notes

1. The number of recipients is the estimated average number receiving benefit.
2. There is a significant overlap between the three categories tabled as most households receiving help with rent will also be receiving help with rates.

Mr. Soley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many recipients of housing benefit there were for Great Britain as a whole prior to the April 1988 changes for *(a)* home owners, *(b)* council tenants and *(c)* others and for (i) pensioners (ii) families with children and (iii) others, in respect of rent rebates, rent allowances and rate rebates; and what is the current estimate for 1988-89.

Mr. Portillo *[holding answer 10 June 1988]*: Numbers of housing benefit recipients by tenure type and household type for 1987-88 and 1988-89 are given in the tables.

Table 1—Tenure type

000s

	1987-88	*1988-89*
Owner-occupiers (rate rebates)	2,336	1,645
Public sector tenants (rent rebates)	3,761	3,430
Private sector tenants (rent allowance)	1,250	1,055

Table 2—Household type

000s

	Rent rebates		*Rent allowances*		*Rate rebates*	
	1987-88	*1988*	*1987-88*	*1988-89*	*1987-88*	*1988-89*
Pensioners	2,086	1,980	633	530	4,044	3,465
Families with children	1,030	990	214	200	1,703	1,500
Others	645	465	403	320	1,283	875
Total	3,761	3,435	1,250	1,050	7,030	5,840

Notes:

1. Figures rounded to nearest 5,000.
2. Pensioners with children are listed once only, under "Pensioners".
3. Figures for both years are derived from a computer simulation model. Those for 1987-88 are consistent with the 1988 public expenditure White Paper; whilst those for 1988-89 have been remodelled and allow for the effects of the Budget and the capital rule changes announced on 27 April. They do not allow for the extra numbers who will receive a transitional payment.
4. Our estimate for the total number of claimants receiving some form of housing benefit in 1988-89 is 6,150,000.

WALES

Fish Farming

Mr. Geraint Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he has any plans to improve the state of fish farming in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: Our objective is to assist the development of shellfish cultivation and fish farming on a viable basis, subject to an adequate statutory framework of controls relating to environmental considerations, such as water abstraction and discharge, and to fish disease.

Valleys Programme

Mr. Murphy: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) if he will breakdown, under expenditure sub-heads, the £400 million for housing which he recently announced for the south Wales valleys;

(2) if he will indicate the basis on which his housing renovation grants in the recently announced valleys initiative will be made; and what percentage of these grants will have to be met by those applying for such grants.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: In the three years of the programme for the valleys we expect to see some £457 million spent on housing. Broadly we expect this expenditure to be as follows:

	£ million
Private sector renovation	107
Area-based renovation (enveloping and block schemes)	50
New build	300

The funding for private sector renovation will be made available by way of the allocation we make to housing authorities, supported with additional allocations for block schemes and enveloping. Grants made by local authorities to individual home owners are generally made at the rate of 75 per cent. of the cost of eligible works, but can be at 90 per cent. in cases of financial hardship. No contribution is sought from home owners for enveloping schemes.

SCOTLAND

Departmental Image

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he has appointed design consultants with a remit to prepare a corporate image promotion campaign for his Department.

Mr. Rifkind: No. The agencies and consultants who have shown an interest in the initiative have until 15 July to respond to the written brief.

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what funds he intends to allocate from his departmental budget in order to conduct an advertising campaign to promote the corporate image of his Department.

Mr. Rifkind: As I have already explained in correspondence with the hon. Gentleman, I cannot at this stage say what the cost of the campaign might be. We shall not be in a position to determine that until we have considered the ideas of the firms which are interested and decided how the best value for money is to be secured.

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what discussions have taken place between his Department and design or public relations or advertising firms concerning a campaign to promote the corporate image of his Department; and if he will name the firms involved.

Mr. Rifkind: An oral briefing on our written proposals was offered to those firms which responded to a public advertisement of my intentions. Over 40 firms attended, but it would not be proper for their names to be divulged.

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland why he is planning a public relations campaign advised by Wolff Olins to raise the corporate image of the Scottish Office.

Mr. Rifkind *[holding answer 30 June 1988]*: It is appropriate to ensure that the responsibilities of the Scottish Office and its agencies are more widely understood. A brief has been sent to a number of companies and proposals have been invited from them by 15 July. But no decision has yet been taken on an appointment.

Scottish Pride

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has had on the future of Scottish Pride; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: None. My right hon. and learned Friend awaits formal responses from industry bodies to the report on Scottish Pride by the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland, publication of which he announced on 18 May, at column *471*, in response to a question by my hon. Friend the Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro).

Widdicombe Report

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has to implement the recommendation of the Widdicombe report with regard to the composition of local authority committees and sub-committees.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The Government have been giving careful consideration to all the recommendations made by the Widdicombe committee and will publish a response soon.

Red Deer (Stalking)

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many persons have been convicted of stalking red deer in Scotland with a full-bore rifle for which they did not have the appropriate authority to possess and use in each of the last two years.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I regret that the information requested is not available.

Myalgic Encephalomyelitis

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland for what reason his Department has decided not to support the Myalgic Encephalomyelitis Association hitherto; and when such support will be forthcoming.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The application from the Myalgic Encephalomyelitis Association was one of a number which were rejected for 1988-89 on grounds that the resources available for payment of grants under section 10 of the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968 were oversubscribed. If a further application is made for assistance in 1989-90, it will be carefully considered.

Nuvan

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he expects to provide a substantive answer to the question from the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow, to which a holding answer was given on 16 June, relating to the frequency of use of the pesticide Nuvan.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: A substantive answer was provided on 4 July.

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will place in the Library copies of the findings of the research studies into the effects of the pesticide Nuvan, mentioned in the answer of 27 June, *Official Report*, columns *85-86*.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Research into the effects of Nuvan by the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland marine laboratory in Aberdeen has not yet been completed.

Health Boards

Mr. Bill Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he has revised the financial allocations to health boards for 1988-89.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I have today allocated £83·4 million to health boards to allow them to meet the full cost of the pay awards to doctors, dentists, nurses and other professional staff. This brings to £1,744 million the allocation to health boards to meet their gross recurrent expenditure commitments on hospital and community health services in 1988-89. The £1,744 million figure includes £19·69 million allocated for specific commitments, including national cardiac surgery services, lithotripsy and AIDS.

After expected income is taken into account the net cash limited allocations to individual health boards are as follows:

Health boards—Net recurrent allocation

	£ thousand
Argyll and Clyde	124,286
Ayrshire and Arran	93,048
Borders	26,984
Dumfries and Galloway	44,687
Fife	87,041
Forth Valley	81,512
Grampian	159,966
Greater Glasgow	452,300
Highland	65,440
Lanarkshire	143,256
Lothian	279,788
Orkney	4,904
Shetland	6,015
Tayside	160,792
Western Isles	8,950

The additional allocation for pay awards means that hospital and community health service allocations in Scotland are now more than £1 billion higher than they were in 1979-80.

Universities

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will have discussions with the Scottish universities on the implications for local economies and employment levels of their cash difficulties; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 1 July 1988]*: Government funding for the universities is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science. I have no plans for such discussions.

The Fraser of Allander Institute has produced a report about the local economic impact of changes in funding by the University Grants Committee at the universities of Aberdeen, Dundee and Stirling. That report records that the total income to these three universities has increased in real terms between 1980-81 and 1986-87.

Crofts (Greylag Geese)

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what steps he is taking to compensate for the damage to crofts caused by the expanding greylag geese population in the Uists.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 4 July 1988]:* We have received representations on this matter from the Scottish Crofters Union. Scottish Development Department officials will be consulting interested parties and thereafter we shall carefully consider all aspects of the problem, in the light of the views expressed.

Health Care International

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he next expects to meet representatives from Health Care International; and what subjects will be discussed.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 4 July 1988]:* The Secretary of State has presently no plans to do so.

Environment Protection (Departmental Resources)

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many staff in his Department are working on the identification and designation of Ramsar sites and special protection areas.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 4 July 1988]:* We look to the Nature Conservancy Council to identify and recommend sites for designation. Amongst its other duties the nature conservation branch of the Scottish Development Department, comprising five staff, considers the Nature Conservancy Council recommendations.

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he intends to increase the resources allocated to the identification and designation of Ramsar sites and special protection areas by his Department; and whether he intends to take steps to increase the rate of progress of site designation.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 4 July 1988]:* The Scottish Development Department considers recommendations from the Nature Conservancy Council on sites to be designated Ramsar sites and special protection areas. Staffing resources allocated to this, as to other tasks of my Department, are kept under regular review. We expect to designate several sites soon. I aim to increase the rate of progress on site designation and my officials have discussed ways of achieving this with Nature Conservancy Council staff.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Government Communications Headquarters

163. **Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the implications for his policy on trade union membership of the progress of deunionisation at Government communications headquarters.

Mr. Mellor: There are no implications for our policy on trade union membership. The changes in the conditions of services at GCHQ were introduced solely in the interests of national security. They are not anti-union. All GCHQ staff are free to join the GCHQ Staff Federation, which is listed as a trade union under the terms of the Trade Union and Labour Relations Act 1974.

Sharpeville Six

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a direct plea for clemency for the Sharpeville Six.

Mrs. Chalker: Further appeals on behalf of the Sharpeville Six were made by Foreign Ministers of the Twelve on 14 June, by the Security Council on 17 June, by Heads of Government at the Toronto summit on 20 June, and by the European Council on 28 June. We have also raised the issue again direct with the South African Government.

British Phosphate Commissioners

Sir Bernard Braine: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what action is being taken to use the residual assets of the British Phosphate Commissioners for the benefit of Commonwealth countries in the south Pacific.

Mr. Eggar: Following the distribution of the residual assets of the former British Phosphate Commissioners in February 1987, £750,000 pa is available for use by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office for the benefit of small Commonwealth states.

In the financial year ending March 1988, the FCO was able to:

(a) contribute £150,000 towards the setting up of the joint United Nations office for small Commonwealth states in New York. We expect to continue to contribute to the costs of this collaborative Commonwealth venture, which gives the smaller countries an opportunity to make their voices heard more effectively, without the otherwise prohibitive costs involved in representation at the United Nations;

(b) provide training for police forces in South Pacific island countries;

(c) add £100,000 to the FCO scholarships and awards scheme (FCOSAS), all of this additional money going to small Commonwealth states, half to those in the south Pacific;

(d) contribute £150,000 as extra-budgetary aid to the South Pacific Commission, particularly for use on their inshore fisheries and plant protection (coconut palm) projects which have an application in all the island countries;

(e) contribute a further £150,000 through the ODA to aid programmes for small Commonwealth states;

(f) contribute £50,000 towards the United Kingdom military training assistance scheme. This has enabled us to increase the help offered to small Commonwealth states in sending members of their security forces on training courses in the United Kingdom.

Sir Bernard Braine: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on his Department's scholarship awards scheme in the Commonwealth, and in particular in the south Pacific; and whether any of the residual British Phosphate Commissioners funds are being used for the purpose of this scheme.

Mr. Eggar: £100,000 from the income generated from the British share of the residual assets of the former British Phosphates Commissioners is added annually to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office scholarships and awards scheme in order to increase the number of awards made specifically to overseas students from Commonwealth small states, including those in the south Pacific.

In 1987-88 the FCOSAS provided a total of 290 awards worth £1·8 million to overseas students from all Commonwealth countries. 28 of those awards, worth £141,000, went to students from Commonwealth countries in the south Pacific.

Sir Bernard Braine: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether the residual assets of the British Phosphate Commissioners will be used for the benefit of the Banaban community on Rabi Island, Fiji.

Mr. Eggar: The income generated from the British share of the residual assets of the former British Phosphate Commissioners will continue to be dedicated to assisting the development of small Commonwealth states. These include the island nations of the south Pacific, among them the Banaban community on Rabi Island, Fiji, who have benefited in the past from funds arising from the phosphate mining industry.

Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether any restrictions have been applied to the joining of the 1968 nuclear non-proliferation treaty by states *(a)* known to have exploded a nuclear device and deployed nuclear weapons prior to 1968, *(b)* known to have exploded a nuclear device but not deployed nuclear weapons since 1969 and *(c)* thought by the United Nations to possess nuclear weapon capability since 1969, but not deployed.

Mr. Mellor: No.

Alex Zelichenok

Mr. Burt: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what response he had to the raising of the case of refusenik Alex Zelichenok from Leningrad at a meeting with Soviet authorities in Moscow on 23 June; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: Alex Zelichenok was included on a list of human rights cases which was handed to Soviet officials during the bilateral human rights talks on 23 June. There was no immediate Soviet reply on his case, but responses to all our concerns were promised. We are pressing for details on each individual case.

Human Rights

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if, during recent talks on human rights between officials from Britain and the Soviet Union, the Soviet side raised cases of alleged human rights abuse in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: The Soviet side raised the case of Paul Hill, who was convicted of murder in the Guildford and Woolwich pub bombings in 1975, and handed over a list of 10 miners who claim to have been blacklisted since the miners' strike. We are looking into all these cases and will provide a full response.

South Africa

Mr. Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make it his policy to take steps to prevent British companies paying the salaries of staff called up for military service and for manufacturing weapons in South Africa.

Mr. Alan Clark: I have been asked to reply.

No.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Oak Wilt

Mr. Butler: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what information he has on the origins of, and prevalence of, oak wilt in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Gummer: Ceratocystis fagacearum, the cause of oak wilt, is not present in the United Kingdom.

Green Pound

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what developments he expects in the green pound by the start of the single European market in 1992.

Mr. MacGregor: As the next stage in dismantling MCAs by 1992, the recent Council of Ministers' meeting agreed, as part of the price fixing and following United Kingdom pressure, that the green pound will be devalued on 1 January 1989 so as to reduce United Kingdom MCAs by 3·2 points. It was also agreed that the Commission should now examine the measures to adopt for future stages.

Hazardous Waste

Mr. Butler: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations he has received regarding the dangers to the health of livestock from the proposed dumping of United States wastes in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Donald Thompson: My Department has received representations from Cheshire and Humberside county councils, Warrington borough council, Warrington chamber of commerce and industry, Liverpool port health authority and the Lancashire and Cheshire branches of the National Farmers' Union. I have also received letters from Warrington, South Conservative association and my hon. Friend the Member for Bath (Mr. Patten).

NATIONAL FINANCE

Income Tax

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the anticipated revenue from income tax for 1988-89 expressed as a per capita sum for each adult over the age of 18 years.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The 1988 Budget forecast of income tax receipts in 1988-89 is £42·1 billion. This represents about £960 per head of the projected mid-1988 adult population aged 18 and over.

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the latest estimate of the total amount of income tax to be paid by the top 5 per cent. and the bottom 50 per cent. of taxpayers in 1988-89.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 27 June 1988]:* The latest estimates of the total amount of income tax to be paid in a full year by the top 5 per cent. and the bottom 50 per cent. are £12·5 billion and £7·5 billion, respectively, for 1988-89.

The calculations are based on a projection of the 1985-86 survey of personal incomes and are therefore provisional.

Civil Servants (Religious Affiliations)

Mr. McCusker: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what action the Board of Inland Revenue and the Board of Customs and Excise have taken to set up monitoring procedures to examine the religious affiliations of civil servants employed by them in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Norman Lamont: During March 1988 all members of staff in Northern Ireland employed by the Inland Revenue and Customs and Excise, together with other Departments in Northern Ireland, were issued with questionnaires seeking information from which to determine their religious affiliation. New recruits are being monitored when they take up duty. The replies to the questionnaires are still being collected and recorded and the survey is expected to be completed by late summer.

VAT (New Construction)

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if in the light of proposals to introduce value added tax on new construction, he will make it his policy to cancel the stamp duty chargeable on new assets.

Mr. Norman Lamont: No. Stamp duty is not charged on the construction of a new building. It is charged on transfers of land and buildings, whether new or used, and regardless of the use to which the property will be put. I have no plans to make stamp duty dependent on whether or not value-added tax is charged.

Private Medical Insurance

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received concerning tax incentives for children who buy private medical insurance for their parents.

Mr. Norman Lamont: None.

Mortgage Interest Relief

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the answer to the hon. Member for Hammersmith, (Mr. Soley) on 14 June, *Official Report*, column *147-48*, what is *(a)* his estimate of the regional distribution of mortgage interest relief within the stated income bands, *(b)* the comparable figures for 1985-86, *(c)* his estimate of the percentage of tax units within each income band who receive mortgage interest relief, *(d)* his estimate of the percentage of tax units within each income band who are owner occupiers nor in receipt of mortgage interest relief, *(e)* his estimate of the median, and *(f)* the average value of mortgage interest relief in each income band, and in cases *(d)*, *(e)* and *(f)* the comparable figures on a regional basis for 1985-86.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Following the introduction of MIRAS in April 1983, regional information on the cost of mortgage interest relief cannot be extracted from Inland Revenue records. The regional distribution of mortgage interest can be estimated from the family expenditure survey (FES) but, as the sample size for the FES is relatively small it is not possible to provide robust estimates after 1982-83.

The other information for 1987-88 is given in the table. These estimates are based on projections to 1987-88 of information in the 1985-86 survey of personal incomes and the 1985 family expenditure survey. The estimates include mortgages formerly under the option mortgage scheme which are now subsumed within MIRAS. All estimates are provisional.

Range of total income	*Number of mortgagors* *thousands*	*Mortgagors as a percentage of all tax units in each income range* *per cent.*	*Owner-occupiers not[1] receiving mortgage interest relief as a percentage of all tax units in each income range* *per cent.*	*Average value of[2] relief per mortgagor* *£*
Up to £5,000	720	5	38	370
£5,000 to £10,000	1,620	21	42	460
£10,000 to £15,000	2,500	50	25	550
£15,000 to £25,000	2,630	67	18	580
Over £25,000	930	72	18	1,010
TOTAL	8,400	26	34	580

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[1] Assuming that all mortgagors are owner occupiers and receive mortgage interest relief.

[2] Estimates of the median are not available.

Government Posts (Northern Region)

164. **Mr. Clelland:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many Government posts were located in the northern region of England in each of the years from 1979 to 1987; and what is the current number of posts.

Mr. Brooke: The number of civil servants in the northern region of England were as follows:

	Number
1979	42,300
1980	40,400
1981	40,700
1982	38,900
1983	37,800
1984	35,400
1985	33,400

	Number
1986	33,100
1987	33,600

Servicewide regional statistics for April 1988 are not yet available.

Barlow Clowes

Mr. Tim Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what investigations were carried out by the Inland Revenue into the affairs of Barlow Clowes in early 1987; and what information was passed on to the Department of Trade and Industry following those investigations.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The Inland Revenue's obligations of confidentiality prevent the disclosure of any information concerning a particular taxpayer's affairs.

Debt Relief

Miss Lestor: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what criteria govern the choice of country benefiting from debt relief from the United Kingdom.

Mr. Lilley: The United Kingdom in common with other official creditors reschedules countries' debts in the Paris Club if they are following IMF approved adjustment programmes and would otherwise be unable to meet their debts service obligations. Reschedulings over longer periods are allowed to the poorest, most heavily indebted of such countries. The criteria which will govern which countries will benefit under the framework for concessional reschedulings agreed at the Toronto summit will be decided by the Paris Club. The United Kingdom also converts old aid loans into grants following the 1978 UNCTAD resolution 165 for countries which have income per head of less than $425 a year and which are following IMF approved adjustment programmes.

Building Societies

Mr. Yeo: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when regulations will be made to allow building societies to convert to public limited companies; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lilley: The Building Societies Commission made the Building Societies (Transfer of Business) Regulations 1988 on 4 July and they were laid before Parliament today.

The regulations complete the legislative framework under which building societies and their members can consider conversion of the society to a plc. The general provisions of conversion are contained in the 1986 Act; the regulations fill out the details on a number of points.

They provide, firstly, for the continuity of agreements, documents, rights and liabilities from the society to its successor company. This will ensure, for example, that mortgage contracts are unaffected by the conversion

They also deal in some detail with the priority liquidation right of former members of societies which convert. The calculation of this right and the means of securing it are set out in the regulations.

Finally, the regulations set out the information which a society must include in a transfer statement which it is obliged to send to members when they are invited to vote for conversion. This information includes particulars of:

The consequences of the transfer for investing and borrowing members and for employees.

The financial position of the society, including the amount of its reserves.

A forecast of the future financial prospects of the successor company.

The interest of the directors of the society in the transfer and the resulting benefits and any compensation to them and other officers.

Any distribution of funds to be made to members of the society.

Any shares, or rights in relation to shares, to be offered in connection with the transfer.

Any priority share rights to be conferred on members, officers or employees of the society.

The terms on which the investments in the society will be held as deposits in the successor company.

Any difference in the statutory protection scheme that will apply.

The directors and auditors of the successor company.

Whether the Bank of England has indicated that it would be prepared to authorise this successor company under the Banking Act 1987.

In the case of a proposed transfer to an existing company, information has to be given on the activities and structure of the successor company, together with details of any significant shareholders.

The regulations also require that if a written takeover proposal has been made to the society during the previous year, the fact is disclosed to members together with non-confidential details of the proposal.

Privatisation

Mr. Burns: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list every company privatised since 1979, showing the percentage of the work force in each company which bought shares in the company and the percentage of the work force that retained shares in the company *(a)* one and *(b)* three years after privatisation.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 21 June 1988]*: The companies privatised by Government share sales since 1979, and the percentage of eligible employees participating in the employee share arrangements, are as set out:

Company and date of sale	*Percentage of eligible workforce participating*
British Aerospace (February 1981)	74
Cable and Wireless (October 1981)	99
Amersham International (February 1982)	99
National Freight Company (February 1982)	36
Britoil (November 1982)	72
Associated British Ports (February 1983)	90
Enterprise Oil (June 1984)	71
British Telecom (November 1984)	96
British Gas (December 1986)	99
British Airways (February 1987)	90
Rolls-Royce (May 1984)	96
BAA (July 1987)	98

In addition to the foregoing, employees of Royal Ordnance, which was sold to British Aerospace in April 1987, were offered free shares in British Aerospace, funded by the Government.

There have also been a number of sales of subsidiaries by nationalised industries and Government-owned companies. Of these, the sale of Jaguar was accomplished by a public share offering, and 19 per cent. of employees purchased shares. In the sale of British Shipbuilders (Warshipyards), VSEL, which purchased two of the eight yards, made special arrangements for employees, and 82 per cent. of those employees purchased shares. Arrangements for employees to purchase shares were also made in the sales of some Rover Group and National Bus Company subsidiaries.

Information on the number of employee shareholders who retained their shares in the privatised companies one and three years after privatisation is not available.

Share Options

Mr. Ian Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list for each of the three types of employee share and share option schemes now approved by the Revenue under the Taxes Act 1988 and originally introduced under the Finance Acts of 1978, 1980 and 1984, the latest information on *(a)* the number of approved schemes and *(b)* the number of people benefiting.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 24 June 1988]:* The number of employee share schemes which had received formal approval by the Inland Revenue by 31 May 1988 was as follows:

	Number
Finance Act 1978 profit-sharing schemes	752
Finance Act 1980 SAYE-related share option schemes	728
Finance Act 1984 share option schemes	3,093

The number of approved all-employee schemes (Finance Act 1978 and Finance Act 1980) has increased from less than 30 in 1979 to 1,480 by 31 May 1988. This has resulted in well over 1·5 million employees acquiring shares or options over shares under these schemes.

Approximately 50,000 options were granted in each of the first three years of operation of the Finance Act 1984 discretionary share option schemes.

Incomes

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the share of pre and post-tax income going to the top *(a)* 1 per cent. and *(b)* 5 per cent. of income recipients from 1970-71 to 1988-89.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 24 June 1988]:* Available information is given in the table. The quantile groups have been determined by reference to the distribution of income before and after tax of those single people and married couples for whom the Inland Revenue has records in each year. The figures are based on the annual surveys of personal incomes. Estimates for 1986-87 and later years are not available on the same basis. However, estimates of the income before and after tax of the top 1 per cent. and top 5 per cent. of income tax payers were given in my reply to the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown) on 28 June at column *188.*

Income before and after tax of the top 1 per cent. and top 5 per cent. of income recipients[1]

Percentages

	Top 1 per cent.		*Top 5 per cent.*	
Year	*Before tax*	*After tax*	*Before tax*	*After tax*
1970-71	6·3	4·1	16·5	13·4
1971-72	6·1	4·2	16·1	13·6
1972-73	5·9	4·1	15·7	12·9
1973-74	6·2	4·2	15·9	12·9
1974-75	5·8	3·7	15·7	12·8
1975-76	5·4	3·6	15·1	12·8
1976-77	5·2	3·6	15·3	12·8
1977-78	5·2	3·6	15·2	12·8
1978-79	5·1	3·6	15·0	12·9
1979-80	5·3	4·2	15·6	13·8
1980-81	5·5	4·3	16·0	14·1
1981-82	5·7	4·4	16·5	14·4
1982-83	5·9	4·5	16·7	14·6
1983-84	5·8	4·5	16·9	14·8
1984-85	5·7	4·6	17·2	15·1
1985-86	6·1	4·7	17·3	15·0

[1] Counting married couples as one and combining their incomes.

Mr. Soley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) if he will publish a table showing the average annual value of mortgage interest tax relief in Great Britain at the latest date available to recipients *(a)* with incomes below £7,000 a year, *(b)* with incomes between £7,000 and £10,000 a year, *(c)* with incomes between £10,000 and £13,000 a year, *(d)* with incomes between £13,000 and £16,000 a year, *(e)* with incomes between £16,000 and £19,000 a year, *(f)* with incomes between £19,000 and £22,000 a year, *(g)* with incomes between £22,000 and £25,000 a year and *(h)* with incomes above £25,000 a year, and the number of recipients in each group;

(2) if he will publish a table showing for each income group the estimated number of mortgagors receiving mortgage interest tax relief in 1988-89, the average annual value of the relief and the total cost for each group.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answers 27 June 1988]:* Provisional estimates for the United Kingdom are given in the table. These are based on projections to 1988-89 of information in the 1985-86 survey of personal incomes and the 1985 family expenditure survey. The estimates include mortgages formerly under the option mortgage scheme which are now subsumed under MIRAS.

Tax units receiving mortgage interest relief by range of total income 1988-89

Range of total income	*Number of tax units*[1] *with mortgage interest relief*[2] *thousands*	*Average value of relief per mortgagor £*	*Total cost of relief £ million*
Up to £7,000	1,030	320	330
£7,000 to £10,000	960	400	380
£10,000 to £13,000	1,480	460	680
£13,000 to £16,000	1,400	480	680
£16,000 to £19,000	1,130	490	560
£19,000 to £22,000	810	500	410
£22,000 to £25,000	620	510	320
Over £25,000	1,170	760	890
Total	8,600	490	4,250

[1] Single persons and married couples

[2] Including about ½ million non-taxpaying tax units

Mr. Soley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the average annual value of mortgage interest tax relief *(a)* to first-time buyers and *(b)* to all recipients (i) in Great Britain and (ii) in each region in each year from 1979 to 1987.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 27 June 1988]:* Estimates for the years 1979-80 to 1982-83 have been derived from the annual surveys of personal incomes and are given in the table. I regret that the information on first-time buyers is not available.

Average value of relief per mortgagor (£)

	1979-80	*1980-81*	*1981-82*	*1982-83*
Northern	215	285	290	305
Yorkshire and Humberside	200	265	270	285
North West	190	275	260	285
East Midlands	225	290	280	285
West Midlands	235	295	310	335
East Anglia	225	315	355	355
Greater London	310	395	440	420
Other South East	290	395	430	415
South West	240	350	355	335
Wales	195	285	335	295
Scotland	265	370	375	390
Northern Ireland	220	350	335	300
United Kingdom	245	335	350	350

Following the introduction of MIRAS in April 1983, regional information on the cost of mortgage interest relief cannot be extracted from Inland Revenue records. The regional distribution of mortgage interest can be estimated from the family expenditure survey (FES) but, as the sample size for the FES is relatively small, it is not possible to provide robust estimates of regional trends for the period after 1982-83. Accordingly, the table shows the average value of relief for 1983-84 to 1987-88 for the United Kingdom only.

United Kingdom
Average value of relief (£)[1]

	Number
1983-84	370
1984-85	460
1985-86	595
1986-87	580
[2]1987-88	575

[1] Includes the cost of mortgage interest relief given to non-taxpayers.

[2] Provisional.

Mr. Soley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish a table of the total cost of mortgage tax relief in Great Britain in each of the years from 1979 to 1987, indicating the amount of spending on mortgage tax relief at each of the higher tax rates of 40 per cent., 50 per cent. and 60 per cent. in each of these years.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 27 June 1988]:* Estimates for the United Kingdom of the total cost of mortgage interest tax relief and the cost of relief at rates in excess of basic rate are given for 1979-80 to 1987-88.

	Cost of mortgage interest relief £ million	*Cost of relief at excess over basic rate £ million*
1979-80	1,450	90
1980-81	1,960	130
1981-82	2,050	190
1982-83	2,150	170
1983-84	[2]2,780	160
1984-85	[2]3,580	200
1985-86	[2]4,750	260
1986-87	[2]4,750	[1]290
1987-88	[2]4,850	[1]370

[1] Provisional.

[2] Includes mortgages formerly under the option mortgage scheme.

The following table shows the cost of relief at excess over basic rate in 1987-88 broken down by the marginal tax rate of the beneficiaries of this relief. A breakdown for other years could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Cost of mortgage interest relief in excess of basic rate in 1987-88

Marginal tax rate percent.	*£ million*
27	45
40	60
45	80
50	65
55	40
60	80
Total	370

Note: Basic rate taxpayers who would be liable at higher rates if mortgage interest relief were restricted to basic rate relief only.

Mr. Soley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish a table giving the cost of mortgage tax relief for each year from 1967-68 to 1987-88, shown at 1987 prices.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 27 June 1988]:* The estimated costs of mortgage interest tax relief in the United Kingdom, at 1987-88 prices, are shown in the table. Figures for 1983-84 onwards include the cost of relief given to non-taxpayers.

Cost of mortgage tax relief at 1987-88 prices[1]
United Kingdom

	£ million
1967-68	1,170
1968-69	1,200
1969-70	1,370
1970-71	1,550
1971-72	1,540
1972-73	1,700
1973-74	2,150
1974-75	2,480
1975-76	2,560
1976-77	2,710
1977-78	2,270

	£ million
1978-79	2,240
1979-80	2,520
1980-81	2,930
1981-82	2,750
1982-83	2,690
1983-84	3,330
1984-85	4,080
1985-86	5,110
[2] 1986-87	4,950
[2] 1987-88	4,850

[1] Revalorised with respect to the retail prices index.

[2] Provisional.

Tax Units (Statistics)

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) how many tax units facing a marginal tax rate of 40 per cent. have children;

(2) how many tax units have children.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answers 27 June 1988]:* In 1988-89 about 5½ million married couples and single people liable to pay income tax have children. Of these, about 500,000 tax units have a marginal tax rate of 40 per cent. About 1½ million non-taxpayers have children.

The figures are based on projection of the 1985-86 survey of personal incomes and the 1986 family expenditure survey and are therefore provisional.

Tax Allowances

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if, pursuant to the answer to the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East of 16 June, *Official Report,* columns *269-70,* he will make a statement on the factors governing the decision on the extent to which pensioners' tax allowances are uprated in line with married man's and single person's tax allowances.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 28 June 1988]:* Changes in personal allowances depend on Budget priorities each year. This year all the main personal allowances, including age allowances, were raised by twice the amounts required under statutory indexation.

Sovereign Immunity

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list all organisations or states covered by sovereign immunity and the date this was granted.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 28 June 1988]:* The Inland Revenue's obligations of confidentiality prevent the disclosure of any information concerning the tax affairs, or tax status, of any individual, company or other entity.

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the total amount of tax refunded to states or organisations granted sovereign immunity in each year since 1979; and what proportion of that amount has been paid to the five largest organisations.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 28 June 1988]:* I regret that figures are not readily available for all the years requested. In the year to 31 March 1988, tax of approximately £119 million was refunded to sovereign immune bodies; the five largest recipients accounted for 87 per cent. of the total repayment. In the previous year, the figures were £108 million and 89 per cent. respectively.

Government Audits

Mr. Tim Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what information he has as to what proportion of central Government audits is undertaken by National Audit Office staff and what proportion is contracted out to private firms of accountants.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 29 June 1988]:* The Treasury is currently building up a data base on public bodies' audit arrangements. Of the central Government bodies and accounts covered so far about 60 per cent. are audited by National Audit Office staff and about 40 per cent. by private accountants.

VAT

Mr. Madel: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will consider introducing a lower rate of value added tax on those items which the European court has ruled should carry value added tax; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 4 July 1988]:* It has been consistent Government policy to keep VAT simple by having a single positive rate of VAT, coupled with zero rates where appropriate. That remains the case.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will provide details of the estimated value added tax which will be gathered from the insurance industry after the mitigating measures in consequence of the European court's decison on value added tax.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 4 July 1988]:* Virtually all the net yield (about £75 million) from the insurance industry would come from value added tax charged on non-domestic construction and rents. Most of the remainder would come from VAT charged on fuel and power.

DEFENCE

MOD Police

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many officers of the Ministry of Defence police have undergone riot training since January 1987.

Mr. Sainsbury: In common with other police forces, MDP officers receive basic public order training as an integral part of their initial recruits course. Four hundred and eighteen MDP officers have undergone this training since 1 January 1987. In the same period 901 officers have received refresher training.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the estimated cost of supplying the operations support unit of the Ministry of Defence police with riot equipment; what is the estimated cost of training the members of the operational support unit to use riot equipment; and on how many occasions has such equipment been used by members of the operational support unit.

Mr. Sainsbury: Replacement public order protective clothing comprising helmets, boots, flameproof overalls and gloves costing £10,000 was provided for the OSU in the financial year 1987-88.

Public order training is undertaken by the OSU as part of its routine programme when not deployed operationally. It does not use additional or external resources, and therefore incurs no extra costs.

The OSU has used public order protective clothing and equipment only in June 1985 and June 1988, on both occasions in the Stonehenge area.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence under what circumstances Ministry of Defence police officers are engaged on armed duty on public roads.

Mr. Sainsbury: When operational circumstances require.

Busy Brewer Exercises

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the Busy Brewer exercises that have taken place at military bases in the United Kingdom since 1979.

Mr. Ian Stewart: I understand that exercises in the Busy Brewer series have been taking place only since 1982. Records of these exercises are readily available only from 1984, and these indicate that the following exercises have taken place since then:

Date	*Base*
1984	
25 April to 17 May	RAF Upper Heyford
13 September to 12 October	RAF Fairford
1985	
2 May to 20 June	RAF Fairford
6 September to 11 October	RAF Fairford
1986	
29 August to 6 October	RAF Fairford
1987	
1 May to 8 June	RAF Fairford
27 August to 12 October	RAF Fairford
1988	
9 April to 6 May	RAF Fairford
3 June to 13 June	RAF Fairford

Military Installations (Security)

Mr. George: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many private security companies are employed in the protection of Ministry of Defence and military installations; and what the annual value of these contracts has been for each of the last five years.

Mr. Sainsbury: Nine companies have been employed to provide security guarding services and the approximate total value of contracts placed in each year was:

Year	*£*
1983-84	250,000
1984-85	350,000
1985-86	600,000
1986-87	1,100,000
1987-88	1,350,000

Mr. Churchill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when the practice of employing unarmed civilians, through private security firms to guard military bases within the United Kingdom began; what is the extent of the practice; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: It is MOD policy to employ unarmed civilian security guards through private security firms on routine guarding tasks at military establishments to relieve trained service men for other more appropriate duties.

Current records show that the first contract was placed in 1978; such contracts are placed only when appropriate security criteria can be satisfied. At present there are 21 military establishments normally guarded in this way.

Computer Work Stations

Mr. Warren: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many computer work stations there are in his Department; what is the ratio of work stations to civil servants; and how he expects this to change over the next five years.

Mr. Sainsbury: This information is not held centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Information Technology

Mr. Warren: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the composition of the senior information technology strategy committees in his Department; and how many times in the past year its meetings have been attended by Ministers.

Mr. Sainsbury: The defence IT management board provides the senior IT strategy committee in the Department. The composition of the board is:

2nd Permanent Under-Secretary of State—Chairman
Deputy Chief of the Defence Staff (Systems)
Chief of Fleet Support
Quartermaster General
Air Member for Supply and Organisation
Chief of Defence Intelligence
Deputy Chief Scientific Adviser
Deputy Under-Secretary of State (Civilian Management)
Deputy Under-Secretary of State (Finance)
Deputy Under-Secretary of State (Defence Procurement)
Deputy Under-Secretary of State (Personnel and Logistics)
Director Central Computer and Telecommunications Agency

The director general IT systems, the assistant chief of defence staff (command, control, communications and information systems) and the director general strategic electronic systems attend meetings of the board as chairmen of the defence IT co-ordinating committee, the defence command, control, communications and information systems board and the procurement executive command, control, communications and information systems board, respectively. These committees report to the defence IT management board.

The board is not attended by Ministers.

Mr. Warren: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many of the staff in his Department at grades 1, 2 and 3 have attended courses or training on information technology awareness or management in the last 12 months.

Mr. Sainsbury: In the 12 months to 31 March 1988, the latest period for which figures are available, a total of 19 civilian officers in grades 1, 2 and 3 attended courses or training events specifically relating to information technology. In addition, six grade 3 officers attended the top management programme, which normally includes a session on information technology.

Information is not available as to how many other general management or similar courses attended by grade 1-3 officers included information technology among the topics covered.

Trespass

Mr. Bellingham: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) how many people have been taken into custody after trespassing on Ministry of Defence land; and what was the minimum and maximum length of custody during the last five years;

(2) how many challenges to the validity of local byelaws in connection with Ministry of Defence property have been made during the last five years;

(3) how many people have been convicted and how many acquitted for trespassing on Ministry of Defence land during the last five years;

(4) how many people have been escorted from Ministry of Defence land as civil trespassers; and how many have been arrested for wilfully obstructing a police officer under section 51(3) of the Police Act 1964 during the last five years;

(5) how many people have been reported for process for trespassing on Ministry of Defence land; and how many were subsequently summoned during the last five years.

Mr. Freeman: The information requested is not readily available and could be provided only by disproportionate effort.

Nuclear Submarines

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) on what date, and in what form, the United States President indicated his willingness to seek the approval of Congress under Cmnd. 9847 (1956) the amendment agreement on the United Kingdom—United States exchange of information on naval nuclear propulsion units to Cmnd. 9560, for Her Majesty's Government to make available technology and design data on nuclear propelled submarines to Canada;

(2) on what date, and in what form, the United States President indicated his willingness to seek the approval of Congress under articles III, IV, VC, VIA and VII of Cmnd. 537 of 3 July 1958 as amended by Cmnd. 859, in 1959; by Cmnd. 4119 in 1969; by Cmnd. 6017 in 1975; Cmnd. 7976 in 1979 and Cmnd. 9336 in 1984 agreement between the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the Government of the United States of America for co-operation on the uses of atomic energy for mutual defence purposes, for Her Majesty's Government to make available technology and design data on nuclear submarines to Canada;

(3) on what date, and in what form, the United States President indicated his willingness to seek the approval of Congress under articles I(2) and V of Cmnd. 9560 1955 agreement between the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the Government of the United States of America for co-operation regarding atomic information for mutual defence purposes, 15 June 1955 for Her Majesty's Goverment to make available technology and design data on nuclear propelled submarines to Canada.

Mr. Sainsbury: Under the terms of the United States/United Kingdom "Agreement for Co-operation in the Uses of Atomic Energy for Mutual Defence Purposes of 1958" (Cmnd. 537 (as amended)), United States consent is required for the transfer by the United Kingdom to a third party of information and technology covered by that agreement. The willingness of the United States President to seek Congressional approval of amendments to the United States/Canada "Agreement for Co-operation in the Uses of Atomic Energy for Mutual Defence Purposes" of 1959 to allow the transfer of equipment and materials related to the Trafalgar class nuclear-powered submarine was made public by a statement from the spokesman for the United States Department of State on 27 April.

Strategic Defence Initiative

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if his counterpart in the United States held any specific consultations with him prior to the Moscow summit to seek permission from Her Majesty's Government that technology developed under licence in the United Kingdom for the strategic defence initiative star wars programme may be offered to the Soviet Union at some future date as stated by President Reagan in Moscow.

Mr. Sainsbury: No. The United States President's offer to share the fruits of SDI research has not been elaborated in the detail suggested in the hon. Member's question. If and when such an issue were to arise, it would be the subject of consultation.

Cruise Missiles

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his policy towards further off-base dispersal exercises for cruise missile support vehicles in the light of the intermediate nuclear forces treaty; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ian Stewart: I have nothing to add to the reply I gave to the hon. Member on 3 December 1987, at column *708*.

Helicopters

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment he has made of the implications for the military helicopter ordering programme of the proposed restructuring of Westland through the sale of Fiat's 16·7 per cent. stake to UTC.

Mr. Sainsbury: It is not expected that the proposed sale of Fiat's holding in Westland Helicopters to UTC will have any effect on the military helicopter ordering programme.

Steeple Aston (Noise)

Mr. Baldry: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) if he will make a statement on the recent noise testing carried out by the Royal Air Force institute of community health at Dr. Ratcliffe's school, Steeple Aston: and if he will publish the results in the *Official Report*;

(2) if in the light of the results of the recent noise testing carried out at Dr. Ratcliffe's school, Steeple Aston, he will issue instructions to prevent airplanes from Royal Air Force Upper Heyford taking off directly over Steeple Aston.

Mr. Freeman *[pursuant to his reply, 16 June 1988, c. 224]:* I have decided that in the light of local concern following the change in fine-weather take-off patterns at RAF Upper Heyford, the full noise survey planned for the autumn should be brought forward to the second half of July. This will enable us to evaluate objectively possible alternative operating patterns aimed at diminishing the disturbance to the local community, while maintaining the safety margins of the flying operations. In advance of this survey I have agreed in principle that, exceptionally, my Department will be prepared to meet the cost of providing sound insulation for the Dr. Ratcliffe school at Steeple Aston.

NORTHERN IRELAND

School Buildings

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the modernisations and extensions which have been carried out in 1986, 1987 and 1988 at controlled secondary schools in Northern Ireland.

Dr. Mawhinney: The following modernisations and extensions have been approved to begin construction at controlled secondary schools (including controlled grammar) in the financial years 1986-87, 1987-88, 1988-89.

Board Area	*School*	*Scheme*
Financial year 1986-87		
	None	
Financial year 1987-88		
Belfast	Model Girls' Secondary School	Reinstatement of fire damage
North-Eastern	Antrim High School	Replacement of Hall
Financial year 1988-89		
Southern	Banbridge Academy	Extension
South-Eastern	Movilla High School	Extension
	Dundonald Boys' High School	Alterations
North-Eastern	Larne High School	Extension
	Glengormley High School	Extension
Western	Omagh Academy	Extension

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many applications for modernisations and extensions are currently with the Department of Education, Northern Ireland, awaiting action; and if he will list the schools concerned, for each board area.

Dr. Mawhinney: Seventy-eight projects for modernisations and extensions have been approved in principle by the Department of Education.

The following detail, by board area, the schools concerned.

Board area and school

Belfast

Orangefield Campus
Beechfield Primary School
Model Girls' Secondary School
Fleming Fulton and Mitchell House
St. Bride's Primary School
St. Joseph's Boys' Primary School (Slate Street)
Corpus Christi College
St. Genevieve's High School
La Salle Boys' Secondary School
St. Patrick's Secondary School
Dominican College (Fortwilliam)
St. Malachy's College
Belfast Royal Academy
Rathmore Grammar School
Bloomfield Collegiate
Christian Brothers' Grammar School (Glen Road)
St. Dominic's High School
Methodist College

South-Eastern

Beechlawn Special School
Comber High School
St. Macartan's Primary School, Downpatrick
St. Mary's Girls' Primary School, Newcastle
St. Colmcille's Primary School, Downpatrick
St. Joseph's Primary School, Newcastle
St. Mary's Girls' High School, Downpatrick
St. Patrick's High School, Lisburn
St. Columba's High School, Newtownards
Our Lady and St. Patrick's College, Belfast

North-Eastern

Ballyclare Secondary School
Coleraine Boys' Secondary School
Coleraine Girls' Secondary School
Abbots Cross Primary School
Ballykeel Primary School
Glenravel Primary School, Ballymena
Stella Maris Secondary School, Newtownabbey
St. Mary's Convent Grammar School, Magherafelt
Larne Grammar School
Dalriada Grammar School, Ballymoney

Western

Castlederg High School
Limavady High School
Limavady Grammar School
St. Tierney's Primary School, Roslea
Killyhommon Primary School, Enniskillen
St. Mary's High School, Limavady
St. Colman's High School, Strabane
St. Fanchea's Girls' Secondary School, Enniskillen
St. Brecan's High School, Londonderry
Loreto Convent Grammar School, Omagh
St. Michael's Grammar School, Enniskillen
St. Columb's College, Londonderry
Christian Brothers' Grammar School, Omagh
Convent Grammar School, Strabane
Thornhill College, Londonderry
Portora Royal School, Enniskillen

Southern

Armagh Secondary School
Dromore High School
Dungannon Secondary School
Banbridge High School
Bocombra Primary School
Howard Primary School
Fivemiletown High School
Rathfriland High School
St. Patrick's Primary School, Dungannon
Castlecaulfield Primary School
Primate Dixon Memorial Boys Primary School, Coalisland
St. Peter's Boys Primary School, Newry
St. Brigid's Primary School, Cookstown
Jonesborough Primary School, Newry
Dromintee Primary School, Newry
St. Mary's Primary School, Dungannon
St. Ciaran's Secondary School, Ballygawley, Dungannon
St. Catherine's College, Armagh
St. Paul's Secondary School, Bessbrook, Newry
St. Patrick's High School, Cookstown
Royal School, Dungannon
St. Patrick's Boys' Academy, Dungannon
Abbey Grammar School, Newry
St. Patrick's College, Armagh

ENVIRONMENT

Homeless Persons

Mr. Doran: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the number of homeless persons in each year between 1976 and 1987 in each of the constituencies of Hendon, South, Mid-Worcestershire, Lancashire, West, Fylde, Staffordshire, Moorlands and Amber Valley.

Mrs. Roe: Aggregate figures of homeless household accepted under the Housing Acts are reported by each local authority. Therefore, figures are available for Staffordshire, Moorlands, but not for the other five constituencies.

The figures reported for 1981 to 1986 by local authorities appear in a table placed in the Library in May 1987. Corresponding earlier figures are in the following issues of "Local Housing Statistics" which are also available in the Library.

Period	*Issue Number*	*Table Number*
1976		
1st half	42	11
2nd half	43	12
1977		
1st half	46	11
2nd half	48	12
1978		
1st and 2nd halves	52	12
1979		
1st and 2nd halves	54	14
1980		
1st half	59	9
2nd half	62	13

Staffordshire Moorlands district council reported 29 acceptances during the first half of 1987, but has not yet provided returns for the second half.

Figures are not strictly comparable over the whole period, because of changes in the reporting system in December 1977 and, in non-metropolitan districts, from the fourth quarter of 1980.

House Building

Mr. Doran: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many new houses were built *(a)* in the private sector, *(b)* by housing associations and *(c)* by local authorities in each year between 1976 and 1987 in each of the constituencies of Hendon, South, Mid-Worcestershire, Lancashire, West, Fylde, Staffordshire, Moorlands and Amber Valley.

Mrs. Roe: The information collected on housebuilding is for the whole of each local authority area. Therefore, figures are available for Staffordshire, Moorlands, but not for the other five constituencies.

The reported figures for local authorities appear in the following issues of "Local Housing Statistics" which are available in the Library.

Year	*Issue number*
1976	41
1977	45
1978	49
1979	59
1980 to 1983	73
1984	77
1985	81
1986	82
[1]1987	84

[1] First nine months

Housing Statistics

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information his Department possesses on the differentials in housing costs, private house prices, availability of accommodation for rent and purchase, and demand for accommodation, as between English regions.

Mrs. Roe: Regional analyses are available from regular returns and sample surveys of local authority rents, rents registered for private and housing association accommodation, prices paid for houses and flats purchased with building society loans, prices paid for housing land, and tender costs of local authority housing. Also, average household expenditure on housing is collected in the family expenditure survey: as the sample is relatively small, regional analyses combine two years' data.

Estimates for the numbers of dwellings in owner-occupation and those which are rented are produced, based on the results of the 1981 census and on information about changes since then, particularly new housebuilding and council house sales. Projections of the numbers of households are derived every second year, which are based on official population projections and on past trends in household formation.

Construction Industry

Mr. Thornton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he intends to publish his Department's report on cowboys in the construction industry.

Mr. Trippier: The working party's report will be published shortly.

House Conditions

Mr. Thornton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he intends to publish his Department's survey of house conditions.

Mr. Waldegrave: The analysis of the 1986 English house condition survey is nearing completion. We shall publish the results just as soon as we can.

Waste Imports

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has as to whether the proposed imports of American domestic waste will have had a proportion or the majority of the recycleable wastes removed beforehand.

Mr. Moynihan: I have no information on this point.

Waste Disposal (Inspection)

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has on the compliance by Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution with the minimum recommended inspection frequencies of waste disposal operations.

Mr. Moynihan: There are no minimum inspection frequencies for waste disposal facilities. Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution plans to publish in the autumn guidance on recommended average inspection frequencies by waste disposal authorities. Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution does not visit sites on a regular basis. Its remit is to visit selected sites in order to discharge their funcions of advising waste disposal authorities and promoting adequate and consistent standards.

Palace of Westminster (Television Monitors)

Mr. Clelland: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the individual cost by screen area of the television monitors located around the Palace of Westminster for use as annunciators.

Mr. Chope: The information is not available in precisely the form requested. The annunciator systems in both Houses are maintained for the Parliamentary Works Office by Rediffusion Business Electronic Ltd. The annual cost is approximately £250,000.

There are at present some 800 monitors in the House of Commons system.

Sport and Leisure Facilities

Mr. Pendry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment why, pursuant to his answer of 25 January, *Official Report,* column *40,* relating to the placing of the responses to the paper, "Competition in the Management of Local Authority Sport and Leisure Facilities" in the Library, only 16 of the 352 responses have been released; and whether the objections raised by those 16 are typical of all the responses.

Mr. Moynihan: I refer the hon. Member to the statement which I made in the House on 1 July at columns 652-64.

VAT

165. **Mr. John Greenway:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment he has made of the implication for jobs *(a)* in the construction industry and *(b)* generally of the recent ruling on value added tax exemptions in the European Court.

Mr. Trippier: I shall write to my hon. Friend shortly.

Sports (Head Injuries)

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what measures he is taking to reduce the number of head injuries that result from sports-related accidents.

Mr. Moynihan: The Sports Council, whose grant is provided by the Department, advises sports governing bodies on improving safety standards in sports equipment and performance. The governing bodies are responsible for ensuring that their sports are organised to minimise any risk of injuries.

Birtenshaw Farm

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether Bolton council has ever applied for *(a)* the convenant on land at Birtenshaw Farm to be confirmed by Act of Parliament and *(b)* the land to be designated as green belt.

Mr. Waldegrave: Bolton borough council has never asked for the covenant to be confirmed by Act of Parliament. It supported the inclusion of the land in the green belt proposed by the Greater Manchester council in 1981, but, following a local inquiry, that council omitted it in accordance with the inspector's recommendation.

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has received Bolton council's view about the validity of the covenant affecting the land at Birtenshaw Farm; and when he expects to make a decision about its discharge.

Mr. Waldegrave: My right hon. Friend has not received a considered view of the validity of the covenant from the Bolton borough council. He expects to issue his decision shortly.

National Rivers Authority Advisory Committee

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) pursuant to his answer of 29 July to the hon. Member for Caerphilly, if he will specify the Vote subhead which authorises the expenditure incurred in the use of facilities of his Department by the chairman of the National Rivers Authority advisory committee;

(2) what has been the expenditure incurred to date by the chairman of the National Rivers Authority advisory committee as a result of his use of the secretarial facilities and stationery provided by his Department.

Mr. Moynihan: Estimate provision for the National Rivers Authority advisory committee is contained within Class X, Vote 5 subhead A1 (Department of Environment: administration). Expenditure by the chairman is not separately identified.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what provision is made within his Department's budget for expenditure incurred by *(a)* the chairman of the National Rivers Authority advisory committee in using his Department's secretarial facilities and stationery and *(b)* by the other Members and Peers mentioned in his answer of 29 June to the hon. Member for Caerphilly.

Mr. Moynihan: Such expenditure by Parliamentary Private Secretaries and my noble Friend Lord Hesketh is subsumed within the provision for Private Offices; that by my right hon. and noble Friend Lord Crickhowell within the provision for the National Rivers Authority advisory committee.

London Residuary Body

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has received proposals from the London residuary body on the transfer of its remaining housing mortgages; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: The Department has today published a consultation paper setting out proposals for the London residuary body (LRB) to divest itself of its remaining housing mortgages. Copies of the paper have been placed in the Library.

The LRB has already disposed of its non-domestic mortgages and housing association mortgages to the boroughs and districts in whose areas they are located. The present proposals deal with the last main group of mortgages held by the LRB. They involve the transfer of the portfolio to the London borough of Richmond, which would administer it on behalf of all London boroughs. For borrowers, the transfer will mean that they make their mortgage repayments to Richmond rather than to the LRB.

The LRB will be writing to all its borrowers shortly to explain the proposals in more detail. I am pleased that the London borough of Richmond is prepared to assume responsibility for administering these mortgages. I am confident that the arrangements which we are proposing safeguard the interests of the borrowers and allow the LRB to discharge its obligations satisfactorily.

CRE (Housing Codes)

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has given further consideration to the extent of the proposed power for the Commission for Racial Equality to issue codes on housing.

Mr. Waldegrave: I am advised that problems relating to the rules of relevance are likely to prevent us from introducing in another place an amendment providing in the Housing Bill as comprehensive a power as we would have liked. We expect, however, that we will be able to cover not only rented housing but housing that is leasehold or occupied under licence and agencies such as building societies and estate agents in so far as they deal with these kinds of accommodation. We aim to extend the power to the rest of the housing field when a suitable opportunity arises. It will be for the commission to decide what action to take in the light of this.

Environmental Assessment

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he will issue a circular to local planning authorities setting out the procedures embodied in the regulations which implement the European Community directive on environmental assessment 85/337/EEC.

Mr. Waldegrave: My Department and the Welsh Office intend to issue the circular as soon as the Town and Country Planning (Assessment of Environmental Effects) Regulations, which were laid before Parliament in draft on 14 June, have been approved and made.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when his Department will publish the revised version of its booklet entitled, "Environmental Assessment of Major Projects in England and Wales".

Mr. Waldegrave: A draft of this advisory booklet was included with my Department's consultation paper on environmental assessment issued in April 1986. The final version is currently being prepared and will be issued in the next month or two.

Housing (Rural Areas)

Mr. Baldry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will make an announcement about housing in rural areas.

Mr. Ridley: The Government are committed to the growth of owner-occupation and to creating the right conditions for private investment in rented housing. Our policies are set out in the White Paper Cm. 214. I have been considering what further steps we can take to improve the supply of housing in rural areas both for sale and to rent at prices within the reach of people on all levels of income. I am issuing today two documents.

The first is an announcement of proposals for increasing the supply of low-cost housing in smaller villages; primarily through expanding the coverage and role of housing associations and the encouragement of private investment. This will involve building on the success of the rural housing association movement that has been established in part through the work of the National Agricultural Centre Rural Trust (NACRT). Its work is already funded by the Rural Development Commission and in the past by the Housing Corporation. I have agreed with the Rural Development Commission a threefold increase in NACRT's funding to enable it to expand its support service to the rural housing association movement and to establish further rural housing associations where they are needed. The Housing Corporation has already announced in its development programme for 1988-89 a revision of the criteria governing the selection of schemes in rural areas, and a doubling of its programme in smaller villages. I have now agreed with the Housing Corporation an extension to its commitment under which it will earmark sufficient funds within its development programme to permit a steady increase in the number of rural schemes approved within the new criteria up to 1990-91. The target figure for that year will be 600 approvals compared with the 185 approvals (on a slightly broader definition) given in 1987-88.

I shall also be looking for more direct private investment to meet the need for lower-cost housing in rural areas. The deregulation of rents combined with the tax benefits and subsidies now available should provide a major stimulus to the private rented sector, and will help landowners to provide housing for their local communities while still making a reasonable return. I hope that developers will pay increasing attention to the needs of village communities by designing developments sympathetically and by building balanced developments that help meet local needs for low-cost housing for rent and sale.

The second paper, on village housing and new villages, is being published as a basis for discussion on housing in rural areas and the land-use planning implications. In the light of comments received, the need for new policy guidance on the subject will be considered. The paper discusses housing in relation to the changing rural economy and considers housing development in villages and small towns and the possibility of new villages in areas well away from the conurbations and well outside the green belts. It emphasises that the Government are fully committed to preserving the green belts, areas of outstanding natural beauty and other statutorily protected areas.

Copies of both papers are available in the Library of the House and in the Vote Office.

Expanded Polystyrene

Sir Trevor Skeet: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has as to how many companies are using pentane technology to replace the use of chlorofluorocarbons for the production of expanded polystyrene; and what information he has about the alternative materials available.

Mr. Atkins: I have been asked to reply.

Pentane is already used as the blowing agent in the production of bead expanded polystyrene. All United Kingdom manufacturers of extruded expanded polystyrene have indicated that they propose to phase out the use of those clorofluorocarbons (CFCs) which are controlled under the provisions of the Montreal protocol. I am unable to provide a comprehensive answer regarding alternative materials. However, prices of the controlled CFCs are expected to rise as the protocol takes effect and this will encourage the development and adoption of substitutes.

Coast Protection

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what studies he has conducted into the impact on the British coast of a rise in the sea level of over $\frac{1}{4}$ metre; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer *[holding answer 4 July 1988]*: I have been asked to reply.

As part of a broader consideration of the impact of possible climate changes by the middle of the next century, the effect of a sea-level rise in excess of 0·2 m is being studied. The recent results were reported to the Toronto conference on "The Changing Atmosphere"; a copy of the United Kingdom report will be placed in the Library of the House.

Drainage bodies will have in mind the possibility of a rise in sea level, amongst other factors, when identifying the need for coast protection and sea defence work. When considering proposals for grant aid for such work, an allowance for a rate of rise of 0·3 m per century has been accepted as reasonable (equivalent to 0·2 m by 2050).

ENERGY

Daya Bay Project

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if his Department or organisations responsible to his Department have received any request since May 1979 to conduct a safety and evacuation analysis for the Daya Bay pressurised water reactor project at Guandong in the Republic of China; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The Hong Kong Government have retained the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority as consultants to advise on the implications of the Daya Bay pressurised water reactor for the territory.

Hinkley Point

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy how many civil servants in his Department have been seconded to the secretariat for the Hinkley Point C public inquiry; what is the current contact telephone number for the secretariat in *(a)* Somerset and *(b)* his Department; and for how long he estimates the secondments will be necessary.

Mr. Michael Spicer: My Department currently has four members of staff seconded to the Hinkley Point C inquiry secretariat. In addition another two members will be seconded to the secretariat shortly.

The telephone numbers for the secretariat are as follows:

1. Somerset—0278 652830 and 0278 652832
2. London—01 211 7324 and 01 211 5591

I expect secondments to continue until the inspector reports to the Secretary of State.

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on the terms of reference of the public inquiry into the Central Electricity Generating Board's proposal to build a pressurised water reactor nuclear power station at Hinkley Point.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to my hon. Friend the Member for Wells (Mr. Heathcoat-Amory) on 21 March 1988, at columns *21-2*.

International Atomic Energy Agency

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will arrange for a copy of the full 1987 International Atomic Energy Agency safeguards implementation report (SCR) to be placed in *(a)* the Library and *(b)* his departmental library.

Mr. Michael Spicer: No. As I said in my reply to the hon. Member for Merionnydd Nant Conwy (Dr. Thomas) on 14 June 1988, at column *101*, the annual safeguards implementation reports of the International Atomic Energy Agency are confidential to board members. A summary will be published in the agency's 1987 annual report, which will be placed in the Library of the House.

EMPLOYMENT

Labour Statistics

13. **Mr. Cummings:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what are the anticipated trends in the numbers of 16 to 19-year-olds entering the employment market in the northern region of England over the next five years.

Mr. Lee: The population of 16 to 19-year-olds in the northern region of England is projected to fall by 41,000 or 22 per cent., between mid-1988 and mid-1993. My Department does not make projections of the numbers in this age group who will enter the employment market in the northern region, but it is clear that these numbers too must be expected to fall substantially as they will do in Great Britain as a whole.

23. **Mr. Duffy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on levels of employment in South Yorkshire.

Mr. Lee: The latest available employment estimates for the county are from the September 1984 census of employment. There were then 462,700 employees in employment in South Yorkshire.

27. **Mr. Jack:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the changes in the numbers of people unemployed since June 1987.

Mr. Lee: In the 11 months between June 1987 and May 1988 seasonally adjusted unemployment excluding school leavers in the United Kingdom fell by 506,700 to 2,415,500, the lowest figure on a consistent basis since September 1981.

39. **Mr. Burt:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will made a statement on the current levels of unemployment in the north-west of England.

Mr. Lee: In May 1988. Seasonally adjusted unemployment, excluding school leavers, in the north-west region was 336,100, compared with 401,000 in May 1987, a fall of 63,900 over the last 12 Months and the lowest since July 1981.

41. **Mr. French:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement regarding the trend in unemployment in Gloucester over the past year.

Mr. Lee In May 1988 the number of unemployed claimants in the Gloucester travel-to-work-area was 4,276 or 6·2 per cent., of all employees in employment plus the unemployed compared with 5,638 or 8·2 per cent. in May 1987, a fall of 1,362 over the last 12 months.

53. **Mr. Nicholas Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what has been the reduction in unemployment levels in the United Kingdom since May 1985; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: In the three years between May 1985 and May 1988 seasonally adjusted unemployment, excluding school leavers, in the United Kingdom fell by 702,600. Within this period the total has fallen by 794,800 over the 22 months since July 1986, the longest and largest sustained fall since the war.

85. **Mr. Tim Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the percentage rate of unemployment in the United Kingdom; and what information he has about the corresponding figures for France, Italy and West Germany.

Mr. Lee: The information is as follows:

Standardised unemployment rates[1] April 1988, seasonally adjusted

	Per cent.
United Kingdom	8·8
France	10·3
Italy	11·7
West Germany	[2]6·5

[1] OECD standardised rates except Italy for which the latest harmonised rate published by the Statistical Office of the European Community has been given.

[2] March, 1988 figure.

107. **Mr. Hayward:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the numbers of people employed in the south-west of England.

Mr. Lee: The civilian employed labour force in the south-west region has increased in each of the last five years. In 1987 there was a net increase of 32,000 to 1,868,000. The civilian employed labour force is the sum of employees in employment and the self-employed.

114. **Mr. Wigley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the levels of unemployment in each of the United Kingdom regions.

Mr. Lee: The table shows for each of the standard regions in the United Kingdom, the seasonally adjusted level of unemployment excluding school leavers in May 1988 together with the percentage unemployment rates and the change over the last 12 months. The largest falls in the unemployment rates have been in the west midlands, north-west, north and Wales.

Region	*Number May 1988*	*Percentage rates May 1988*	*Change since May 1987*
South East	528,500	5·7	−1·8
Greater London	300,900	7·0	−1·6
East Anglia	54,400	5·4	−1·9
South West	142,700	6·9	−1·8
West Midlands	243,200	9·4	−2·4
East Midlands	151,800	7·9	−1·7
Yorkshire and Humberside	237,900	10·1	−1·9
North West	336,100	11·3	−2·2
North	180,400	12·7	−2·2
Wales	132,200	11·2	−2·0
Scotland	291,300	11·9	−1·9
Northern Ireland	116,700	17·1	−1·4

118. **Mr. Simon Coombs:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the current levels of unemployment.

Mr. Lee: In May 1988 the level of seasonally adjusted adult unemployment in the United Kingdom was 2,415,500, the lowest level on a consistent basis since September 1981. The figure has now fallen for 22 consecutive months, by 794,800 in total since July 1986, the longest and largest sustained fall on record since the war.

137. **Mr. Yeo:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the level of unemployment in Suffolk at the latest estimated date.

Mr. Lee: In May 1988 the number of unemployed claimants in the county of Suffolk was 15,010, a fall of 5,867 over the last 12 months.

138. **Mr. Steinberg:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what percentage of young people left school and went directly into work at 16 years without training in 1987.

Mr. Cope: We do not have any direct information on this point. However, a postal survey of young people aged 16 and 17 was conducted in spring 1987 as part of the youth cohort study. Twenty-three per cent. of those who replied said they were in full-time employment, and of those 25 per cent. said they neither received on-the-job training, nor attended courses at college.

141. **Mr. Andrew Mitchell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the level of unemployment in the east midlands.

Mr. Lee: In May 1988, seasonally adjusted unemployment excluding school leavers in the east midlands region was 151,800, compared with 184,600 in May 1987, a fall of 32,800 over the last 12 months.

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will detail the annual average for each year since 1979 of *(a)* the number of unemployed and *(b)* the number and percentage of this total who have been out of work for more than 12 months.

Mr. Lee: Direct comparisons of unemployment by duration since 1979 are not possible because of changes in the coverage of the count. The following is the available information which is also in the Library. Table *(a)* shows the average number of unemployed registrants in the United Kingdom and the average number and percentage of these who had been unemployed for 12 months or more for each year from 1979 to 1982. Table *(b)* shows corresponding figures according to the average number of claimants, from 1983 to 1987.

Table A

Average number of unemployed registrants in the United Kingdom

	Total unemployed	*Unemployed over 12 months*	
		Total	*Percentage of unemployed*
1979	1,406,873	359,651	25·6
1980	1,738,250	368,651	21·2
1981	2,696,348	595,708	22·1
1982	3,167,161	1,059,665	33·5

Table B

Average number of unemployed claimants in the United Kingdom

	Total unemployed	*Unemployed over 12 months*	
		Total	*Percentage of unemployed*
1983	3,135,777	1,123,936	35·8
1984	3,158,256	1,229,378	38·9
1985	3,281,355	1,332,260	40·6
1986	3,312,383	1,354,252	40·9
1987	3,015,550	1,260,030	41·8

Note: Figures based on the average for January, April, July and October each year.

Food and Environmental Protection

15. **Mr. Stott:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many additional Health and Safety Executive inspectors are needed to enforce the Control of Pesticides Regulations 1986.

18. **Mr. Canavan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many additional inspectors will be needed to fully implement the Food and Environment Protection Act.

28. **Dr. Godman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many additional inspectors will be needed to fully implement the Food and Environment Protection Act.

116. **Mr. Rooker** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many additional Health and Safety Executive inspectors are needed to enforce the Control of Pesticides Regulations 1986.

Mr. Nicholls: The Food and Environment Protection Act and its related Control of Pesticides Regulations are enforced by the Health and Safety Executive concurrently with other health and safety regulations. The executive plans to increase the number of inspectors in the agricultural and factory inspectorates from the current levels of 150 and 542·5 to 160 and 588 respectively by the end of 1988-89.

126. **Mr. Corbyn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many notices have been served under the Food and Environment Protection Act since it came into force.

130. **Mr. Blunkett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many notices have been served under the Food and Environment Protection Act since it came into force.

Mr. Nicholls: Between 27 June 1987 and 31 March 1988, a total of 61 enforcement notices were issued by the Health and Safety Executive under the Food and Environment Protection Act 1985.

152. **Mr. Home Robertson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many prosecutions have occurred under the Food and Environment Protection Act 1985 since it came into force.

Mr. Nicholls: Between 27 June 1987 and 31 March 1988 four prosecutions including eight offences were taken by the Health and Safety Executive's agricultural inspectorate under the Food and Environment Protection Act 1985.

Tourism

16. **Mr. Dickens:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how much the tourism industry earns in terms of overseas earnings; and what equivalent information he has for other major industries.

Mr. Lee: Overseas earnings from tourism were £6·237 billion in 1987, three times as much as earnings from car exports, which were £1,981 million, and nearly 25 per cent. higher than earnings from aerospace exports, which were £4,996 million. Overseas tourism earns half as much as the financial services sector and altogether accounts for over 20 per cent. of the service sector's total earnings. This is equivalent to about 10 per cent. of the value of all manufacturing exports.

98. **Mr. Jacques Arnold:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the increase in the total number of jobs in the tourism industry in the year to December 1987.

Mr. Lee: It is estimated that the number of employees in employment in tourism-related industries increased by 41,000, or 3 per cent., between December 1986 and December 1987. The self-employed are not included in this estimate.

102. **Mr. Ken Hargreaves:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what he is doing in schools to promote awareness of tourism as a career.

Mr. Lee: A number of initiatives are under way, including some 20 projects funded under the technical and vocational education initiative. I also constantly encourage the tourism industry itself to promote the excellent and varied career opportunities that it offers. It is pleasing to see the range of careers material aimed at young people that is now available.

117. **Mr. David Davis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the increase in jobs in the tourism industry in the regions outside London and the south-east between December 1985 and December 1987.

Mr. Lee: Regional information for the tourist industry as a whole is not available for the period specified. However, it is estimated that the number of employees in employment specifically in the hotel and catering industry outside London and the south-east increased by 51,000 or 8 per cent. between December 1985 and December 1987. The self-employed are not included in this estimate.

158. **Mr. David Porter:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what further plans he has to encourage jobs in tourism in East Anglia; and what assessment he has made of the impact of tourists in the region.

Mr. Lee: My Department will continue to support the work of the English tourist board and the East Anglia tourist board in promoting the expansion of tourism in East Anglia, thereby helping to create more jobs not only in the tourist sector but also in other related industries in the area. In 1987 employment in the hotel and catering sectors in the East Anglia employment region was 34,000, compared with 23,000 in 1977, an increase of 47 per cent. It should be noted, however, that these figures are subject to significant sampling errors. During the same period tourism spend went up from £240 million to £670 million, an increase of 179 per cent.

Health and Safety Executive

17. **Mr. Archer:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the total number of inspectors now available to the Health and Safety Executive.

20. **Mr. Skinner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the total number of inspectors now available to the Health and Safety Executive.

Mr. Nicholls: As of 1 June this year, the total number of inspectors employed by the Health and Safety Executive was 1,159.

31. **Mr. Dunnachie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many additional areas of responsibility have been taken on by the Health and Safety Executive since 1979.

Mr. Nicholls: The Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 laid upon the Health and Safety Commission and Executive responsibility for virtually all aspects of occupational health and safety, and most aspects of the protection of the public from industrial activity. Within this overall competence HSE has acquired the following specific new responsibilities since 1979:

(i) carriage by road, classification, packaging and labelling of dangerous substances;
(ii) notification of new and existing substances before they are placed on the market;
(iii) action under the European directive on the control of industrial major accident hazards;
(iv) mains gas safety;
(v) asbestos licensing;
(vi) the enforcement of part 3 of the Food and Environment Protection Act and its related Control of Pesticides Regulations.

In addition, the HSE has acquired new or substantially expanded work in connection with the nuclear industry and the control of dangerous substances in harbour areas, radiation and noise and the health and safety implications of the development and use of new technology including programmable electronics and biotechnology. There has also been a significant growth of EC activity and regulations in areas affecting safety and health, and a general growth in public and international interest in relevant environmental and major hazards issues requiring action by the HSE.

32. **Mrs. Dunwoody:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment when he last met the director general of the Health and Safety Executive to discuss funding of the Health and Safety Executive.

97. **Dr. Reid:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment when he last met the director general of the Health and Safety Executive to discuss funding of the executive.

109. **Mr. Gareth Wardell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment when he last met the director general of the Health and Safety Executive to discuss funding of the executive.

144. **Mr. Frank Cook:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment when he last met the director general of the Health and Safety Executive to discuss funding of the executive.

Mr. Nicholls: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and I last met the Health and Safety Commission to discuss funding of the Health and Safety Commission and Executive on 8 March 1988. The director general of the HSE attended the meeting.

35. **Mr. Harry Ewing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many inspectors were employed by the Health and Safety Executive in *(a)* 1979 and *(b)* in the latest year for which figures are available.

149. **Mr. Wareing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many inspectors were employed by the Health and Safety Executive 1979; and what is the figure at present.

89. **Mrs. Wise:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many inspectors were employed by the Health and Safety Executive in 1979 and at present.

Mr. Nicholls: On 1 April 1979, 1,424 inspectors were in post in the HSE. On 1 June 1988 there were 1,159.

40. **Mr. Allen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what has been the total accommodation costs paid to Health and Safety Executive staff following the relocation of the executive to Bootle.

145. **Dr. Marek:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what has been the total accommodation costs paid to Health and Safety Executive staff following the relocation of the Health and Safety Executive to Bootle.

Mr. Nicholls: The relocation of the Health and Safety Executive to Bootle was phased between 1982 and 1986 and the search and analysis of individual records to determine for example what was paid to individuals employed on detached duty terms would be disproportionately expensive.

63. **Mr. Parry:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the total number of inspectors now available to the Health and Safety Executive.

95. **Ms. Armstrong:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the number of inspectors now available to the Health and Safety Executive.

Mr. Nicholls: The total number of inspectors employed by the Health and Safety Executive is 1,159 (1 June 1988).

78. **Mr. Doran:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what steps he has taken to ensure that the research and laboratory services division of the Health and Safety Executive is able to carry out its responsibilities adequately.

Mr. Nicholls: The responsibility for ensuring that the division is able to carry out its responsibilities adequately lies with the Health and Safety Commission and Executive. The division is receiving an appropriate share of the available resources and emphasis is being placed on efficiency improvements within the division to obtain maximum benefit from these resources.

87. **Mr. Hood:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he has any plans to improve the performance of the technology division of the Health and Safety Executive.

Mr. Nicholls: No. The performance of the technology division is a matter for the Health and Safety Executive.

108. **Mr. McAllion:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what steps he has taken to ensure that the directorate of information services of the Health and Safety Executive is able to carry out its responsibilities effectively.

Mr. Nicholls: I am satisfied that the Health and Safety Executive's directorate of information and advisory services is able to carry out its responsibilities effectively. The management of the division is a matter for the executive.

120. **Ms. Ruddock:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what steps he has taken to ensure that the research and laboratory services division of the Health and Safety Executive is able to carry out its responsibilities adequately.

162. **Mr. Foot:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what steps he has taken to ensure that the research and laboratory services division of the Health and Safety Executive is able to carry out its responsibilities adequately.

Mr. Nicholls: I am satisfied that the Health and Safety Executive's research and laboratories division is able to carry out its responsibilities effectively. The management of the division is a matter for the executive.

121. **Mr. Terry Davis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the additional funding sought by the Health and Safety Executive for the running of the executive during the year 1988-89.

Mr. Nicholls: The Health and Safety Executive did not seek any additional funding at the time of the 1988-89 Supply Estimates.

128. **Mr. Galloway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what steps he has taken to ensure that the enforcing inspectorates of the Health and Safety Executive receive adequate back-up services from the specialist inspectorates.

148. **Mr. Mullin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what steps he has taken to ensure that the enforcing inspectorates of the Health and Safety Executive receive adequate back-up services from the specialist inspectorates.

Mr. Nicholls: The allocation of resources in support of the enforcing inspectorate is a matter for the Health and Safety Executive.

132. **Mr. Meale:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many of the United Kingdom's 1,500 most potentially dangerous workplaces the technology division of the Health and Safety Executive plans to inspect in the next 12 months.

Mr. Nicholls: Of the approximately 1,300 premises which are subject to the Fire Certification (Special Premises) Regulations 1976, HSE inspectors from the technology division expect to visit 215 in 1988-89. Some 600 certificates have already been issued, a further 35 premises have been surveyed and listed major hazard sites are also subject to other visits by HSE inspectors.

150. **Mrs. Fyfe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what steps he has taken to ensure that the directorate of information services of the Health and Safety Executive is able to carry out its responsibilities effectively.

Mr. Nicholls: The responsibility for ensuring that the division is able to carry out its responsibilities adequately lies with the Health and Safety Commission and Executive. The division is receiving an appropriate share of the available resources and emphasis is being placed on efficiency improvements within the division to obtain maximum benefit from them.

Construction Industry

19. **Mr. Heffer:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many prohibition notices have been issued during the Health and Safety Executive's intensive campaign of visits to construction sites in 1988.

Mr. Cope: Between 1 January 1988 and 10 June 1988 632 prohibition notices have been issued by Health and Safety Executive inspectors participating in the series of construction site blitzes.

The present series of construction blitzes is continuing.

66. **Mr. Morley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is his estimate of the shortage of skilled workers in the construction industry at the present time.

Mr. Nicholls: The growth of the economy has meant increased demand for construction workers, particularly in the south. Employers are best placed to identify and meet their skill needs, and I hope they will participate fully in programmes such as the YTS and employment training.

99. **Mr. Young:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many hours have been spent by inspectors who are usually employed in fields other than construction, in connection with the Health and Safety Executive's blitzes in 1988 on construction sites.

Mr. Nicholls: The information is not available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

106. **Mr. Illsley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many prosecutions have resulted from the Health and Safety Executive's campaign of visits to construction sites in 1988.

Mr. Nicholls: The information requested is not available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

New Training Scheme

21. **Mr. Andrew F. Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what consultations he has had with the Health and Safety Commission concerning the new training scheme.

Mr. Nicholls: The commission has strongly supported our policy that participants on the new employment training programme should have the same protection as employees for the purposes of health and safety legislation. The commission has recently forwarded, for my approval, draft regulations which would give effect to this policy, and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State plans to lay these before Parliament shortly.

Adult Training

24. **Mr. Knapman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he has any plans to meet members of the Trades Union Congress Council to discuss the adult training scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has no present plans to do so.

140. **Mr. Latham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he will make a statement on the progress of the adult training initiative.

Mr. Nicholls: Preparation for the launch of employment training are proceeding very well indeed. There has been a very good response from organisations bidding to deliver training places with over twice as many bids as are needed. The Training Commission will be signing contracts with providers during July and the programme will come into operation as planned on 5 September.

Small Firms

154. **Mr. Kirkhope:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many inquiries were received by the small firms service in 1987-88; and if he will make a statement.

26. **Mr. Amess:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a further statement on the progress of the small firms service.

Mr. Cope: The achievements of the small firms service in 1987-88 are set out in its annual report, published today. A copy will be sent to all hon. Members.

48. **Mr. Gill:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what plans he has to meet the president of the Association of British Chambers of Commerce to discuss the creation of small firms; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Cope: I met a delegation from the Association of British Chambers of Commerce on 30 June to discuss a range of issues including those relating to small firms.

133. **Mr. Bright:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the annual report 1987-88 of the small firms service.

Mr. Cope: I have today announced the publication of the 1987-88 annual report of the small firms service. A copy is being sent to all hon. Members.

153. **Mrs. Maureen Hicks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many guarantees have been given by his Department under the loan guarantee scheme to small firms; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Cope: Since 1981 over 19,600 guaranteed loans to a value of £650 million have been given to small firms under the loan guarantee scheme. Following the introduction in January this year of simplified administrative procedures for loans up to £15,000 the rate of applications has doubled and is now running at over 200 a month. An increase in the guarantee to 85 per cent. for businesses in inner city task force areas was recently announced and I hope that this change will also lead to greater usage of the scheme.

155. **Mr. Wood:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what plans he has to meet the director general of the Institute of Directors to discuss the development of small businesses; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Cope: I have no immediate plans to meet the director general of the Institute of Directors, although both I and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State have done so on many occasions.

156. **Mr. Bellingham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what contribution is being made to the Government's inner city initiative by the small firms service; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Cope: The small firms service offers a comprehensive national information and counselling service for those running small businesses or wishing to start their own business. This includes over 39,000 counselling sessions in 1987-88 of which more than a quarter were in inner cities. The small firms service also maintains very close links with other organisations offering services to small businesses such as local enterprise agencies.

As part of the action for cities initiative, announced by the Prime Minister on 7 March, the small firms service contribution in inner city areas is being considerably increased with the opening of six new offices in Blackburn, Derby, Leicester, Middlesborough, Sheffield and Wolverhampton; and the appointment of specialist business advisers to work in the local small business community, particularly with ethnic minority businesses.

Young People (Training)

29. **Mr. George Howarth:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what steps he is taking to encourage all employers to train young people who join their firms between the ages of 16 and 19 years.

Mr. Cope: The Government will continue to underline the value, to employers and young people alike, of quality training for young recruits. YTS offers young people a structured programme of quality training and work experience and is the main route into employment for the under 18 age group.

Crown Immunity

30. **Mr. Ashley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment when he last discussed the health and safety implications of Crown immunity with the Health and Safety Commission.

Mr. Nicholls: Since becoming Secretary of State for Employment my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has not discussed this subject with the Health and Safety Commission. However, when my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, was Minister for Employment he met the commission on 8 May 1986 to discuss the matter.

Enterprise Agencies

33. **Mr. Anthony Coombs:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many enterprise agencies are operating in the inner city areas; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Cope: There are over 90 local enterprise agencies operating in the urban programme authorities in England. My Department, through the local enterprise agency grant scheme, is encouraging the development of a network of viable agencies in England; 54 agencies in the urban programme authority areas were supported in the 1987-88 financial year. In addition, my Department has recently introduced a new local enterprise agency project scheme which is designed to assist projects run by agencies in the urban programme authority areas and to encourage greater private sector support for them.

Crossroads Attendance Schemes (Scotland)

34. **Mr. McLeish:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what representations he has received concerning the impact of the rules of the new adult training programme on the Crossroads (Scottish) attendance schemes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: We have received a number of representations from hon. Members about the future of the Crossroads attendance schemes. The voluntary sector has an important part to play in employment training and I hope most existing managing agents and sponsors will move forward into the new programme.

Hotel, Catering and Travel Trades

36. **Mr. Bevan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many places are provided under the YTS in the hotels, catering and travel trades.

Mr. Cope: At the end of May 1988 there were 11,600 YTS places available on schemes in the hotel and catering industry and just over 2,000 places on schemes managed by the Association of British Travel Agents and a number of individual tour operators.

Heavy Weights (Lifting)

37. **Mr. Cryer:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on proposals from the Health and Safety Executive for legislation to control lifting of heavy weights.

Mr. Nicholls: A tripartite working party set up by the Health and Safety Commission to review proposals for regulations and guidance on the manual handling of loads will be presenting its conclusions to the commission this summer.

Industrial Relations

38. **Mr. Knox:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he has had any recent discussions with the Confederation of British Industry on the long-term improvement of industrial relations.

Mr. Cope: On the 14 June my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State spoke to the Confederation of British Industry conference about the Employment Act 1988.

Factory Inspectors

42. **Mr. McCartney:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what proportion of the factory inspectorate are trainee inspectors.

92. **Mr. Radice:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what proportion of the factory inspectorate are trainee inspectors.

Mr. Nicholls: 11·6 per cent. of the total number of factory inspectors in the inspectorate on 1 June 1988 are trainees.

45. **Mr. Barry Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many workplaces the factory inspectorate visited during the periods 1 April 1986 to 31 March 1987, and 1 April 1987 to 31 March 1988.

56. **Mr. Boyes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many workplaces the factory inspectorate visited during the periods 1 April 1986 to 31 March 1987 and 1 April 1987 to 31 March 1988.

Mr. Nicholls: Between 1 April 1986 and 31 March 1987, factory inspectors paid 186,155 visits to workplaces for which the Health and Safety Executive's factory inspectorate had enforcement responsibility. Between 1 April 1987 and 31 March 1988, 173,033 (provisional) visits were paid.

47. **Mr. Bill Michie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many sites have been visited by the factory inspectorate at the latest available date using the hazards rating system since its introduction; and how many sites were scheduled to have been visited under this system by the same date.

Mr. Nicholls: This question is incapable of answer. The scheme has been in operation for over 10 years, and there is a substantial turnover of scheduled sites as companies grow or go out of business.

50. **Mr. Haynes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many specialist factory inspectors are currently in place.

74. **Ms. Short:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many specialist factory inspectors are currently in post.

Mr. Nicholls: On 1 June 1988 there were 213 specialist inspectors in post with the Health and Safety Executive.

68. **Mr. Worthington:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many specialist inspectors have resigned from the Health and Safety Executive in the past 12 months.

Mr. Nicholls: Between 1 June 1987 and 31 May 1988 a total of 10 specialist inspectors resigned from the Health and Safety Executive.

71. **Mr. Nigel Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the latest number of factory inspectors.

Mr. Nicholls: On 1 June 1988 there were 542·5 inspectors in post in the Health and Safety Executive's factory inspectorate.

80. **Mr. Pendry:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what proportion of reported accidents is investigated by the factory inspectorate.

157. **Mr. Turner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what proportion of reported accidents is investigated by the factory inspectorate.

Mr. Nicholls: In 1987-88 a total of 4·9 per cent. of reportable accidents reported to the Health and Safety Executive's factory inspectorate were investigated.

84. **Mr. Graham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many inspector hours were spent enforcing the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations in the last 12 months.

Mr. Nicholls: Enforcement of the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Occurrences Regulations is dealt with during inspections and investigations, and the time spent on drawing the attention of employers to the need to report such incidents is not recorded separately.

93. **Mr. Fatchett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what information he has on *(a)* the number of Health and Safety Executive inspectors and *(b)* accident at work rates.

Mr. Nicholls: On 1 June 1988 the total number of HSE inspectors in post was 1,159. The latest accident at work rates are given, for those industries where the HSE is the enforcing authority, in the Health and Safety Commission-Executive annual report 1986-87—a copy of which is in the Library.

105. **Mr. Lofthouse:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many specialist factory inspectors are currently in place.

Mr. Nicholls: On 1 June 1988, there were 213 specialist factory inspectors in post with the Health and Safety Executive.

124. **Mr. Sedgemore:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how often sites are reviewed as to whether or not they should be inspected under the factory inspectorate's hazards rating system.

Mr. Nicholls: Each fixed premise registered with the factory inspectorate is allocated an inspection rating and this is reviewed at each visit to the premises. In addition, each inspection rating is reviewed at the start of every inspection year, when a rating is amended upwards to take into account the period since the last preventive inspection.

129. **Mr. Redmond:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the average frequency of visits made by the factory inspectorate to known workplaces in 1987.

Mr Nicholls: There is no information available on the average frequency of visits made by the factory inspectorate to known workplaces in 1987.

131. **Mr. Michael Welsh:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is his estimate of the number of additional factory inspectors that would be required to allow the average frequency of preventive inspection of factory sites to be once in every four years.

Mr. Nicholls: The 402,000 premises registered with HSE include many fixed sites other than factories and there is an unknown number of small industrial establishments not registered. Consequently the information is not available in the form in which it is requested.

139. **Mr. Corbett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how often sites are reviewed as to whether they should be inspected under the factory inspectorate's hazards rating system.

Mr Nicholls: Each fixed premise registered with the factory inspectorate is allocated an inspection rating and this is reviewed at each visit to the premises. In addition, each inspection rating is reviewed at the start of every inspection year, when a rating is amended upwards to take into account the period since the last preventive inspection.

146. **Mr. Terry Lewis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many sites the factory inspectorate has decided not to visit unless requested to do so or unless there is a serious accident.

Mr. Nicholls: None.

Restart Scheme

43. **Mr. Waller:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many restart interviews have been carried out since the introduction of the scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: Since national implementation of the restart programme on 1 July 1986 until 27 May 1988, almost 4 million restart interviews have taken place.

Great English City Breaks

44. **Mr. Key:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many bed nights for Great English City Breaks were sold between *(a)* October 1987 and February 1988 and *(b)* October 1986 and February 1987.

Mr. Lee: Exact figures for the periods specified are not available, because of the different methods of record-keeping employed by the cities involved in the city breaks promotion. However, ETB estimates are:

October 1987 to February 1988 = 20,000 bed nights sold.
October 1986 to February 1987 = 5,000 bed nights sold.

Gas Regulations

46. **Mr. Wall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many inspector hours were spent enforcing the Gas Safety (Installation and Use) Regulations during the past 12 months.

159. **Mr. Terry Field:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many inspector hours were spent enforcing the Gas Safety (Installation and Use) Regulations during the past 12 months.

Mr. Nicholls: The time spent by factory inspectors on enforcement related action connected with the Gas Safety (Installation and Use) Regulations 1984 is not recorded separately.

Dangerous Workplaces

49. **Mr. Nellist:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many of the United Kingdom's 1,500 most potentially dangerous workplaces the technology division of the Health and Safety Executive has inspected and certified for fire precautions since 1976.

54. **Mrs. Golding:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many of the United Kingdom's 1,500 most potentially dangerous workplaces the technology division of the Health and Safety Executive has inspected and certified for fire precautions since 1976.

Mr. Nicholls: Of the approximately 1,300 premises which are subject to the Fire Certification (Special Premises) Regulations 1976, the HSE has issued approximately 600 fire certificates and surveyed a further 35. This is part of a continuing programme.

Self-employment

51. **Mr. Ian Bruce:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the increase in the number of people in self-employment since June 1979; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: Between June 1979 and December 1987, the latest date for which estimates are available, there was a net increase of 1,021,000 in the number of self-employed people in Great Britain.

134. **Mr. Devlin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the number of self-employed people in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Lee: In December 1987, the latest date for which estimates are available, there were 2,923,000 self-employed in the United Kingdom; this represented 12 per cent. of the employed labour force.

London Docklands

52. **Mr. Sheerman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what steps he intends taking to increase training opportunities for unemployed people in the areas bordering the London docklands.

Mr. Nicholls: People in the areas bordering London docklands are served by a network of Training Commission offices delivering its full range of training programmes. In addition, the commission is working closely with the London Docklands development corporation to develop joint training initiatives.

The Training Commission and employment service have also set up the docklands liaison group to help co-ordinate and streamline links with local organisations. The group, in consultation with the London Docklands development corporation, the employment service, local business and other organisations, is seeking better information about new jobs and the skills which unemployed people in and around London docklands will need to help them take advantage of the many new opportunities which the regeneration of the docklands is providing.

Northern Region

55. **Mr. Fallon:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people are employed as self-employed in the northern region; and what was the figure in 1983.

Mr. Lee: In December 1987, the latest date for which figures are available, there were an estimated 110,000 self-employed people in the northern region. In December 1983 the figure was 92,000.

62. **Mr. Leadbitter:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what proportion of YTS leavers in the northern region of England became unemployed.

Mr. Cope: The latest available information, from the Training Commission's 100 per cent. follow-up survey of YTS leavers, shows that 31 per cent. of leavers between April 1986 and December 1987 in the northern region were unemployed some three months after leaving their scheme.

69. **Mr. Ronnie Campbell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many jobs have been lost in manufacturing in the northern region of England since 1979.

Mr. Lee: There are no figures for job losses and job gains. Between March 1979 and March 1988 the number of employees in employment in manufacturing in the northern region fell by 147,000.

Dock Labour Scheme

57. **Mr. Madel:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he expects to announce changes in the dock labour scheme before 1 September 1989; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: As I said in reply to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Warrington, South (Mr. Butler), on 29 April, at column 298, and on other occasions in the House, the Government have no present plans to change the scheme. I cannot speculate about what view might be taken in future.

Manufacturing Industry

58. **Mr. Roy Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement about the trend in the numbers employed in the manufacturing industry.

Mr. Lee: Between April 1987 and April 1988, the latest date for which figures are available, there was an average net decrease of 3,000 per month in the number of employees in employment in the manufacturing industries in Great Britain. In the period from April 1986 to April 1987 the average net decrease was 12,000 per month. This is clear evidence that the trend in manufacturing employment has levelled out compared with the previous relatively rapid falls.

Long-term Unemployment

59. **Mrs. Virginia Bottomley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what plans he has to improve the work skills of the long-term unemployed.

Mr. Nicholls: The new £1·5 billion adult programme employment training, which starts on 5 September 1988, represents our major investment in improving the work skills of long-term unemployed people.

Employment training will be a high quality training programme relevant to the needs of individuals and the local labour market. Trainees will follow their own individual training plan leading to a record of achievement and wherever possible to recognised vocational qualifications or a credit towards one.

Hazardous Substances

60. **Mr. Flannery:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many additional health and safety inspectors will be needed to enforce the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations.

Mr. Nicholls: No additional Health and Safety Executive inspectors will be needed specifically to enforce the proposed Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations as currently drafted. Enforcement of the regulations will be integrated into normal inspection arrangements.

Construction Industry

61. **Mr. Martlew:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what steps is he taking to train more skilled workers for the construction industry.

Mr. Nicholls: We are spending some £150 million a year on providing nearly 60,000 YTS places for trainees in construction occupations, and the introduction of employment training this autumn will provide new opportunities for the training of the adult unemployed in construction skills. I understand that the Construction Industry Training Board is already discussing with employers the provision of up to 6,000 employment training places a year.

Non-statutory Training Organisations

64. **Ms. Quin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what steps he intends taking to increase the effectiveness of non-statutory training organisations.

Mr. Nicholls: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Huddersfield (Mr. Sheerman) on Tuesday 29 March, at column *412*.

Hazards Rating System (Site Inspections)

65. **Dr. Moonie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how often sites are reviewed as to whether or not they should be inspected under the factory inspectorate's hazards rating system.

Mr. Nicholls: Each fixed premise registered with the factory inspectorate is allocated an inspection rating and this is reviewed at each visit to the premises.

In addition, each inspection rating is reviewed at the start of every inspection year, when a rating is amended upwards to take into account the period since the last preventive inspection.

Investment Statistics

67. **Mr. Curry:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give the figure for investment from July 1987 to December 1987 in *(a)* new hotel extensions or refurbishments, *(b)* marinas, *(c)* conference/theatre facilities, *(d)* mixed developments and *(e)* self-catering facilities.

Mr. Lee: The English tourist board's "Tourism Investment Monitor", which identifies tourism developments valued at over £0·5 million, shows the following levels of investment in projects opened or under construction during the period July 1987 to December 1987:

	£ million
Hotel extension and refurbishments	155·3
Marinas	113·8
Theatres and conference facilities	154·2
Major mixed developments	247·1
Self-catering facilities	43·2

Rural Areas

70. **Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what measures are being undertaken by his Department to ensure a reduction of unemployment in rural areas with higher than average levels of unemployment.

Mr. Lee: My Department is playing its part with other interested Departments to foster improvements in the economy of rural areas. In particular, we are providing active encouragement and support to enterprise, through our support for local enterprise agencies, tourism, and small businesses, which we are aiding through our small firms service and a range of marketing improvement services. In addition, the full range of our employment, enterprise and training measures are available to help unemployed people in all rural areas.

There are clear signs that those policies are helping to reduce unemployment in all rural areas. Estimates of unemployment in rural areas produced for the Development Commission for Rural England show that in the year to January 1988 unemployment fell in all the commission's priority rural development areas. Some of the largest falls occurred in rural areas with the highest unemployment rates. The average unemployment rate of all rural development areas was 8·6 per cent. in January 1988, compared with an average for the United Kingdom of 9·8 per cent. at that time.

Information Technology

72. **Mr. Hinchliffe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what steps he intends to take to tackle skill shortages in information technology.

Mr. Cope: The Government, through the Training Commission, support the learning of information technology (IT) skills with YTS and its adult training programmes including, from September, the £1·5 billion employment training programme. Support is also given to industrial training organisations and other employer groupings to improve the quantity and quality of relevant IT training. In addition, the number of places in higher education IT courses has increased by 50 per cent. since 1979 and is being expanded further.

Single Market

73. **Mr. Grocott:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he will discuss with his European counterparts the impact of the single European market on working hours and conditions.

Mr. Cope: I have no plans at present to discuss these matters with ministerial colleagues from other member states. Working hours and conditions can most appropriately be discussed between employers and employees in the light of their individual circumstances.

161. **Ms. Primarolo:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he will discuss with his European counterparts the impact of the single European market on health and safety.

Mr. Cope: The Council of Labour and Social Affairs Ministers held on 1 December 1987 discussed the European Commission's plans for a programme of work on health and safety legislation following the adoption of the Single European Act. The Council which met on 9 June agreed a timetable, proposed by the current Presidency and the next two Presidencies, for further work on proposals for health and safety at work.

YTS

75. **Mr. Orme:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he will make a statement on health and safety in relation to YTS.

Mr. Cope: The Training Commission places paramount importance on health and safety in YTS. There is a contractural requirement on managing agents to secure the health, safety and welfare of trainees both in work placements and in off-the-job training. In addition, a positive commitment to health and safety is one of the criteria which have to be met before approved training organisation status is granted. Moreover, in 1987 a total of 211 work placements were closed or not accepted because they did not meet the stringent health and safety requirements of the commission.

Details of how the commission has been implementing its policy can be found in the latest annual report, "Health and Safety on YTS 1 January 1987 to 31 December 1987", which is being placed in the Library.

88. **Mr. Vaz:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what percentage of young people in YTS schemes also undertake part-time study for further education qualifications at the same time.

Mr. Cope: There is no information available on the amount of part-time study undertaken by YTS trainees apart from that leading to vocational qualifications as part of their YTS training programme.

It is an objective of the two-year YTS that all trainees should have the opportunity to gain a recognised vocational qualification or a credit towards a qualification. All two-year YTS training programmes must provide trainees with a minimum of 20 weeks, and one-year programmes a minimum of 13 weeks off-the-job training.

Evidence from a survey of YTS trainees in their second year in September 1987 showed that 98 per cent. of them had trained for a qualification in their first year on YTS

West Midlands

76. **Mr. Pawsey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on current levels of unemployment in the west midlands.

Mr. Lee: In May 1988, seasonally adjusted unemployment excluding school leavers in the west midlands region was 243,200, compared with 305,800 in May 1987—a fall of 62,600 over the last 12 months and the lowest since March 1981.

Employment Medical Advisory Service

77. **Ms. Harman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many doctors and nurses are currently employed by the employment medical advisory service.

160. **Mrs. Mahon:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many doctors and nurses are currently employed by the employment medical advisory service.

Mr. Nicholls: On 1 June 1988 a total of 51 doctors and 47 nurses were employed in the Health and Safety Executive's employment medical advisory service.

110. **Mr. David Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he has any plans to strengthen the employment medical advisory service.

Mr. Nicholls: Responsibility for the employment medical advisory service lies with the Health and Safety Commission and Executive. A reorganisation of the service's regional structure has started and will bring it into line with the rest of HSE's area organisation. This will result in a more effective use of resources across the country.

Power Presses

79. **Mr. Battle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what qualifications a competent person must have to inspect safety equipment under the 1965 power press regulations.

Mr. Nicholls: The Power Presses Regulations 1965 do not require any specific qualifications for a competent person and whether a person is competent for the purpose of the regulations is for the court to decide. However, it is generally considered that such a person should have such practical and theoretical knowledge and the actual experience of the type of machinery or plant which he has to examine as will enable him to detect defects or weaknesses which it is the purpose of the examination to discover, and to assess their importance in relation to the strength and functions of the machinery or plant.

Availability for Work Rule (Itinerants)

81. **Mr. Heathcoat-Amory:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how the availability for work rule for eligibility for unemployment benefit is applied to itinerants.

Mr. Lee: Availability for work is enforced by my Department through the availability questionnaire which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State announced in this House on 14 December 1987, *Official Report*, columns 337-38. Instructions issued to officials in the south-west require them to apply the full test of availability to any unemployed person claiming benefit.

111. **Mr. Marlow:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will take action to strengthen the availability for work rule such that itinerant hippies can no longer gain access to unemployment benefits.

Mr. Lee: Being available for work is a fundamental condition for the receipt of unemployment benefits. In the past 18 months my Department has improved its procedures for identifying those who are not genuinely available. Indeed, the revised questionnaire my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State announced in this House on 14 December 1987 *Official Report* at columns 337-38 is already proving more successful in this area than its predecessors.

Instructions to officials in the south-west require them to apply availability testing fully to each claimant. We keep the availability test under review but we do not plan any changes to affect one group differently from another.

Training Commission

82. **Mr. Favell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what recent representations he has had on the future of the Manpower Services Commission.

Mr. Cope: Since the passing of the Employment Act 1988 I have received only one representation, from the Association of Principals of Colleges, about the composition of the additional membership of what has now become the Training Commission.

Young People and Sexual Discrimination

83. **Mr. McFall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many responses he has received to the consultative document on restrictions on employment of young people and removal of sexual discrimination in legislation; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: My Department has received a total of 83 responses to the consultative document from various organisations and individuals.

Hotel and Catering Industry

86. **Mr. Michael Brown:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what estimate he has for the increase in the number of self-employed people in the hotel and catering sector in the last four years.

Mr. Lee: It is estimated that between 1983 and 1987 the number of self-employed people in the hotel and catering industry in Great Britain increased by 38,000 or 27 per cent.

Job Vacancies

90. **Sir Fergus Montgomery:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many inquiries were received in 1987 by unemployed people following up advertised job vacancies in jobcentres; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: Precise information for 1987 is not available. However I would expect the total to be broadly in line with that for 1985-86, the last year in which comprehensive information is available. At that time over 80 per cent. of the total 19 million job vacancy inquiries were made by unemployed people.

100. **Mr. Roger King:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the current number of job vacancies in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Lee: In May 1988 the number of unfilled vacancies registered at jobcentres in the United Kingdom, seasonally adjusted and excluding community programme vacancies was 255,500, compared with 230,500 in May 1987—an increase of 11 per cent. over the last 12 months. It is estimated that about one third of vacancies are notified to jobcentres.

Employers (Negligence)

91. **Mr. Galbraith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many employers have been sentenced to imprisonment since 1974, having been found negligent when their employees have been killed at work.

151. **Mr. James Lamond:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many employers have been sentenced to imprisonment since 1974, having been found negligent when their employees have been killed at work.

Mr. Nicholls: None in prosecutions brought by the Health and Safety Executive.

Skillcentres

94. **Mr. Ingram:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people received training in Manpower Services Commissions skillcentres in the last year.

Mr. Nicholls: In the financial year 1987-88, the numbers of trainees starting courses in skillcentres run by the Skills Training Agency (STA) were as follows:

36,855 on Training Commission sponsored training; 50,000 on employer-sponsored training. In addition, a further 22,143 people were trained on employer's premises by the STA's mobile training service.

Loan Guarantee Scheme

96. **Mr. Rowe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he has any plans to continue the loan guarantee scheme; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Cope: The loan guarantee scheme is currently due to run until 31 March 1989. An evaluation of the scheme has recently been carried out by consultants who are due to report shortly. In addition a telephone survey of current users of the scheme is taking place. A decision on the need for the loan guarantee scheme after 31 March 1989 will be taken in the light of the reports and other factors.

Health and Safety

101. **Mr. Clay:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is his policy towards the balance to be struck by the Health and Safety Commission between hazards to people and costs to industry.

Mr. Nicholls: The Health and Safety Commission in its last published plan of work (for 1985-86 and onwards) stated that the protection of those at work and of the public is its indispensable aim, and that this must be achieved at realistic cost to industry, with technical understanding, and by the use of practical common sense.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has endorsed the commission's policy and in considering proposals put to him by the commission for new legislation under the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974. We use the same criteria.

142. **Mr. Buckley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he has any plans to seek to increase the penalties available where health and safety law has been contravened.

Mr. Nicholls: It has been suggested that the maximum fines available to magistrates' courts for breaches of health and safety legislation are not high enough. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has sought the views of the Health and Safety Commission and is now considering with colleagues whether there is a case to be made for reviewing these penalties.

Health and Safety

143. **Mr. Strang:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will introduce measures to give workers and their trade union representatives more power to ensure that regulations governing health and safety at work are fully applied.

Mr. Nicholls: No.

Self-catering Accommodation Approval Scheme

103. **Mr. David Nicholson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many applications have been made so far to the English tourist board's self-catering accommodation approval scheme.

Mr. Lee: I understand from the English tourist board that between January, when the scheme began, and 24 June this year, 1,900 applications have been received by the ETB, covering 5,600 units of accommodation.

Holiday Accommodation (Special Needs)

104. **Mr. Butterfill:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what he is doing to encourage the improvement of holiday accommodation for those with special needs.

Mr. Lee: The English tourist board (ETB) provides financial support for the holiday care service which is a national charity providing information, help and advice on holidays for disabled people and others with special needs. The holiday care service has just set up a working party to recommend on future development of holiday provision for these groups.

Fraud Investigations

112. **Mr. John Townend:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment which local authorities have refused to provide lists of names and addresses of the holders of taxi licences to his Department's fraud investigators.

Mr. Lee: I am not aware that any local authority has refused to provide lists of the names and addresses of the holders of taxi licences to this Department's fraud investigators.

School Compacts

113. **Mr. Carrington:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many representations he has received about the Government's proposals to develop school compacts; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Fowler: The Training Commission is expecting a number of applications for development funding from potential compact partners in the urban programme areas. The successful bids will be announced at the end of July. Compacts are agreements under which employers guarantee jobs with training or YTS training followed by a job to school leavers who meet agreed standards of performance.

Agricultural Inspectors

115. **Mr. Martyn Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the latest number of agricultural inspectors.

Mr. Nicholls: On 1 June 1988 there were 150 agricultural inspectors in post in the Health and Safety Executive's agricultural inspectorate.

European Venture Capital Conference (Ministerial Visit)

119. **Mr. Ian Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the visit of the Minister of State, the right hon. Member for Northavon (Mr. Cope), to the European venture capital conference.

Mr. Cope: I gave the opening address at the European Venture Capital Association symposium on 26 May. It was encouraging to be able to address a gathering of people from different European countries, all concerned with the supply of venture capital to businesses. The symposium provided evidence that the venture capital industry is thriving in Europe, and particularly in the United Kingdom. A survey undertaken by Peat Marwick McLintock showed that of total funds available for investment in Europe at December 1987, 55 per cent. had been raised in the United Kingdom. This is assisting businesses to create additional wealth and employment.

Occupational Ill-health

122. **Mr. Cohen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many new cases of occupational ill-health among active workers he estimates there are each year in Britain.

136. **Mr. Maxton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many new cases of occupational ill-health among active workers he estimates there are each year in Britain.

Mr. Nicholls: In 1987, the latest year for which figures are available, there were 4,792 awards of disablement benefit because of new cases of occupational disease under industrial injuries and other compensation schemes. The figure does not include people not claiming or qualifying for benefit, and does not distinguish between active workers and others.

English Tourist Board

123. **Mr. Sackville:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment when he expects to meet the chairman of the English tourist board.

Mr. Lee: My right hon. Friend hopes to meet the chairman of the English tourist board on 11 July at the launch of the ETB's rural tourism strategy.

Skill Levels

125. **Mr. Patrick Thompson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what plans he has to improve the levels of skill in British industry; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Cope: The Government aim to encourage increased and more effective investment in skills training by British employers particularly to meet the challenges of demographic change and technological advance and the sharper competition which will result from the European single market in 1992.

Public expenditure on training has increased from over £450 million in 1979 to a planned £3 billion this year. The

Training Commission (formerly the Manpower Services Commission), will have increased employer representation and concentrates exclusively on training. It delivers a wide range of training programmes, to include employment training from September 1988, many of which lead to vocational qualifications.

The Training Commission is also reviewing its range of programmes to encourage employers' investment in training to meet their emerging skill needs.

Gas Act 1986

127. **Miss Lestor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many additional inspectors are needed by the Health and Safety Executive adequately to enforce the Gas Act 1986.

Mr. Nicholls: The Health and Safety Executive does not consider that additional inspectors are needed specifically for the enforcement of the Gas Act 1986.

Young Persons (Health and Safety)

135. **Mr. Ernie Ross:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what assessment he has made of the relative risk in terms of health and safety at work for younger employees.

Mr. Nicholls: I am aware of the results of research into the relationship between age and accidents at work summarised recently by the Health and Safety Executive in its report "Health and Safety Statistics 1984-85". This report indicates that the work-injury ratio for male employees in the 16-24 years age group is higher than for any other age group. The research suggests that the type of employment and the immaturity and inexperience of young employees play some part in explaining the higher ratio. The research results will be taken into account when deciding what action to take following the recent document on "Restriction on the employment of young people and the removal of sex discrimination in legislation".

Job Clubs

147. **Mr. Sumberg:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many job clubs have now been established; what resources have been allocated to them; and what assessment he has made as to how effective they have been to date in achieving the aims set for them.

Mr. Lee: At the end of May 1988 there were 1,214 job clubs open including 538 run directly by the employment service and 676 run by organisations acting as its agents.

Four hundred and eighty staff units have been allocated to the employment service to run the jobcentre job clubs and to support the agency job clubs. A sum of £22·5 million has been allocated in 1988-89 to cover the costs of the agency job club network, costs incurred by members in travelling to and from job club and marketing costs.

Between April 1987 and March 1988, 105,677 people passed through job clubs. Of these 57,080 (or 54 per cent.) went into jobs and a further 14,571 (or 14 per cent.) took up training, education, a place on the community programme or enterprise allowance schemes. These results represent a considerable achievement in helping long-term unemployed people.

Employment Training

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list those organisations who have refused to take part in the employment training programme.

Mr. Nicholls: The Training Commission is currently negotiating contracts with organisations which have applied to take part in employment training, either as training agents or training managers. Contracts should be exchanged during July. It is, therefore, not possible to assess at this stage which organisations will refuse to take part in employment training. However, the response has been very good and in general, organisations are bidding to deliver significantly more plans than are needed to launch the programme successfully on 5 September.

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if, pursuant to his answer of 23 June, he will outline the circumstances in which the participants on employment training will benefit from a £15 per week disregard for income received above their standard entitlements.

Mr. Lee: If participants in employment training who are in receipt of income support undertake paid work outside the programme, the normal disregards will be applied under DHSS regulations. For most people, this is a £5 weekly disregard, but the earnings of lone parents, people in receipt of a disability premium, couples aged under 60 who have been in receipt of supplementary benefit or income support for two years, and people in certain specialist occupations such as retained fire-fighters all attract a £15 weekly disregard.

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether severely disabled people in receipt of severe disablement allowance will be allowed to retain their severe disablement allowance and receive all other payments to which trainees are entitled throughout their stay on the employment training scheme.

Mr. Nicholls *[holding answer 30 June 1988]:* People who are in receipt of severe disablement allowance will receive a training allowance on entering employment training, which gives a premium of £10 over their benefit level while they train. They will be eligible to receive all other payments to which trainees on the programme are entitled.

Skill Shortages

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will publish in the *Official Report* a detailed breakdown of skill shortages on both a regional and a national basis.

Mr. Cope: The detailed information is not available as requested. However similar information on the manufacturing and construction industries is reported in the Training Commission's skills monitoring report for February 1988 which is available in the Library.

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if his Department is carrying out any studies into skill shortages found by small businesses in East Anglia concerning *(a)* recruitment of school leavers, *(b)* trainee and apprentice pay level, *(c)* recruitment of skilled labour, and *(d)* of management training; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Cope *[holding answer Thursday 30 June 1988]*: No studies are proceeding in the form suggested.

The Training Commission's computer-assisted local labour market information system is already used to analyse information relevant to local employers' needs for training in East Anglia as elsewhere. Information is collected from a wide range of employers, including small businesses.

Vale of Clwyd Mind Association

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will meet Deeside and Clwyd Vale of Clwyd Mind Association, to discuss its difficulties under the new employment training scheme consequent upon the abandonment of the community programme.

Mr. Nicholls: Local Training Commission officials are best placed to discuss whether Deeside and Vale of Clwyd Mind Association are able to move forward into employment training. Local officials will consider all the available options and I suggest the association gets in touch with the Training Commission area office as soon as possible.

Brain Injuries

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will take steps to ensure that people recovering from traumatic brain injury make a staged return to work via part-time arrangements and that duties increase gradually until full-time work can be undertaken.

Mr. Nicholls: These matters are best dealt with by individual arrangements between employers and employees to suit particular circumstances without Government involvement.

Disabled Persons

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many firms in the United Kingdom of 20 or more employees are not employing at least 3 per cent. disabled persons in the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Lee: The information available relates to people who are registered as disabled under the Disabled Persons (Employment) Act 1944, or the Disabled Persons (Employment) Act (Northern Ireland) 1945. On 1 June 1987 25,540 employers in the United Kingdom with 20 or more employees were employing less than 3 per cent. registered disabled people.

Benefits

Ms. Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people during each month from January to May have been *(a)* refused benefit following an initial claim and *(b)* withdrawn from benefit following a restart interview for each benefit office in Middlesbrough, Redcar, Eston, Guisborough, Hartlepool, Loftus, Saltburn, Stockton and Billingham, on the grounds that they were not available for employment, giving details of the reasons for these decisions.

Mr. Lee: The table shows the number of initial claims disallowed by an adjudication officer on availability grounds for the months and offices requested.

The information requested in *(b)* is not available. Any refusal of benefit following a restart interview could only occur as the result of a decision by an independent adjudication officer operating under long-standing legal rules adopted by successive Governments.

These decisions are given by independent adjudicating authorities on the basis of the evidence available in each individual case. It is not possible to state the exact reason under the availability condition as to why benefit entitlement is disallowed, as the Department is only advised of the social security legislation upon which the decision is based.

Numbers of disallowances of benefit on initial claims

	January	*February*	*March*	*April*	*May*
Middlesbrough 1	1	2	0	0	2
Middlesbrough 2	1	5	2	3	3
Middlesbrough 3	4	6	5	4	1
Redcar	6	12	14	14	11
Eston	4	4	1	3	0
Guisborough	3	3	2	3	0
Hartlepool 1	1	4	1	7	2
Hartlepool 2	4	5	5	7	2
Loftus	0	1	2	3	5
Saltburn	2	4	5	2	1
Stockton 1	5	7	4	6	9
Stockton 2	15	15	3	10	12
Billingham	19	5	2	0	5

Control of Lead at Work Regulations 1980

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he will consider extending to men the approved code of practice for the Control of Lead at Work Regulations 1980.

Mr. Nicholls: The approved code of practice for the Control of Lead at Work Regulations 1980 already applies to both men and women.

Equal Pay

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what response he has made to the recent Equal Opportunities Commission Report which revealed a large disparity between men and women's pay; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: The hon. Member is presumably referring to information in the 1987 annual report of the Equal Opportunities Commission which was published on 14 June. This report will be discussed on 13 July by my

Department's advisory committee on women's employment. Joanna Foster, the chairman of the Equal Opportunities Commission, is a member of the Committee and will be attending this meeting.

The Government are fully committed to equal opportunities and equal pay for men and women.

Young Enterprise

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many young enterprise area boards have been established to date; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Butcher: I have been asked to reply.

I understand that there are, at present, 146 young enterprise area boards co-ordinating the activities of some 28,000 young achievers. It is envisaged that, during the 1988-89 academic year, the number of area boards will increase to 155 and will involve around 30,000 young achievers. This Department has worked closely with young enterprise for a number of years and greatly values its efforts, together with the many other industry/education link organisations, towards improving such links.

Disposable Incomes

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will provide a table in the *Official Report* showing the figures for average disposable income in the lowest quintile group of households, by household type, for the years 1975 to 1985, at current prices, as were used to construct chart 6, on page 111 of *Economic Trends*, July 1987, "The Effects of Taxes and Benefits on Household Income 1985;" and whether he can update the table to show the 1986 figures at current prices.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 22 June 1988]:* I have been asked to reply.

Figures for 1986 are not yet available but figures for earlier years are in the table. These figures are derived from the family expenditure survey. They show household income in the 12 months prior to interview. They are not comparable with the recent DHSS series "Households Below Average Income" which is based on current income and is adjusted for family size and composition.

Average disposable incomes by household type in the lowest quintile group of all households, ranked by original income, 1975 to 1985

			£ per year			
At current prices	*1975*	*1977*	*1979*	*1981*	[1]*1983*	[1]*1985*
Retired households	1,034	1,366	1,755	2,452	2,864	3,143
Non-retired						
One adult	857	1,096	1,233	1,719	2,063	2,389
Two adults	1,335	1,561	2,101	2,832	3,214	4,005
One adult with children	1,180	1,539	1,961	2,798	3,207	3,571
Two adults with children	1,476	2,042	2,747	3,637	4,346	4,769
Three or more adults, with or without children	2,289	2,648	3,680	4,665	5,498	6,174
Average over all households in the lowest quintile group	1,061	1,414	1,791	2,558	3,054	3,388

Source: Central Statistical Office, based on the family expenditure survey.

[1] The advent of housing benefit in 1983 introduced a discontinuity into the series: before then the payments to recipients of supplementary benefit included an unknown amount of assistance with rates. Under the housing benefit scheme this is separately identified, and is excluded from income. The figures for 1983 and earlier years cannot be adjusted onto the same basis as those for 1985 and are higher than they would be on a consistent basis.

Management Extension Programmes

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people participating in management extension programmes organised by the Manpower Services Commission found permanent employment within six months of completing their management extension programme in each year since management extension programmes began.

Mr. Cope *[holding answer 29 June 1988]:* The number of people known to have found permanent work within six months of completing the management extension programme, in the years for which statistics are available, are:

	Number
1985-86	388
1986-87	513
[1]1987-88	343

[1] Up to September 1987.

The figures have been established by a survey with an approximate 75 per cent. response rate, and the actual figures, therefore, are likely to be higher.

TRANSPORT

Drinking and Driving

Sir Bernard Braine: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what scientific evaluations have been undertaken within his Department's anti-drink-drive publicity campaign; who has made these; and whether he will publish the findings.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Regular evaluations are undertaken before and after major publicity campaigns to look at changes in attitudes to drinking and driving. These consist of "tracking surveys" carried out for the Central Office of Information on our behalf by Research Bureau Limited.

Copies of the report on the 1987-88 campaign are being placed in the Library. It confirms a continuing downward trend in drinking and driving. Last winter in particular there appears to have been a shift to lower levels of consumption on driving occasions.

A summary report showing trends since 1979 is being prepared for publication.

Unmarked Lobster and Crab Pots

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what steps he is taking to seek to reduce the number of fouled propellers from unmarked lobster and crab pots.

Mr. David Mitchell: I know that my noble Friend the Minister for Aviation and Shipping has already advised my hon. Friend that the best way of making progress on this issue is through better communications locally between fishermen, yachtsmen and others. This remains of prime importance. In view of the clear concern however he will seek means of advising fishermen of the problem and of emphasising the importance of their marking their pots adequately.

North Report (Traffic Law)

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what recent representations he has received regarding the implementation of the recommendations of the North report on road traffic law.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: We have received a number of representations. We welcome public reaction to the report. We are pressing ahead with our consideration of the recommendations. We will report to the House on our progress before the summer recess.

A1

Mr. Cran: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the estimated current daily flow on the A1; and what were the comparable figures *(a)* 10 years ago, and *(b)* expected when the road was opened.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The table sets out estimated daily traffic flows, currently and10 years ago, for those stretches of the A1 for which such information is available. Information on expected flows at the time of opening is not available except at disproportionate cost. The figures are annual average daily traffic flows.

	1978	*1988*
London Area	N/A	53,000
M25-Hatfield	24,500	55,000
Hatfield Tunnel	[1]54,000	63,000
Welwyn-Stevenage	36,000	59,000
Stevenage-Baldock	35,500	55,000
Baldock-Biggleswade	N/A	27,000
Biggleswade-Black Cat	21,000	32,000
Black Cat-St. Neots	25,500	36,000
St. Neots-Alconbury	20,500	29,500
Alconbury-Peterborough	22,000	45,000
Peterborough-Stanford	22,500	29,000
Grantham Bypass	[2]12,300	[3]22,600
Newark Bypass	[2]16,600	[3]22,600
Ferrybridge	[4]30,500	[3]40,600
Dishforth	[4]27,500	[3]37,600
North of Darlington	[5]20,000	24,800
A689 Junction	N/A	[6]28,700
Washington Services	[5]41,600	[6]47,700
North of Tyne Tunnel	[5]20,700	[6]25,800
North of Alnwick	[5]5,100	[6]6,500

[1] Refers to old road. Hatfield Tunnel forecast 50,000 to 57,000 in opening year (1987).

[2] 1975.

[3] 1987.

[4] 1977.

[5] 1979.

[6] 1986.

M1

Mr. Cran: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the estimated current daily traffic flow on the M1; and what were the comparable figures *(a)* 10 years ago, and *(b)* expected when the motorway was built.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The table sets out estimated daily traffic flows, currently and 10 years ago, for those stretches of the M1 for which such information is available. Information on the traffic flows expected at the time of opening is not available except at disproportionate cost. The figures are annual average daily traffic flows unless otherwise stated.

Junctions	*1978*	*1988*
1-2	n/a	[1]41,900
4-5	n/a	[1]55,200
9-10	72,000	117,000
14-15	54,000	92,000
16-17	[2]50,300	90-100,000
21-22	[2]29,800	60,000
30-31	[3]37,700	56,000
41-42	[3]34,000	52,600

[1] 16 hour flows.

[2] 1975, average August flow.

[3] 1977.

Merchant Shipping (Operations Book) Regulations 1988

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what account was taken of crew fatigue in the drafting of the Merchant Shipping (Operations Book) Regulations 1988; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: The draft regulations give only a basic framework for the required book and make no specific reference to fatigue. However, a merchant shipping notice will accompany the regulations and give further guidance on matters relating to the crew's fitness for duty and the avoidance of fatigue.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is his criterion for an excessive number of hours worked by a member of a ship's crew with regard to his Department's draft Merchant Shipping (Operations Book) Regulations 1988; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: It is unlikely that specific criteria will be included in the merchant shipping notice which will accompany the regulations because of variations in operating practices and routines but it will give guidance on matters relating to the crew's fitness for duty and the avoidance of fatigue.

Worker Fatigue

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what evidence is available to his Department on the effects of fatigue on crew members aboard shipping vessels;

(2) if his Department plans to conduct further research into the effect of fatigue on crew members aboard shipping vessels.

Mr. David Mitchell: Aspects of fatigue have been considered in the course of several research projects conducted on behalf of my Department but the results have been inconclusive. The final report of a research project on "The Human Element in Shipping Casualties" was recently received; when it has been analysed I will decide whether further action is necessary.

Vessels (Destinations and Dockings)

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what requirements are placed by his Department upon shipowners in regard to the recording of all previous destinations and dockings of a ship using British port facilities.

Mr. David Mitchell: This information must be recorded by United Kingdom ships in the official log book, by certain passenger carrying ships in the appropriate returns and by all ships carrying certain liquids in a record book.

Lead-free Petrol

Mr. Ward: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he will take steps to ensure that lead-free petrol is available at all motorway service areas; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: We shall require all new motorway service areas to provide unleaded petrol. Of the 42 existing ones, 24 already provide it. This total is expected to rise to 36 by the end of the year following the approach we made to operators last year. We hope to persuade the operators of the remaining six areas to make unleaded fuel available. There are 9 million cars which already or with simple adjustment can save money by using it.

Driving Hours

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the number of tachograph checks carried out in each of the last eight years; how many of those checks revealed drivers to have exceeded their legal driving hours maximum; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Information is only available for the last five years.

Year	*Tachograph charts examined by DTp staff*	*Driver hours infringements*
1983-84	681,000	1,800
1984-85	576,000	3,400
1985-86	585,000	2,700
1986-87	848,000	1,700
1987-88	1,078,000	2,200

Weighbridges

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many weighbridges have been operated by his Department in each of the last eight years; how many of those weighbridges have been dysfunctional due to disrepair or other causes; if he will specify any other causes for weighbridge dysfunctionality than mechanical disrepair; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The details are:

Year	*Number of weighbridges*	*Number out of action*
1982-83	34	Not known
1983-84	47	Not known
1984-85	50	Not known
1985-86	56	17
1986-87	59	13
1987-88	60	8

The most serious problems have arisen where the concrete slab in which the weighbridge sits has fallen outside the tight level of tolerance required to meet the DTp code of practice for vehicle weighing.

Vehicle Overloading

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many goods vehicle checks have been carried out in each of the last five years where overloading was identified; what was the distribution of overloading between categories of goods vehicles; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The number of vehicles weighed and found to be overloaded by DTp traffic examiners and local authority trading standards departments for each of the last five years were:

Year	*Vehicles weighed*	*Number overloaded*
1983-84	98,100	23,200
1984-85	88,200	21,100
1985-86	98,600	25,400
1986-87	93,700	23,000
1987-88	126,000	28,500

The figures are not broken down between vehicle categories.

Bakerloo Line (Extension)

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what criteria his Department will apply to the evaluation of any proposals for the extension of the southern end of the Bakerloo line.

Mr. David Mitchell: The Government's approach to the evaluation and financing of public transport projects was set out in their observations on the third report of the Transport Committee (Session 1986-87) on the financing of rail services (HC 420).

Channel Tunnel

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he has yet received proposals from British Rail concerning rail links to the Channel tunnel; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell *[holding answer 4 July 1988]:* I expect to receive British Rail's report shortly and hope that it will be published soon thereafter.

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what recent discussions he has had with Eurotunnel concerning rail links to the Channel tunnel.

Mr. David Mitchell *[holding answer 4 July 1988]:* There have been no recent discussions. Doubtless Eurotunnel, like the Government, is looking forward to the publication of British Rail's report, expected shortly.

A27, Worthing

Mr. Higgins: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether consultants he appointed to study the A27 in the Worthing areas have examined the feasibility of the Findon Gap route in the same detail as the route which they have recommended.

Mr. Peter Bottomley *[holding answer 4 July 1988]:* Yes. More detailed drawings of their recommended route, as well as of the on-line improvement option at Lancing, were drawn up by the consultants because of the need to assess the effect on homes in the urban area.

Heavy Goods Vehicles

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list in the *Official Report* all the organisations which are in receipt of the current European Economic Community quota of multilateral authorisations for heavy goods vehicles in each traffic area, and if he will also list the number of authorisations held by each organisation.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The list, by county and number of operators, follows. The Department's policy is not to name individual firms, for reasons of commercial confidentiality. Following the successful Council meeting in Brussels on 20-21 June, hauliers have been invited to apply for the additional 238 permits available.

EC multilateral permits at January 1988
England

County	*Operators*	*Permits*
Avon	8	23
Bedfordshire	7	22
Berkshire	3	5
Buckinghamshire	5	36
Cambridgeshire	3	10
Cheshire	8	19
Cleveland	3	4
Cumbria	1	1
Derbyshire	4	6
Dorset	13	31
Durham	7	16
Essex	34	75
Gloucestershire	4	7
Hampshire	23	53
Hertfordshire	12	25
Humberside	13	39
Kent	41	133
Lancashire	13	21
Lincolnshire	9	15
London	16	28
Greater Manchester	5	9
Middlesex	7	7
Norfolk	9	22
Northamptonshire	14	44
Nottinghamshire	5	22
Oxfordshire	5	10
Shropshire	10	35
Somerset	6	10
Staffordshire	9	32
Suffolk	6	7
Surrey	8	14
Sussex	6	12
Tyne and Wear	2	3
Warwickshire	26	53
Wiltshire	3	4
Worcestershire	1	4
North Yorkshire	5	11
South Yorkshire	2	8
West Yorkshire	28	60

Vehicle Inspectorate

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment his Department has made of the effects of proposals to remove certain Civil Service responsibilities from Whitehall Departments, with special reference to the vehicle inspectorate agency.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Establishing the vehicle inspectorate as an executive agency would enhance the responsibility and accountability of local management for its day to day running, and would focus incentives to improve efficiency and services to the public.

The inspectorate would remain part of the Department of Transport and part of the Civil Service.

Highways Work (Tendering)

Mr. Jacques Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the estimated value of work under £25,000 covered by the current regulations on competitive tendering for highways work.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The regulations cover approximately £50 million of work on trunk roads and £300 million of work on local authority roads. Increased competition for this work is expected to secure keener prices and thus save public funds.

East London River Crossing

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what assessment he has made of how many additional residential properties his Department would need to acquire in order to build the East London river crossing; and how many of these are currently owned by the London residuary body;

(2) how many residential properties have been acquired by his Department in connection with the proposed East London river crossing;

(3) what discussions his Department has undertaken with the London residuary body about the acquisition of residential properties required for the construction of the East London river crossing.

Mr. Channon: Ninety-five residential properties have been acquired by the Department in connection with the proposed East London river crossing. A further 145 residential properties would be required of which 127 are currently owned by the London residuary body. Discussions about the possible purchase of these properties have taken place with that body, without prejudice to the decisions yet to be taken on the statutory orders for the scheme.

London Underground (Fires)

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether he will publish a list of all fires reported on the London Underground in each of the last five years showing *(a)* the date, *(b)* the line, *(c)* the duration, and *(d)* the cost of damage in each.

Mr. David Mitchell *[pursuant to his reply, 29 June 1988, c. 281]*: The following table was omitted.

Date	*Location*	*Lines Affected*	*Duration*	
			Hours	*Minutes*
1984				
5 June	At Lambeth North	Bakerloo	—	—
23 November	At Oxford Circus	Victoria, Bakerloo, Central	3	—
1985				
15 January	Near Holland Park	Central	2	—
21 January	At Mansion House	District and Circle	—	40
25 January	At Green Park	Piccadilly, Victoria, Jubilee	—	55
26 January	Near South Wimbledon	Northern	1	20
31 May	At Manor House	Piccadilly	2	04
14 July	Between Bank and Angel	Northern	2	26
21 September	At Alperton	Piccadillly	—	35
4 October	At Hyde Park Corner	Piccadily	—	17
24 November	At Warwick Avenue	Bakerloo	—	—
2 December	At Seven Sisters	Victoria	1	19
23 December	At Holborn	Piccadilly, Central	—	—
1986				
20 March	At Mornington Crescent	Northern	—	53
8 May	At Victoria	Victoria, District and Circle	1	07
18 June	Between Tottenham Court Road and Holborn	Central	4	13
1 July	At Victoria	—	—	—
2 July	Near Colindale	Northern	—	20
4 July	At Sloane Square	District and Circle	1	55
6 July	At Euston	—	—	—
20 July	Near Theydon Bois	Central	2	43
1 October	At Kennington	Northern	—	44
5 October	At London Bridge	Northern	—	22

Written Answers to Questions

Wednesday 6 July 1988

PRIME MINISTER

Wormhoudt Massacre

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Prime Minister which Department will be responsible for continuing contact and liaison with the authorities of the Federal Republic of Germany in respect of the Wormhoudt massacre.

The Prime Minister: The Foreign and Commonwealth Office, in consultation with the other Government Departments involved, will be the principal channel for communication with the authorities of the Federal Republic of Germany.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Police Officers (Service)

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information he has as to how many police officers do not complete 30 years' service, and if he will break the answer down into individual constabularies and ranks.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The information is as follows:

Police Officers who had not completed 30 years' service (1987)[1]

Force	*Chief Commissioner*	*Deputy Chief Commissioner*	*Assistant Chief Commissioner*	*Chief Superintendent*	*Superintendent*	*Chief Inspector*	*Inspector*	*Sergeant*	*Constable*	*Total*
Avon and Somerset	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	10	72	83
Bedfordshire	—	—	—	—	2	1	1	1	32	37
Cambridgeshire	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	4	25	29
Cheshire	—	—	—	—	1	—	1	3	34	39
Cleveland	—	—	—	—	—	1	3	4	32	40
Cumbria	—	—	—	—	1	—	1	1	22	25
Derbyshire	—	—	—	—	—	1	3	5	51	60
Devon and Cornwall	—	—	1	—	—	1	—	8	56	66
Dorset	—	—	—	—	—	1	3	6	23	33
Durham	—	—	—	—	—	1	2	5	22	30
Dyfed Powys	—	—	—	—	—	—	2	5	11	18
Essex	—	—	—	—	—	3	1	8	67	79
Gloucestershire	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	4	26	30
Greater Manchester	—	—	—	1	—	1	11	16	175	204
Gwent	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	1	24	26
Hampshire	—	—	—	1	—	1	1	8	73	84
Hertfordshire	—	—	—	—	1	—	1	8	60	70
Humberside	—	—	—	—	—	2	2	5	50	59
Kent	—	—	—	—	—	2	4	5	83	94
Lancashire	—	—	—	—	1	2	5	11	55	74
Leicestershire	—	—	—	—	—	1	6	12	62	81
Lincolnshire	—	—	—	—	1	—	1	2	15	19
Merseyside	—	—	—	—	1	—	4	15	69	89
Norfolk	—	—	—	—	—	—	2	2	25	29
Northamptonshire	—	—	—	—	—	1	1	3	30	35
Northumbria	—	—	—	—	1	2	3	14	64	84
North Wales	—	—	—	—	—	1	2	3	19	25
North Yorkshire	—	—	—	—	—	1	1	1	23	26
Nottinghamshire	—	—	—	—	1	1	6	12	41	61
South Wales	—	—	—	—	—	—	5	16	72	93
South Yorkshire	—	—	—	1	1	—	2	11	62	77
Staffordshire	—	—	—	—	—	4	2	4	56	66
Suffolk	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	3	23	26
Surrey	—	—	—	—	—	2	—	4	40	46
Sussex	—	—	—	—	1	—	2	12	78	93
Thames Valley	—	—	—	—	1	—	4	7	124	136
Warwickshire	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	3	25	28
West Mercia	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	1	35	37
West Midlands	—	—	—	—	3	3	3	17	142	168
West Yorkshire	—	—	—	—	1	—	5	18	108	132
Wiltshire	—	—	—	—	—	1	1	—	31	33
City of London	—	—	—	—	—	—	4	4	23	31
Metropolitan	—	—	—	9	13	7	26	94	671	820
TOTAL	—	—	1	12	30	41	124	376	2,831	3,410

[1] Information on officers retiring on age grounds, which will include some who have less than 30 years' service, is not included because it is not possible to distinguish these from others in the same category who have achieved 30 years.

Domestic Violence

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his reply of 8 March, *Official Report*, column *110*, if he will take steps to keep statistics of domestic violence cases in order to monitor the effectiveness of the Metropolitan police force order; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I understand from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis that he is now maintaining a central record of incidents of domestic violence. The latest available figures, which are given in the table, show an increase of 118 per cent. in the number of recorded domestic conflicts—which are defined as assaults involving husbands, wives, relatives and cohabitees—in the whole of the Metropolitan police district over the period January-April 1988, compared with the corresponding period in 1987. The rise is thought to reflect an increase in the level of reporting following the issue of the new force instruction in June 1987.

Violence against the person—domestic conflicts—offences recorded in the MPD

	Number
January-April 1987	422
January-April 1988	918
Per cent. increase	118

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis as to whether he has yet completed his evaluation of the force order relating to domestic violence.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I understand that the evaluation is not yet complete.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the local referral points for victims of domestic violence within the Metropolitan police district.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: No. To do so might endanger those who have sought refuge.

Motorways (Speeding)

Sir Anthony Grant: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prosecutions have been brought in the last three years for exceeding the mandatory speed limits on the M11 and M25 when there are road works; and how many resulted in convictions.

Mr. John Patten: The information collected centrally on proceedings, finding of guilt and fixed penalty notices for speed limit offences does not include whether there were road works at the scene of the offence. The available information, including that by police force area, is published annually in "Offences Relating To Motor Vehicles England and Wales, Supplementary Tables" (tables 5, 16 and 19 of the issue for 1986), copies of which are in the Library. Figures for 1987 will be published later this year.

Magistrates' Clerks

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what assessment he has made of the implications for retaining clerks in the magistrates' courts of the differences in pay between the Crown Prosecution Service and magistrates' clerks; what action he proposes to take; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Uxbridge (Mr. Shersby) on 23 June, at column *683*.

Vagrants

Sir Trevor Skeet: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will introduce legislation *(a)* to consolidate the law relating to the punishment of idle and disorderly persons and rogues and vagabonds, as set out principally in the Vagrancy Act 1824, and *(b)* to repeal that Act; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: We have no present plans to do so.

Category C Prisons

Mr. Leigh: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, further to the answer to the hon. Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle of 27 June, why 16 category C prisons have a population lower than their certified normal accommodation.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Prison population may fluctuate for a number of reasons. The population is mobile; prisoners arrive at local prisons, are transferred to training prisons of the appropriate security category, may be transferred later to training prisons of lower security category and are finally released. Consequently, vacancies in some establishments are likely to appear in any count of population against certified normal accommodation, unless the establishments are regularly overcrowded. Additionally, the Government's construction programme is delivering extra accommodation in both existing and new prisons, the occupation of which takes time to build up.

Mr. Leigh: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the total amount spent per annum for each category C prison in the United Kingdom on foodstuffs; and what proportion of this was purchased from small local retail shops.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: In 1986-87 the total amount spent in each category C prison on foodstuffs purchased to meet the dietary scale was as follows:

Prison	*Amount* £
Acklington	148,394
Camp Hill	184,910
Channings Wood	152,876
Featherstone	186,230
Haverigg	185,831
Highpoint	300,245
Lancaster	77,534
Lindholme	249,295
Northeye	56,238
Preston	181,946
Ranby	140,086
Send	32,346
Shepton Mallet	80,254
Stafford	243,136
Stocken	104,254
Thorp Arch	44,826
The Verne	195,013
Wayland	160,673
Wymott	265,251
	2,989,338

Information on the proportion of these foodstuffs, and of inmate canteen items, purchased from small local retail shops is not available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Prison Officers (Housing)

Mr. Leigh: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, further to the written answer of 27 June, to the hon. Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle, why there was a delay between the acquisition and sale of properties at (i) High Point, (ii) Northeye, and (iii) Erlestoke; what effect the delay had on the fabric of the properties, and what effect this had on the price gained for the properties on resale.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: With the exception of six terraced houses at Highpoint, which were in poor condition on acquisition, properties sold at Highpoint, Northeye and Erlestoke had been used as married quarters for prison officers. There was no delay in selling these properties as and when they were declared surplus to requirements. The condition of the six terraced houses had deteriorated and they were sold for an average price of £16,850 each.

Information on what the price would have been had the six houses been in a satisfactory condition is not readily available.

Mr. Leigh: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, further to his answer of 27 June to the hon. Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle, what was the approximate distance of those houses sold to private ownership from the prison fence.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The approximate distances from the prison fence to the nearest house sold to private ownership at Highpoint, Northeye and Erlestoke, were 60m, 60m and 400m respectively.

Prisoners (Escapes)

Mr. Leigh: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will request chief constables to collate information relating to offences committed by escaping prisoners other than the common law offence of escaping.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: No. It is not always possible for the police to identify separately recorded offences committed by escaped prisoners: collection of information on those which can be identified could involve disproportionate cost.

New Prisons

Mr. Leigh: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what proposals there are to develop prisons on the surplus sites listed by the Secretary of State for Defence in the answer to the hon. Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle on 27 June.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Of the 34 listed sites in England and Wales, 17 have been considered and rejected as unsuitable for prison purposes, except for Binbrook, and the remainder are under consideration; none of these could, however, meet the need which would be met by Binbrook.

Under-age Drinking

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has had recently on under-age drinking in pubs and clubs; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Since 1 March we have received some 80 letters either calling for tougher action to curb under-age drinking or criticising the provisions of the Licensing Act 1988 which strengthen the law on the sale of alcohol to those under the age of 18.

In our opinion these are crucial provisions which should enable landlords, police and prosecuting authorities to act more effectively to curb a serious mischief. We shall be urging this course in our forthcoming circular to magistrates and the police, which will also encompass other provisions of the licensing laws which we believe could be more robustly used.

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received recently from licensed victuallers and others seeking an identity card system for young people.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We have received recently some representations from licensed victuallers and members of the public in support of local identity card schemes for young people. I am aware of a number of such voluntary schemes for young people around the country which are led and financed by local licensees or licensed victuallers associations with the co-operation of the police. I am pleased to see licensees and the police working together on initiatives of this kind and welcome the introduction of voluntary schemes which take full account of local circumstances.

Citizenship Applications

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the length of time *(a)* taken or *(b)* expected to be taken for applications to be processed for British citizenship in regard to the deadline of 31 December 1987 for certain Commonwealth citizens; and, of those applications made, how many have yet to be given their initial consideration by his Department.

Mr. Renton: About 134,000 applications which were subject to the 31 December 1987 deadline have been acknowledged and had their passports returned but have not yet been given initial consideration. The majority of these applications will be considered in the Liverpool nationality office, which will open in September. A substantial proportion of these applications will be decided by April 1989 and the remainder during the following year.

Glasgow Passport Office

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) whether any telephone calls were answered by Glasgow passport office on Wednesday 29 June;

(2) why the telephone exchange at the Glasgow passport office does not have a call-queuing system.

Mr. Renton: Calls to the six exchange lines at present available for incoming inquiries are held on a stacking system and should be dealt with when an inquiry extension is clear. A substantial number of callers were answered on 29 June, although precise figures are not available as the telephone system does not at present log incoming calls. Among other improvements to the telephone system being considered in the light of the planned expansion of the Glasgow passport office is the use of recorded message facilities to filter out calls seeking general information.

Drugs Cases (Metropolitan Police)

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis as to the names of the arresting officers and of the other witnesses for the prosecutions brought by the Metropolitan police in the following cases which were dropped at Knightsbridge Crown court in October 1985 and January 1986 *(a)* for possession of drugs against Mr. Alan Waite, *(b)* for possession of drugs against Mr. Geoffrey Pope, *(c)* for possession of drugs against Mr. Marcel Mullins, *(d)* for obstruction and assault against Mr. Mark Whittaker and *(e)* for supplying drugs to Ms. Theresa James against Mr. Paul Brown, as to the shift relief at west end central station in which they served at the time, and as to where these officers are currently serving.

Mr. Douglas Hogg *[holding answer 28 June 1988]:* I understand from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis that there are outstanding civil proceedings in these cases. It would not therefore be right to provide the information requested.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Immigration Appeals System

Mr. Sayeed: To ask the Attorney-General if he will give for the last five years the cost to the Lord Chancellor's Department of the immigration appeals system and judicial reviews arising from that system.

The Attorney-General: Administrative responsibility for the immigration appellate authorities was transferred to the Lord Chancellor's Department from the Home Office only on 1 April 1987. The cost of the immigration appellate authorities to the Lord Chancellor's Department in 1987-88 was £2,411,088. Details of the cost to the Lord Chancellor's Department of judicial review cases arising from the immigration appeals system could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

SS Politician

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Attorney-General if the Lord Chancellor will allow the release of files by the Public Records Office relating to the sinking of the SS Politician in 1941; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: The only record relating to the sinking of the SS Politician that has been identified in the Public Records Office from the information given is the cancellation by the Registry of Shipping and Seamen of the vessel's certificate of registration (BT 110/1270). This document is available for public inspection at the PRO in Kew.

Members (Writs)

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: To ask the Attorney-General what was the outcome of the application to the High Court last week in relation to the writs recently served on right hon. and hon. Members.

The Attorney-General: An application to the High Court in connection with the proceedings recently issued by Mr. Anthony Hill against right hon. and hon. Members was heard in the Sheffield district registry on 30 June. The application was successful and the proceedings were struck out as against all defendants.

WALES

Valleys Initiative (Schools)

Mr. Rowlands: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many *(a)* primary schools, and *(b)* secondary schools within the area covered by the Valleys initiative were built before 1914; and how many major refurbishments or replacements of these schools will take place within the time scale of the valleys initiative.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Information on the age of school buildings is not held by the Department. Local education authorities are responsible for schools in their areas, and will decide what refurbishments or replacements to undertake in the next three years in the light of the resources available and their own priorities for expenditure.

Firegreen Ltd.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) if he will make a statement concerning the application of Firegreen Ltd. for investment grant from his Department;

(2) if he has received applications from Firegreen Ltd. for grant aid concerning its plans to create jobs at Hawarden, Clwyd.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Applications for grant-aid have been received from Firegreen Ltd. Details of these applications are confidential.

TRANSPORT

Royal Flights

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he last reviewed the purple airspace rules for royal flights.

Mr. Bottomley: The Civil Aviation Authority is responsible, through the national air traffic services, a joint CAA and Ministry of Defence organisation, for all aspects of air traffic control.

The purple airspace rules for royal flights were last reviewed in 1985 and found to be satisfactory by both the Queen's flight and the national air traffic services.

The next review is scheduled for later this year.

Random Breath Testing

Mr. Boyes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what response he has made to the recommendation of the report by the Comptroller and Auditor General on road safety that further consideration be given to random breath testing.

Mr. Bottomley: None.

Accidents and Casualties

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what is the number of staff in each of the last five years employed by the Transport and Road Research Laboratory directly involved in researching ways of reducing accidents and casualties;

(2) how many people have been employed in the road safety division of his Department both regionally and nationally, in each of the last five years for purposes directly related to accident prevention;

(3) how many people have been employed by the vehicle standards and engineering division of his Department in each of the last five years in employment directly related to reducing road accidents and casualties;

(4) what is the percentage and number of people employed by the highways division of his Department in each of the last five years whose primary function has been work on ways of reducing accidents and casualties;

(5) how many people have been employed in each of the last five years at the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Centre in employment directly related to road safety matters;

(6) what percentage of people employed for work on the trunk road construction programme are directly involved in ways of reducing accidents and casualties.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Total staffing levels in the appropriate parts of the Department are set out in the following table. The figures reflect the total number of staff involved over the last five years. It is not possible to break down the staff numbers further by function. Other divisions also have work related to road safety.

About half the Department's staff in the regional office are currently engaged on the national road construction and maintenance programme. Enhancement of road safety is one of the programme's prime aims.

Table 1[1]

	1984	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*
Road Safety Division	28·0	20·5	20·0	25·5	29·0
Vehicle Standards and Engineering Division	60·0	54·0	52·0	60·0	51·0
Chief Highway Engineer	296·5	272·5	275·5	275·5	260[2]
TRRL	79	86	109	117	112
Driver Licensing Division of the DVLC	932	915·5	965	964	915
DTp Regional Offices	1,037	1,089	1,136·5	1,172	1,226·5
Total staff numbers	2,432·5	2,437·5	2,558·0	2,614·0	2,593·5

[1] Part timers counted as 0·5.

[2] Reorganisation of CHE has put some staff into highway policy directorate in 1988.

Drink-driving

Dr. Moonie: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what steps his Department is taking to reduce the size of the problem drinking driver population;

(2) what evaluation and research into the high-risk drink-driving offender scheme has been undertaken or is planned by his Department.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Following a request from the ministerial group on alcohol misuse we are considering how to extend the scope of the high-risk offenders scheme. Under the present scheme, some categories of drink-driving offenders have to satisfy the Secretary of State that they no longer have a drink problem and are otherwise fit to drive before restoration of their driving licence.

Dr. Moonie: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what proportion of convicted drinking and driving offenders are estimated to be clinically definable as problem drinkers; and what measures are used to determine this.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: This information is not available.

Dr. Moonie: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what specific medical or other criteria are used by the medical advisers to the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Centre to refuse restoration of a driving licence to drink-driving offenders classified as high-risk offenders.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Applicants undergo a structured clinical assessment and examination, including an evaluation of their history of alcohol abuse. In addition, details are obtained about alcohol withdrawal fits in the past two years and attitude to attendance at alcohol treatment units. Their blood alcohol level at the time of the examination is assessed. A blood sample is taken at the examination and used to evaluate the levels of gamma GT, AST, MCV, serum B12 and folate.

These criteria are based on the recommendations of informed medical opinion.

Dr. Moonie: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what proportion of high-risk offenders were refused restoration of their driving licence by the medical advisers of the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Centre in the most recent three years for which figures are available.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The only figures available are those from a recent small sample exercise. These suggest that 5 per cent. of those who apply for restoration are refused on medical grounds. A further 10 per cent. are refused because they fail to co-operate with medical inquiries.

Dr. Moonie: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what proportion of high-risk drink-driving offenders do not request restoration of their licence at the end of their period of driving ban.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: It is estimated that 35 to 40 per cent. do not apply for the restoration of their licence.

Dr. Moonie: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport who are the medical examiners employed to administer the high-risk drink-driving offender scheme; and how they are selected.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Specialists in occupational medicine selected by the Department of Transport.

Channel Tunnel

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what steps he is taking to encourage British Rail to run Channel tunnel trains direct to Britain's major cities; and if he will consider a transport grant for this purpose.

Mr. David Mitchell: Under section 40 of the Channel Tunnel Act 1987 it is the responsibility of the British Railways Board to prepare a plan by the end of 1989 setting out its proposals for international through services serving various parts of the United Kingdom. Section 42 of the 1987 Act specifically rules out grants to British Rail in connection with its Channel tunnel rail services.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received from (i) British Rail and (ii) others, regarding the economic effect the use of several rail carriages for customs procedures will have on British Rail's proposals to have Channel tunnel trains running direct to major cities; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: None. The amount of space needed for on-train controls is still under discussion between British Rail and the authorities concerned.

Sonic Booms

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what discussions he has had with British Airways regarding sonic booms from aircraft over Cornwall.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The Department is in regular touch with British Airways about this. The airline does what it reasonably can to minimise sonic boom disturbance.

Airports Policy

Mr. Haselhurst: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will review the policy set out in the 1985 airports policy White Paper (Cmnd. 9542); and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Channon: The strategy set out in the airports policy White Paper needs to be carried forward in the light of latest expectations about the level of air traffic from 1995 through into the next century. The Civil Aviation Authority already has a duty under section 16(2) of the Civil Aviation Act 1982 to consider and make recommendations to me about airport capacity, and I have today written to the chairman formally asking for advice on the adequacy of airport capacity in the United Kingdom in the period to 2005. I have asked for a report by July next year.

In view of the authority's recent announcement that the central control function will not produce a substantial increase in usable airspace capacity before 1995, I have also asked the chairman to let me have rather earlier a separate report on strategies for making good use of the airspace we shall have available until then.

A copy of my letter has been placed in the Library.

A27

Mr. Higgins: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the answer of 24 June, *Official Report*, column *771*, what assessment he has made of the accuracy of the topographical model showing his Department's consultants' preferred future route for the A27, with particular reference to the height used to depict the South Downs in relation to lateral distance and the effect on this on the perception of the depth of any cuttings or tunnels on the Findon Gap route; what is his assessment of the resultant implications for the ability of those attending the exhibition of the consultants' study to reach an objective conclusion about the merits of the various routes; what representations he has received on this matter; and if he will make statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley *[holding answer 4 July 1988]*: The topographical model was intended as an aid to supplement the plans at the public exhibition and the information in the consultants' report. It is usual to exaggerate the vertical scale (in this case by five times) so that particular landmarks can be identified.

Over 400 letters have been received since the publication of the consultants' report. Nearly three quarters disagree with all or part of the consultants' findings and recommendations. One petition containing 450 signatures in support of the consultants' route has also been received.

We will take account of all comments received during the consultation period in considering the next steps.

Railway Stations

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list stations *(a)* closed, *(b)* opened and *(c)* reopened in 1978 and each subsequent year to date.

Mr. David Mitchell *[holding answer 20 June 1988]*: The information is as follows:

Stations closed	*Stations opened*	*Stations re-opened*
1978		
	Newton Aycliffe: Aigburth; Liverpool Central Low Level; Garston (Merseyside); Liverpool Lime Street, Low Level; Moorfields; Hattersley; Longbridge; University; IBM; British Steel Redcar; Barrhead	Cressington; St. Michaels; Five Ways; Clitheroe
1979		
	Lelant Saltings; West Ham; Argyle Street	Anderston; Bridgeton; Glasgow Central, Level low; Dalmarnock; Finnieston.
1980		
Bury Bolton Street	Bury; Hackney Central; Hackney Wick; Moulscoomb; Birchwood	Partick
1981		
New Holland Pier; Gateshead	New Holland; Gateshead and Heworth (renamed Gateshead Metro Centre in 1987)	Dronfield; Honeybourne Valley; Kentish Town West; Wetheral
1982		
	Fitzwilliam; Crossflats; Deighton; Milton Keynes Central; Watford Stadium; Watton at Stone	Blaenau Ffestiniog
1983		
Coulsdon North; Corkerhill; Mosspark; Crookston; Paisley Canal; Houston; Bridge of Weir; Kilmacolm; Bingham Road; Coombe Road; Selsdon; Radipole; Skelmanthorpe; Clayton West	Cathays; Moss side; Runcorn East; Slaithwaite; Dalston Kingsland	Bramley; Pinhoe; Kings Cross Midland City

	Stations closed	*Stations opened*	*Stations re-opened*
1984	Upton by Chester; South Bank	Bache; Dunston; Dyce; Humphrey Park; Kilmaurs; Livingston South; Lostock Hall; Saltaire; South Bank; Sandwell and Dudley	Auchinlack; Melton; Sherburn-in-Elmet
1985	Tunbridge Wells West; Groombridge; New Hadley; Lea Bridge; Errol; Eltham Park; Abertafol; Gogarth	Bridge of Allan; Bromborough Rake; Derker; Flowery Field; Lisvane and Thornhill; Loch Awe; Lock Eil (Outward Bound); Longbeck; Mills Hill; Portlethen; Roughton Road; Ryder Brow; Silkstone Common; Smithy Bridge; Eltham; Homerton; South Gyle; Godley	Dunrobin; Melksham
1986	Balloch Pier; Cefn-Onn; Tiverton Junction; Broad Street; Dalston Junction	Cwmbran; Livingston North; Meadowbank; Uphall; South Wigston; Langley Mill; Burnley Manchester Road; Hall i'th Wood; Eastbrook; Ystrad Rhondda; Tiverton Parkway; Welham Green; Winnersh Triangle; Telford Central	Bathgate; Ynyswen
1987	Royton; Meadowbank	Ardrossan Town; Ty-Glas; Hag Fold; Blackpool Pleasure Beach; East Garforth; Rotherham Central; Salford Crescent; Wester Hailes; Fairwater; Danescourt; Curriehill; Frizinghall; Lake (IoW); Haddenham and Thame Parkway	Conwy; Heysham Harbour; Ninian Park; Waungron Road; Birmingham Snow Hill; Sandal and Agbrigg; Corby; Bicester Town
1988	Rowntree's Halt (York) (w.e.f. 7 July)	Cottingley	Bedworth; Cononley; Falls of Cruachan; Thurnscoe; Goldthorpe; Halewood; Outwood; Lostock; Stanhope

Note: The list of stations closed differs from the information supplied to the hon. Member in my answer at column 732, on 10 June 1988, in the following respects:

1. The closure of Bury (Bolton Street) station in 1981 was not counted in my previous answer, because of its direct replacement by the new Bury station.
2. The closure of Meadowbank station in 1987 has been included in this list for the sake of completeness. Its opening in 1986 had been under section 56A of the Transport Act 1962, and thus withdrawal of services was not subject to statutory closure procedures.

Lorry Quotas

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list in the *Official Report* all the organisations which are in receipt of the current European Economic Community quota of multilateral authorisations for heavy goods vehicles in each traffic area, and if he will also list the number of authorisations held by each organisation.

Mr. Peter Bottomley *[pursuant to his reply, 5 July 1988]:* The table for Scotland, Northern Ireland, Wales and Gibraltar was omitted:

Area	*Operators*	*Permits*
Scotland		
Central	2	3
Dumfries and Galloway	3	8
Fife	2	5
Strathclyde	1	1
Northern Ireland		
Antrim	6	15
Armagh	4	15
Down	4	7
Fermanagh	1	2
Londonderry	1	2
Tyrone	5	13
Wales		
Clwyd	2	4
Dyfed	1	3
Mid Glamorgan	1	1
South Glamorgan	3	3
Gwent	2	4
Powys	2	3
Gibraltar	2	2
TOTAL	426	1,027

ENVIRONMENT

County Hall, London

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what price will be received by the London Residuary Body for County Hall; what is the proposed timetable for the conversion of the site; and which individuals and organisations were involved in the successful bid.

Mr. Chope: Details of the terms of the bid accepted by the LRB for the sale of County Hall are commercially confidential. Conversion of the site and its timing will be dependent on matters that have yet to be determined. The purchasers are the County Hall Development Group, a consortium including New England Properties, London and Metropolitan, Touche Remnant Property Investment and Lazard Brothers.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he was consulted by the London Residuary Body in respect of the bids submitted for the development of County Hall, SE1; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: The LRB did not formally consult my right hon. Friend as there is no requirement for it to do so, but it did inform him of the sale prior to its announcement on 29 June.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment he has made of the consistency of the proposed development of the County Hall site with his decisions, as set out in his Department's press release No. 407 of 20 October 1987; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: None. This is in the first instance a matter for the local planning authority, the London borough of Lambeth. Development of the County Hall site will be subject to the granting of planning consents to the extent that any proposed development is not already permitted.

Waste Imports

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on his recent meeting with members of Cheshire county council in respect of proposals to import domestic waste from America.

Mr. Ridley: My hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment and Member for Lewisham East (Mr. Moynihan) met members of Cheshire county council, who were accompanied by my hon. Friend the Member for Warrington, South (Mr. Butler).

The council members made clear their concern about the proposal to import domestic waste from USA for disposal in their area. They said that it would have serious consequences for the county's long-term waste disposal plan, would pose problems for the satisfactory supervision and operation of the site and would involve risks for plant and animal health.

The Minister shared the council's concerns, but said that under existing statutory arrangements it was first for the council, as operator of the site in question and as waste disposal authority and planning authority for the area, to decide on the proposal before it. He pointed out that the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food maintains a constant vigilance against the risk of diseases coming into this country in material of animal or plant origin, and any proposals to import such material would have to satisfy him that no risk exists.

Community Projects (Hackney)

Mr. Sedgemore: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) when he intends to take a decision on approving outstanding partnership grants for community projects for the London borough of Hackney for the current financial year;

(2) if he will explain the delay in approving partnership grants for community projects in the London borough of Hackney for the current financial year.

Mr. Trippier: We received only last week the annual report and final details necessary to allow decisions on Hackney's 1988-89 inner area programme. These decisions will be taken as soon as possible.

Homelessness

Mr. Heddle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has yet reached a decision on the allocation of the additional £21 million resources for homelessness which he announced on 17 June.

Mr. Waldegrave: The allocations have been made to this Department's regional offices as follows:

Region	*Allocation £ million*
Northern	0·8
Yorkshire and Humberside	1·1
North West	2·8
East Midlands	0·8
West Midlands	1·3
Eastern	0·5
London	10·5
South Eastern	2·5
South West	0·5
Merseyside task force	0·3
TOTAL	21·1

These extra resources will enable local authorities to provide additional units of accommodation for homeless people, with the emphasis being given to bringing empty properties back into use and reducing dependence, particularly in London, on bed-and-breakfast accommodation.

That is a far more sensible and cost-effective use of resources than, for example, leasing hotel space, which can, in certain circumstances, attract subsidy under the detailed rules of the Housing Act 1985 system. Because of the present subsidy system, such arrangements can be virtually without cost to local authorities, which could serve to encourage extended use of bed-and-breakfast hotels rather than other better forms of provision. This is wholly unsatisfactory. Where subsidy is available it must be put to better purpose to help the homeless through provision of permanent accommodation.

I intend, therefore, that payments by local authorities on the leases of whole or part of hotels, signed after midnight tonight, will not qualify for subsidy. The existing arrangements for subsidy on the leasing of separate and self-contained premises will not be affected.

Departmental Staff

Mr. Churchill: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many employees within his Department are currently employed in London and the south-east of England; what percentage of these are engaged in work which can only readily be done within this area; and what consideration he has given to the relocation of units within his Department to Manchester and other regional centres.

Mr. Ridley *[holding answer Tuesday 5 July]:* Some 5,200 of the 6,600 staff in my Department, excluding the Property Services Agency, are employed in London and the south-east. Of the 25,400 staff in the Property Services Agency, 11,800 are employed in London and the south-east. My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the

Exchequer announced on 31 March, at columns *610-11*, that Departments would be reviewing the location of their work. In pursuit of that announcement, I am presently reviewing my Department to determine whether any work might be suitable for relocation from London and the south-east to other areas of the country.

Old Perry Bridge, Birmingham

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment on what date his Department was asked for scheduled monument consent for remedial works to the medieval packhorse bridge known as Old Perry bridge, Aldridge road, Birmingham; what factors are being considered; and when a decision will be announced.

Mr. Moynihan: An application for schedule monument consent was received from Birmingham city council on 10 December 1987 and referred to English Heritage for advice on 23 December. Following a site visit in January, I understand that English Heritage asked for further details of the proposed works and the methods to be employed; it will be in touch with the council shortly to discuss them. As soon as these matters are resolved, my officials will ensure that formal consent is granted as quickly as possible.

ENERGY

Electricity Industry

Mr. Geraint Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a further statement on the future of the electricity industry in Wales.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I refer the hon. Member to the statement that my right hon. Friend made to the House on 25 February 1988, at columns 454-56.

EMPLOYMENT

Pentachlorophenol

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what controls there are on the use of pentachlorophenol in the United Kingdom; and what are the circumstances in which its use is permitted.

Mr. Nicholls: The Health and Safety Executive recommends that all occupational exposure to pentachlorophenol should be controlled to a recommended limit of 0·5 mg m^{-3} 8-hour time weighted average (8 hour TWA) and 1·5 mg m^{-3} 10-minute TWA. In addition, HSE guidance note EH 40 draws attention to the risk of absorption of pentachlorophenol through the skin.

Pesticides containing pentachlorophenol can only be used following formal ministerial approval based on the advice of the Advisory Committee on Pesticides. Conditions of use have to be specified on the label.

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what information he has as to the circumstances under which pentachlorophenol (PCP) is permitted to be used in the United States of America.

Mr. Nicholls: I am informed that in the United States of America the American Conference of Government Industrial Hygienists (ACGIH) recommends for occupational exposure to pentachlorophenol a threshold limit value of 0·5 mg m^{-3} 8 hour TWA and draws attention to the risks of skin absorption. The use of pentachlorophenol in products other than wood preservatives is not permitted in the United States of America.

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what information he has as to which European countries ban pentachlorophenol (PCP) and as to the particular circumstances in which other European countries prohibit the use of (PCP).

Mr. Nicholls: I am informed that the Federal Republic of Germany has recently announced a total ban on the use of pentachlorophenol. The Health and Safety Executive is not aware of any other country in Europe which has banned or prohibited the use of pentachlorophenol.

Earnings Statistics

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what percentage of full-time working men in Cornwall earn less than £100 a week; and what is the figure for the United Kingdom as a whole.

Mr. Nicholls: Information on the distribution of earnings from the new earnings survey sample indicates that, in April 1987, some 8 per cent. of full-time male employees in Cornwall on adult rates, whose gross earnings were not affected by absence, earned less than £100 per week. The equivalent figure for the United Kingdom as a whole is just under 5 per cent.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Electronics Industry

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what information he has as to how many foreign companies have set up operations to assemble electronic printers in the United Kingdom in the last five years.

Mr. Butcher: The total number of foreign companies known by the Invest in Britain Bureau to have set up operations to manufacture electronic printers since 1984 is seven. Details prior to 1984 are not recorded.

Internal Market Council

Mr. Page: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will report on the Internal Market Council held on 22 June.

Mr. Maude: The Council, at which my hon. Friend the Minister for Trade and I represented the United Kingdom, reached agreement on 15 individual measures which contribute towards completion of the single market. This has brought the total number of single market measures agreed under the German presidency to well over 50, thus maintaining the momentum we started under our presidency 18 months ago.

Important decisions reached by the Council included the adoption of a directive on non-life insurance services; a package of four directives relating to food law (on flavourings, materials and articles intended to come into contact with foodstuffs, food additives and quick-frozen foodstuffs) and the agreement on common positions on directives on the mutual recognition of higher education diplomas; on the pricing of pharmaceutical products; and on construction products under the Commission's "new approach" to technical harmonisation.

Those measures, together with other notable agreements reached over the last month—for example, on the liberalisation of capital movements and international road haulage—are a clear demonstration that barriers to trade in the Community are being cut, to the benefit of both business and the consumer.

Director General of Fair Trading (Report)

Mr. Page: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when he intends to publish the report by the Director General of Fair Trading for the year 1987.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The 14th annual report by the Director General of Fair Trading has been published today. It covers the period 1 January 1987 to 31 December 1987. Copies of the report have been laid before Parliament.

Post Office

Dr. Blackburn: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement about the profit targets of the Post Office.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The profit target for 1988-89 set following consultation with the Post Office for its postal business, covering the letters, parcels and counters businesses, is 3·25 per cent. return on turnover, before net interest and tax, on the current cost accounting basis. Profit targets for the three businesses in 1988-89 separately calculated on the same basis are 2·8 per cent. for letters, 6·8 per cent. for parcels and 1·2 per cent. for counters. The profit target for Girobank plc in 1988-89 is to make a return, before tax and interest on long-term loans from the Secretary of State, of 20 per cent. of mean net assets on a historic cost accounting basis.

Elstree Film Studios

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will agree to meet a deputation from the work force at Elstree film studios to discuss the implications for employment and redundancies of the sale of the studios by the Cannon Group; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Butcher *[holding answer 5 July 1988]:* The Government regret the redundancies announced by Cannon, but note that employees in the post-production department will be offered jobs when that department is relocated. It would not be appropriate for the Government to intervene in a commercial decision taken by the company.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement on his policy towards the future development of the British film industry in the light of the sale by the Cannon Group of its Elstree studios.

Mr. Butcher *[holding answer 5 July 1988]:* The fortunes of the British film industry have traditionally been cyclical. The Government maintain the view that current economic conditions offer a sound framework for the British film industry to operate successfully on a commercial basis.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Interest Rates

Mr. Doran: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what information he has to the additional administrative cost to *(a)* building societies and *(b)* the clearing banks of each half per cent. change in interest rates.

Mr. Lilley: No details of the costs are held centrally.

Value Added Tax

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will meet the charity value added tax and tax reform group to discuss the ruling on value added tax by the European Court of Justice as it affects the building programmes of charities, including those for severely disabled people.

Mr. Lawson: Customs and Excise officials have already met the group to discuss the implications of the European Court of Justice ruling for charities, and my hon. Friend the Economic Secretary has also invited them to meet him shortly.

Channel Tunnel

Mr. Marlow: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if, pursuant to his statement of 21 June, *Official Report,* column 959, he will give his assessment of the likely effects of the value added tax ruling of the European Court on the cost of the Channel tunnel; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 28 June 1988]:* I cannot comment specifically on individual taxpayers. However, any contract entered into prior to 21 June 1988 will continue to be zero-rated for the life of the contract. In addition, firms registered for VAT will be able to reclaim VAT on construction contracts entered into on or after 21 June 1988, subject to the normal rules for deduction of input tax.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Chile

10. **Mr. Sedgemore:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he has had any recent discussions with the Government of the United States of America regarding the conditions under which the impending plebiscite in Chile will be held.

58. **Mr. Nigel Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he has had any recent discussions with the Government of the United States of America regarding the conditions under which the impending plebiscite in Chile will be held.

87. **Dr. Godman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he has had any recent discussions with the Government of the United States regarding the conditions under which the impending plebiscite in Chile will be held.

Mr. Eggar: We consult frequently and at all levels with the United States Administration on a wide range of topics, including Chile.

Disarmament

16. **Mr. Cohen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what initiatives he has taken following his speech at the United Nations special session on disarmament.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: In my speech at the special session on 7 June I put forward an initiative on chemical weapons. This stressed the need for wider accession to the 1925 Geneva protocol, which bans the use of chemical weapons in war, and proposed specific measures for immediate investigations of CW use and for international action against violators. We are pursuing those proposals vigorously at the United Nations, and bilaterally, as appropriate.

Sharpeville Six

19. **Mr. Menzies Campbell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent representations he has made to the South African Government about the Sharpeville Six.

22. **Mr. Barron:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps he has taken since the failure of the petition for a retrial of the case of the Sharpeville Six; and if he will make a statement.

25. **Mr. Eastham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he proposes to make to the President of the Republic of South Africa seeking the exercise of his prerogative to commute the death sentences on the Sharpeville Six; and if he will make a statement.

34. **Mr. Graham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what further action he is considering in the light of the recent court decision in South Africa in the case of the Sharpeville Six; and if he will make a statement.

36. **Miss Lestor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to President Botha regarding the position of the Sharpeville Six.

49. **Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has any plans to make representations to the Government of South Africa regarding the case of the Sharpeville Six.

82. **Mr. Wallace:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to the South African Government regarding the Sharpeville Six.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: Further appeals on behalf of the Sharpeville Six were made by Foreign Ministers of the Twelve on 14 June, by the Security Council on 17 June, by Heads of Government at the Toronto summit on 20 June, and by the European Council on 28 June. We have also raised the issue again direct with the South African Government.

Mr. Shaher Sa'ed

20. **Mr. McAvoy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to the Israeli Government about the detention without trial of Mr. Shaher Sa'ed, general secretary of the General Federation of Trade Unionists in the West Bank and Gaza, along with others; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: We have asked the Israeli Government for details of Mr. Sa'ed's detention. If there is no case against him, we hope that he will soon be released to resume his trade union work.

Central America

21. **Mr. Corbett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions took place at the recent Toronto summit on the subject of Central America.

70. **Mr. Michael:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions took place at the recent Toronto summit on the subject of Central America.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: There was no general discussion of Central America at the Toronto summit.

55. **Mr. Patchett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had with the Government of the United States of America regarding the visit of the United Nations Secretary of State, George Shultz, to Central America.

Mr. Eggar: None.

South Africa

23. **Ms. Ruddock:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has received regarding the Government's policy on the situation in South Africa.

Mrs. Chalker: We receive representations about policy towards South Africa from many individuals and organisations, representing all shades of opinion.

39. **Mr. Hunter:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is his assessment of the implications of the South African Government's decision to establish a council for constitutional reform for the prospects of a just settlement in South Africa.

Mrs. Chalker: We would welcome any move which led to genuine dialogue and to negotiations on early fundamental change.

Mr. Canavan: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent communications he has had with the South African Government; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: We maintain regular contact with the South African authorities on a wide range of issues, both here and via Her Majesty's ambassador.

Mr. Nelson Mandela

24. **Mr. Galbraith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what further representations he has made to the Government of South

Africa on the case for the release of Mr. Nelson Mandela on his forthcoming 70th birthday; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: As I told the House on 8 June, we have long called, with the Commonwealth and our European Partners, for the unconditional release of Mr. Mandela. On 28 June the European Council strongly appealed to the South African authorities to free him and all other political prisoners.

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will receive a petition from the 25 young people currently marching from Glasgow to London to demand the release of Mr. Nelson Mandela; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: We have long called for the unconditional release of Mr. Nelson Mandela and other political prisoners. I shall be ready to receive a petition calling for Mr. Mandela's release when the 25 marchers arrive in London.

Congo

26. **Dr. Twinn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he plans next to visit the Congo.

Mrs. Chalker: My right hon. and learned Friend has no present plans to visit Congo. I plan to visit Congo on 14-15 July.

United Nations

27. **Mr. Chapman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he next plans to visit the United Nations headquarters.

Mr. Eggar: My right hon. and learned Friend expects to visit the United Nations headquarters in New York during the General Assembly in the autumn.

South Georgia (Fishing)

28. **Sir John Biggs-Davison:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what measures have been taken to protect fishing round South Georgia; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply which I gave to the hon. Member for Wrexham (Dr. Marek) on 21 June.

38. **Mr. Shersby:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will take steps to institute a controlled fishery zone around South Georgia.

Mr. Eggar: We have currently no plans to do so.

Israel

29. **Mr. Yeo:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement about current relations with Israel.

Mr. Mellor: I refer my hon. Friend to my right hon. and learned Friend's reply to the hon. and learned Member for Leicester, West (Mr. Janner) on 4 May.

43. **Mr. Marlow:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will devise with the United Kingdom's European partners a system of escalating measures against Israel until such time as that country enters into serious negotiations for Palestinian self-determination.

Mr. Mellor: No. We aim to help the parties work towards mutual compromise, not to coerce them into negotiations against their will. Only a negotiated settlement voluntarily entered into can hope to achieve stable peace.

45. **Mr. Galloway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent representations he has received seeking the application of limited selective economic sanctions against Israel; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: Economic sanctions would not help to bring about a solution to the problems of the region.

63. **Mr. Ernie Ross:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to the Government of Israel about the abuse and denial of human rights in the occupied territories; and if he will make a statement.

67. **Mr. Frank Cook:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to the Government of Israel in the light of the continuing killing and wounding of unarmed Palestinians by Israeli soldiers and settlers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: We maintain our pressure on Israel to administer the occupation of the West Bank and Gaza in accordance with international law and human rights standards. The killing and wounding of Palestinians is one of the most serious areas of concern.

76. **Mrs. Fyfe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has received urging Her Majesty's Government to ask the Government of Israel to investigate allegations about the use of high velocity dum-dum bullets as a method of crowd control in the occupied territories; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: None.

84. **Mr. Litherland:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to the Government of Israel about the spraying of gas from aircraft into densely populated refugee camps; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: None. We cannot confirm reports of such incidents.

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to the Government of Israel about the detention without trial of Palestinians from the occupied territories.

Mr. Mellor: We have made repeated representations to the Israeli Government both on the principle of detention without trial and in individual cases of particular concern.

Nelson Mandela Concert, Wembley

30. **Mr. John Carlisle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations

he has received from the Government of South Africa following the broadcast by the British Broadcasting Corporation of a popular concert at Wembley on 11 June organised by the anti-apartheid movement.

71. **Mr. Doran:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what further exchanges there have been between Her Majesty's Government and the South African Government about the BBC's televising of the Wembley concert for Nelson Mandela; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: I refer my hon. Friend and the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Motherwell, North (Dr. Reid) on 28 June.

European Community Foreign Ministers

31. **Mr. Callaghan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he next proposes to meet his colleagues in the European Community; and what subjects will be on the agenda.

Mrs. Chalker: My right hon. and learned Friend expects to meet his European Community counterparts at the Foreign Affairs Council in Brussels on 25-26 July. Items on the agenda are the renegotiation of the Lomé convention; trade negotiations with Czechoslovakia; the establishing of the court of first instance; and, possibly, issues arising from the Hanover European Council. Ministers will also discuss the appointment of judges to the European Court of Justice.

European Parliament

32. **Mr. Forth:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he last met members of the European Parliament.

Mrs. Chalker: My right hon. and learned Friend met Lord Plumb, President of the European Parliament, on 29 June. We both also maintain regular contact with other members of the European Parliament. My right hon. and learned Friend hosted a reception for the joint colloquy between the European Democratic Group and the group of the European People's party on 30 June. I spoke to a session of the joint colloquy on the same day.

57. **Mr. Fearn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he last met the President of the European Parliament; and what matters were discussed.

Mrs. Chalker: My right hon. and learned Friend met Lord Plumb on 29 June. They discussed the results of the Hanover European Council and current issues involving the Council and the European Parliament.

South Korea

33. **Mr. Parry:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on human rights in South Korea.

Mr. Eggar: We are encouraged by recent progress, including democratically held elections and the release of political prisoners on 30 June. We hope this progress will continue.

Nicaragua

35. **Mr. Flannery:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has any plans to visit Nicaragua to hold discussions with its Government.

Mr. Eggar: My right hon. and learned Friend has no plans at present to visit Nicaragua.

India

37. **Mr. Butler:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when last he met the Foreign Minister of India to discuss Anglo-Indian relations.

Mr. Eggar: My right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary met the then Indian Minister of External Affairs during his visit to India in April 1986. He also met Mr. Narasimha Rao twice in the past nine months and looks forward to meeting him again soon in his new capacity following his appointment on 25 June as the Minister of External Affairs.

El Salvador

40. **Mr. McFall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made regarding the increase of death squad activity in El Salvador.

Mr. Eggar: In February this year we supported the extension of the mandate of the United Nations special representative on human rights in El Salvador, and in March I took the opportunity presented by the visit of the Salvadorean Foreign Minister Acevedo Peralta to discuss this matter with him.

85. **Mr. Dunnachie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he has received any request from the Government of El Salvador regarding monitoring of the 1989 presidential election in El Salvador.

Mr. Eggar: No.

86. **Mr. Cunliffe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he has now received a report from Dr. David Browning on the conduct of the recent congressional elections in El Salvador.

Mr. Eggar: Yes. We hope to be able to present it to the House very soon.

European Community (Foreign Policy)

41. **Mr. Knox:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he next proposes to have disscussions with his European Community partners concerning the development of common European foreign policies.

Mrs. Chalker: My right hon. and learned Friend will meet colleagues from the Twelve to discuss political co-operation matters in Athens on 18 July.

Gibraltar

42. **Mr. Colvin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what progress Gibraltar has made towards the Chief Minister's declared aim of economic self-sufficiency.

Mrs. Chalker: The new Government of Gibraltar are pressing ahead rapidly with their economic development plans. It is too early to judge the results across the board, but it is understood that Gibraltar Shiprepair Limited is already showing a working profit.

Entry Visas (Iranian Citizens)

44. **Mr. Cousins:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he has any proposals to review the arrangements for issuing entry visas to citizens of Iran.

Mr. Eggar: There are no proposals to review the arrangements.

British Visitors Abroad (Conduct)

46. **Mr. Ashton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had with his counterparts in other countries with regard to hooliganism by British visitors at football matches and holiday resorts abroad.

Mr. Eggar: None. We are greatly concerned at the damage to the United Kingdom's reputation caused by hooliganism. I discussed a number of possible measures to counter hooliganism with the Spanish authorities in Madrid last month. My hon. Friends the Minister of State, Home Office and the Minister responsible for sport have been having talks with their counterparts in the Council of Europe in Portugal and in the Federal Republic of Germany respectively.

Ministerial Visits

47. **Mr. Franks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many ministerial visits have been made to sub-Saharan Africa, including Commonwealth countries there, during the last 12 months; and what major subjects were discussed.

Mrs. Chalker: My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister visited Kenya and Nigeria in January 1988. My hon. Friend the Minister of State and I have made five visits to sub-Saharan Africa during the last 12 months. Ministers in other Government Departments have also visited the region. A wide range of bilateral, regional and international issues were discussed.

African National Congress

48. **Mr. Anderson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how Her Majesty's Government's relations with the African National Congress have evolved since the Prime Minister's statement at the Vancouver summit of Commonwealth Heads of Government.

Mrs. Chalker: Officials meet ANC representatives from time to time as part of our policy of dialogue with a wide range of opinion within and outside South Africa. We use such meetings to urge the ANC to forswear violence, and shall continue to do so.

Council of Ministers

50. **Mrs. Clwyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what are the main topics for discussion at the next meeting of the European Community Council of Ministers.

Mrs. Chalker: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to my hon. Friend the member for Wyre Forest (Mr. Coombs) on 30 June.

54. **Mr. Patnick:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the implementation by the European Community Council of Foreign Ministers on the future financing package agreed by the European Council in Brussels in February.

56. **Mr. Colin Shepherd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the implementation by the European Community Council of Foreign Ministers on the future financing package agreed by the European Council in Brussels in February.

Mrs. Chalker: I refer my hon. Friends to the reply I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Pembroke (Mr. Bennett) on 30 June.

Australia

51. **Mr. Rowe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he next plans to visit Australia.

Mr. Eggar: At present my right hon. and learned Friend has no plans to do so.

Spain

52. **Mr. Adley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on relations with Spain.

Mrs. Chalker: Relations with Spain are friendly and businesslike, as is to be expected between fellow EC partners and NATO allies. Our relations will be given a further boost by the visits to Spain of Her Majesty The Queen and my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister in the autumn.

Middle East

53. **Mr. McAllion:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will raise with the European Community Council of Ministers the case for a European initiative to accelerate the middle east peace process; and if he will make a statement.

81. **Mr. Allen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if, in the light of the failure so far of the mission of the United States Secretary of State, Mr. Schultz, to produce a settlement, he will give consideration to the launching of a European initiative in the middle east; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: We and our European partners keep under constant review how we can contribute most effectively to advancing the peace process.

66. **Sir Dennis Walters:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will report on progress towards a peace settlement in the middle east.

78. **Mr. Atkinson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a further statement on progress towards a settlement of the conflict over Palestine.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: We shall continue to encourage the parties to the Arab-Israel dispute to respond positively to Mr. Shultz's initiative and to agree arrangements for an international conference.

68. **Mr. Ron Davies:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if, in the light of the Arab League summit in Algiers, he plans to press for a European initiative to accelerate the middle east peace process; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: We and our European partners keep under constant review how we can contribute most effectively to advancing the peace process.

77. **Mr. Rogers:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment he has made of the implications for the middle east peace process of the Arab League summit in Algiers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: We hope that the Arab consensus emerging from the summit can be harnessed to realistic and constructive efforts to resolve the Arab-Israel dispute.

Hong Kong

59. **Mr. Andrew MacKay:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he next intends to visit Hong Kong.

Mr. Eggar: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave him on 8 June.

East-West Relations

60. **Mr. Leigh:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the current state of East-West relations.

Mr. Mellor: East-West relations are in better shape than for many years. Fundamental differences between East and West remain, most obviously in the field of human rights and individual liberties, but both sides have shown their interest in ensuring that the relationship is effectively managed, with the aim of creating long-term stability and predictability, thus enhancing security.

Philippines

61. **Mr. Kirkwood:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on his recent meeting in the Philippines.

Mr. Eggar: My right hon. and learned Friend visited the Philippines from 27-29 May. He had useful and cordial discussions on a wide range of topics with President Corazon Aquino and members of her Cabinet, including Foreign Secretary Raúl Manglapus. The visit served to improve the already good relations between the United Kingdom and the Philippines, and to promote the interests of British exporters.

Sri Lanka

62. **Mr. Wigley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent representations he has received concerning human rights in Sri Lanka; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: None. We have seen some recent allegations.

Refugees (Hong Kong)

64. **Mr. Buckley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he has received any representations from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, following his statement on refugees and Hong Kong.

65. **Mr. Jim Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he has received any representations from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, following his statement on refugees and Hong Kong.

Mr. Eggar: We have had a number of contacts with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees over the introduction by the Hong Kong Government of a new policy on Vietnamese boat people. Those contacts continue. We have not received any representations from him on this matter.

Czechoslovakia

69. **Mr. Carttiss:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has any plans to visit Czechoslovakia.

Mr. Mellor: Not at present.

Cameroon

72. **Sir Fergus Montgomery:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he next plans to visit Cameroon.

Mrs. Chalker: As I told my hon. Friend the Member for Gravesham (Mr. Arnold) on 8 June, my right hon. and learned Friend has no present plans to visit Cameroon. I plan to visit Cameroon on 12-14 July.

Western European Union

73. **Mr. Hardy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is his present policy on the offering of public criticism by Her Majesty's Government of other member states of the Western European Union.

Mr. Mellor: We believe that the Western European Union and its Assembly should be a forum for frank discussion of key European security issues such as burden sharing. We do not consider that close allies should be offended by plain speaking about such issues.

European Council, Hanover

74. **Mr. Barry Porter:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the European Council meeting at Hanover.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I have nothing to add to the statement by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister on 30 June.

Toronto Summit

75. **Mr. David Davis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the Toronto summit.

83. **Mr. Michael Brown:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the Toronto summit.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I refer my hon. Friend to the statement made by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister on 23 June.

Côte d'Ivoire

79. **Mr. Burt:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the purpose of the proposed visit of the right hon. Member for Wallasey, (Mrs. Chalker) the Minister of State, to Côte d'Ivoire.

Mrs. Chalker: The main purpose of my visit is to strengthen our political links with Côte d'Ivoire and to review the long-term prospects for increased co-operation in a wide field, including trade and investment. I shall be accompanied by a group of senior British business men.

Haiti

80. **Mr. Norman Hogg:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will meet the United States Secretary of State to discuss recent developments in Haiti.

Mr. Eggar: My right hon. and learned Friend has no immediate plans to meet the United States Secretary of State to discuss Haiti.

Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania

88. **Mr. Madel:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has as to whether there have been any recent changes in Soviet policy towards the future status of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: In line with glasnost, more of the historical truth about the incorporation of the Baltic states into the Soviet Union and subsequent events is now emerging. The views of the Latvian, Lithuanian and Estonian peoples can also be expressed with increasing freedom. Meanwhile, there are some signs of Soviet readiness to tolerate greater local autonomy, for example, in cultural and economic areas. We welcome these developments as part of the wider process of reform in the Soviet Union.

Egypt (British Assets)

89. **Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 21 January, *Official Report*, column 156, if any response has now been received from the Egyptian Government to Her Majesty's Government's representations seeking the restoration of British assets in full, or alternatively complete compensation following their sequestration by the Egyptian Government in the aftermath of the Suez crisis in 1956; what further action he proposes to take with particular reference to the property of Mr. Douglas Forsyth, a constituent of the hon. Member for Wealden, in the light of the further adjournment of his case in the Egyptian courts; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: No such representations have been made. The 1959 United Kingdom—Egyptian Financial and Property Agreement (Cmnd. 723) provided for the return of all sequestrated British property and for the payment of compensation for damage thereto in full. In our view, both the Egyptian and British Governments have fully discharged their obligations under this agreement.

Representations to expedite the hearing of Mr. Forsyth's appeal before the Egyptian courts were made. The court's determination was announced on 22 June. We have not yet received a reply to our request to the Egyptian Government for any proposals they may have to assist Mr. Forsyth in obtaining vacant possession of his property.

Mr. Brian Butcher

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps he has taken to investigate the imprisonment in Rome of Mr. Brian Butcher; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: We are aware of Mr. Butcher's arrest, and he has been visited by consular officials. The legality of Mr. Butcher's arrest is a matter for the Italian courts to determine. It would be contrary to internationally accepted practice for us to attempt to intervene in this process. We shall continue to monitor developments closely.

Majorca (Arrested Britons)

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the circumstances leading to the recent arrest of five Britons in Majorca; what exchanges he is having with the Spanish authorities; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: The events leading to the arrest of five Britons in Majorca on 1 July 1988 are a matter for investigation by the Spanish authorities. The five are remanded in custody pending completion of that investigation. They have been visited by a consular officer.

The general question of hooliganism by a small minority of British visitors to Spain is one on which we have regular and frank exchanges with the Spanish authorities and with British travel organisations. I gave details of the most recent of these exchanges in answer to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Brentwood and Ongar (Mr. McCrindle) on 22 June 1988.

I recently launched a new initiative in the form of a series of public service messages for television which offer practical advice to British holidaymakers travelling abroad.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Sheep

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if, further to his answer of 27 June, he will give a breakdown by county of where the 593 blue marked sheep were remonitored between 28 September 1987 and 1 June 1988.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Between 28 September 1987 and 1 June 1988 blue-marked sheep could be sent for slaughter only if remonitoring had revealed them to present no danger to public health and they had been identified as eligible for slaughter by a distinctive Ministry ear-tag. Of the 593 sheep remonitored in England in this period, 561 were remonitored in Cumbria, where the highest levels of radioactivity would be expected to be found, and 32 in Lancashire.

Domestic Waste

Mr. Butler: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he has given consideration to invoking the provisions of the Plant Health (Great Britain) Order 1987 to avert the impact of American domestic wastes containing plant material.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The Plant Health (Great Britain) Order 1987 prohibits the landing in Great Britain of a number of plants and plant pests from the United States, but does not specifically refer to the landing of domestic waste. Nevertheless, I recognise the possibility that domestic waste originating from the United States might contain banned material, with a consequent risk of introducing serious plant diseases into the United Kingdom, and I am naturally concerned that this should not happen.

Pesticides

Mr. Crowther: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the measures he has taken, under powers granted to him under the Food and Environmental Protection Act 1984, to protect members of the public using public footpaths against the harmful effects of pesticides.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Pesticides are strictly controlled under the Control of Pesticides Regulations 1986, with the effect that no pesticide may be used in the countryside which poses an unacceptable risk in use to operators, members of the public, wildlife or the environment generally. The agricultural inspectorate of the Health and Safety Executive is actively enforcing this prohibition, and prosecutions have resulted. However, we believe that safe use of pesticides also requires a high standard of information and training amongst operators. All new-entrant spray operators in the agriculture industry will accordingly have to show a certificate of competence from 1 January 1989, as will contractors' staff; and we are developing a detailed code of practice with the help of both the industry and the independent experts of the Advisory Committee on Pesticides. In the most recent draft, which is publicly available, growers are advised that they

> "should avoid overspraying public rights of way (including roads, footpaths and bridleways) and consider, after reading pesticide labels, the need for warning notices".

The reference to pesticide labels follows advice given by the ACP that only a small number of pesticides carry any risk to walkers who come into contact with the crop after use. The labels will normally identify such products as "Irritant" and contain advice to exclude people from fields for a period after spraying. Where a right of way exists the grower's obligation to protect human health may, as the draft code indicates, be achieved more effectively by avoiding overspraying of the right of way. The advice given in this edition of the draft code will be the subject of renewed consultation at the end of this growing season.

Aerial application is subject to additional controls, including the legal requirement to confine the application to the land intended to be treated, and to notify occupants of nearby buildings in writing before spraying takes place.

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps he is taking to protect public footpaths from aerial spraying of pesticides.

Mr. Gummer: The aerial application of pesticides has been subject, since 6 October 1986, to the Control of Pesticides Regulations 1986. This legislation imposes more stringent controls in aerial application than on any other type of pesticide use, and requires the application of pesticides to be confined to the land intended to be treated. In the most recent draft of the code of practice on use, farmers and growers are advised that in order to meet their legal obligations they should avoid overspraying public rights of way.

Agricultural Development and Advisory Service

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what discussions he has had with the employees of the Agricultural Development and Advisory Service on the subject of a management buy-out; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: None.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what plans he has to sell the Agricultural Development and Advisory Service; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: I have no plans to sell ADAS.

School Milk (Subsidies)

Mr. Robert Hicks: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the quantities of milk, whole and semi-skim, supplied to each local education authority in Great Britain on which European Community subsidy was claimed, during the 1986-87 school year.

Mr. Donald Thompson *[holding answer 4 July 1988]*: Quantities of school milk on which EC subsidy was claimed by local education authorities and local authorities in Great Britain are recorded by school year, not by financial year. During the 1986-87 school year the quantities were as follows:

Quantities of whole milk and semi-skimmed milk for which subsidy was claimed by local education authorities for the school year 1986-87

(All figures in gallons)

	Whole milk	*Semi-skimmed milk*
Avon	593,694	—
Barking	46,713	—
Barnet	44,042	8,061
Barnsley	147,831	—
Bedfordshire	201,381	1,457
Berkshire	259,954	18,825
Bexley	66,954	4
Birmingham	372,258	3,236
Bolton	174,324	—
Bradford	208,198	—
Brent	180,008	—
Bromley	84,762	491
Buckinghamshire	102,322	214
Bury MBC	42,349	—
Calderdale	85,652	—
Cambridgeshire	15,085	—

	Whole milk	*Semi-skimmed milk*
Cheshire	144,249	959
Cleveland	142,957	—
Coventry	36,460	824
Cornwall	56,439	—
Croydon	125,864	41
Cumbria	139,985	11,778
Derbyshire	429,861	—
Devon	303,426	2,314
Doncaster	104,350	8
Dorset	211,766	1,293
Dudley	36,301	—
Durham	112,895	1,184
Ealing	58,131	3,359
Enfield	43,801	—
Essex	65,170	732
Gateshead	102,533	—
Gloucestershire	193,482	14
Hampshire	151,331	169
Haringey	126,998	—
Harrow	21,350	15
Havering	82,660	—
Hereford and Worcester	201,856	2,985
Hertfordshire	710,682	1,057
Hillingdon	31,301	12,471
Hounslow	119,311	2,221
Humberside	164,189	17,270
ILEA	1,561,646	—
Isle of Wight	31,694	—
Isles of Scilly	—	—
Kent	397,804	6,580
Kingston-on-Thames	4,495	145
Kirklees	133,667	732
Knowsley	139,837	—
Lancashire	474,928	3,616
Leeds	327,572	317
Leicestershire	496,783	1,781
Lincolnshire	37,523	8,267
Liverpool	169,806	—
Manchester	422,091	24,518
Merton	26,701	2,505
Newcastle-on-Tyne	194,025	—
Newham	189,017	—
Northamptonshire	87,851	13,358
Norfolk	299,414	9,221
Northumberland	229,886	22,339
Nottinghamshire	548,279	—
Oldham	121,176	375
Oxfordshire	184,915	7,832
Redbridge	5,067	7,031
Richmond-on-Thames	31,663	3,673
Rochdale	107,908	1,882
Rotherham	75,638	1,657
St. Helens	82,041	—
Salford	173,409	8,956
Sandwell	139,010	—
Sefton	48,188	6
Sheffield	310,241	—
Shropshire	135,123	1,025
Solihull	28,361	—
Somerset	173,366	915
Staffordshire	218,245	—
Stockport	50,816	155
Suffolk	62,733	13,586
Sunderland	209,929	—
Surrey	285,437	23,381
East Sussex	277,793	3,646
West Sussex	163,079	—
Sutton	4,384	819
Tameside	209,955	20,808
Trafford	24,526	—
North Tyneside	131,932	402
South Tyneside	150,215	—
Wakefield	126,646	648
Waltham Forest	166,789	—
Walsall	91,736	—
Warwickshire	78,301	82,910
Wigan	59,271	—
Wiltshire	225,957	8,922
Wirral	87,241	—
Wolverhampton	217,979	6
North Yorkshire	258,941	7,738
Ackworth	12,457	—
Bath	33,301	745
Bentham	3,628	12
Blackburn	3,935	628
Bracknell	13,714	—
Brewood	—	—
Bristol	10,158	936
Bury PC	38,380	—
Cotton	2,872	—
	—	
E Cambridgeshire	3,480	—
Blackpool	—	—
NE Derbyshire	4,188	—
Erewash	—	—
Forest Heath	—	—
Fordbridge	3,805	—
Fylde	3,095	107
Gosfield	1,787	—
Great Budworth	395	—
Hammersmith and Fulham	1,105	—
Harborough	—	—
Harlow	43,112	—
Kensington and Chelsea	4,986	—
Kingshurst	—	—
Lancaster	6,760	—
Lichfield	8,450	77
Northavon	6,952	77
Ribble Valley	19,167	—
Rutland	—	—
Stafford	22,354	30
E Staffordshire	16,057	27
Stanway	—	—
Smiths Wood	—	—
Thurrock	41,930	—
ALSO:		
IAPS	1,162,933	56,401
(Incorporated Association of Preparatory Schools)		
Wansdyke	8,989	10
Wandsworth	3,090	—
Westminster	9,610	82

	Whole milk	*Semi-skimmed milk*
Windsford	11,972	—
Woodspring	27,459	—
Wrekin	38,896	—
Wyre	17,824	—
West Lancashire	2,279	—
Wales		
Connah's Quay	7,591	—
Sealand	2,173	—
Clwyd	127,573	—
Dyfed	48,347	—
Mid-Glamorgan	277,142	3
South Glamorgan	94,570	157
West Glamorgan	19,840	—
Gwent	19,321	—
Gwynedd	56,463	—
Powys	19,495	33
Scotland		
Borders	9,807	1,259
Central	257,571	463
Dumfries and Galloway	32,561	449
Fife	302,242	11,770
Grampian	188,287	13
Highland	20,328	1,098
Lothian	433,880	11,541
Orkney Isles	15,834	—
Shetland Isles	18,834	—
Strathclyde	1,605,998	106
Tayside	186,932	1,153
Western Isles	6,891	—

Vegetable Gene Bank

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) what has been the Government contribution to the running costs of the vegetable gene bank at Wellsbourne, Stratford upon Avon, in each of the years since it was established;

(2) if he intends to make it his policy to meet the future running costs of the vegetable gene bank at Wellsbourne, Stratford upon Avon.

Mr. Donald Thompson *[holding answer 5 July 1988]:* The vegetable gene bank is maintained within the Institute of Horticultural Research of the Agricultural and Food Research Council and as such receives some support from the science Vote of the Department of Education and Science. However, the majority of the running costs have been met by Oxfam and contributions of £30,000 per annum from my Department. Oxfam has recently withdrawn its support, but alternative sources of funding are being sought and my Department has increased its contribution to £60,000 for 1988-89. The research and development programmes of Agricultural Departments are under review.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what assessment he has made of the contribution to research and development of the vegetable gene bank at Wellsbourne, Stratford upon Avon.

Mr. Donald Thompson *[holding answer 5 July 1988]:* All the work of the Institute of Horticultural Research funded by my Department was considered in the recent review of near market research and development, but no specific assessment of the contribution of the vegetable gene bank has been made by my Department. However, it is clear that the gene bank provides a resource for plant breeders in the United Kingdom and the rest of the world.

Trees (Storm Damage)

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if any breakdown is yet available of approximate numbers of each tree species lost during the storm of October 1987.

Mr. Gummer *[holding answer 4 July 1988]:* The estimated figures, by major species groups, are as follows:

	Million
Pine	8
Other Conifers	3
Oak	1
Beech	1
Other Broadleaves	2
TOTAL	15

SOCIAL SERVICES

Housing Benefit

Mr. Doran: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is his latest estimate of the number of housing benefit claimants who have lost as a result of recent changes in housing benefit rules; and what estimate he has of the average level of loss in each of the constituencies of Hendon, South, Mid-Worcestershire, Lancashire, West, Fylde, Staffordshire, Moorlands, and Amber Valley.

Mr. Portillo: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to the hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) on 7 June 1988, at column *561*, for an answer to the first part of his question. I regret that detailed information about the effects of housing benefit changes in individual constituencies is not available.

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement concerning his Department's response to the decision of the Birkenhead SSAT on 10 June concerning housing benefit supplement and transitional protection.

Mr. Portillo: A decision by a social security appeals tribunal represents the first stage in the appeals procedure under the independent adjudication system. I understand that the chief adjudication officer has now received the tribunal's written decision and has applied to the tribunal chairman for leave to appeal to a commissioner.

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many claimants on income support will be covered by the housing benefit transitional payments scheme.

Mr. Portillo: Most claimants on income support will not need a housing benefit transitional payment, because they will be entitled to maximum housing benefit from 1 April and help towards their new 20 per cent. rates payment is provided for in income support. Moreover, transitional protection was built into the change from supplementary benefit to income support. There will, however, be a small number of income support recipients in the vulnerable groups who will qualify for a payment under the criteria announced by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State on 27 April. These will generally be households affected by the detailed changes in the rules governing the treatment of non-dependant deductions, and service or amenity charges.

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on the operation of the payment of transitional benefit relating to the loss of housing benefit.

Mr. Portillo: The transitional payments unit in Glasgow has started to receive applications for transitional payments and we expect the unit to become fully operational this month.

Diet Costs

Mrs. Wise: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what calculations his Department has made as to how much needs to be spent on a healthy diet by a pregnant woman.

Mrs. Currie: Such calculations would be misleading. The range of foods available to the British public provides endless possibilities for constructing a healthy diet, many of them quite inexpensive, both for pregnant women and for everybody else.

Mrs. Wise: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what was the notional amount which his Department calculated as being necessary for expenditure on food in order to achieve a healthy diet when family credit rates were decided.

Mr. Portillo: There is no specific element for food in the family credit rates. It is for individuals to decide on the amount and proportion of their income to be allocated to each area of expenditure.

Mrs. Wise: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what was the notional amount which his Department calculated as being necessary for a claimant to spend on food when income support rates were decided.

Mr. Portillo: The income support rates cover the costs of day-to-day living, including food, but do not have amounts allocated to the different elements of these costs. It is for individuals to decide on the amount and proportion of their income to be allocated to each area of expenditure.

Hospital Building Schemes

Mr. Hanley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list in chronological order by start date the hospital schemes costing over £5 million, started since 1979, giving in each case *(a)* the date of start on site, *(b)* the actual or intended completion date, *(c)* the number of beds involved, *(d)* the number of operating theatres involved, *(e)* the total cost and *(f)* the regional and district health authority; and if he will also give the number of such schemes costing over £1 million during the same period.

Mrs. Currie: The information requested on the 83 health building schemes over £5 million which have started construction since 1979 is provided in the table. In addition, 338 schemes each costing between £1 million and £5 million, were started in this period.

List of schemes over £5,000,000 with start on site between 1 April 1979 and 29 June 1988

Project/Scheme	*Construction cost (£)*	*Contract dates*		*Actual or estimated completion*	*Number of beds*	*Number of theatres*	*Region*	*District*
		Start	*Complete*					
Southampton General—Phase 5, West Ward Block	6,381,550·00	2 April 1979	30 January 1982	2 December 1981	521	—	Wessex	Southampton
Hinchingbrooke Hospital, Huntingdon, Phase 3	10,890,269·00	20 August 1979	19 August 1982	10 January 1983	227	17	East Anglian	Huntingdon
Newham Hospital, Phase 1 (Nucleus)	9,113,626·00	10 September 1979	10 September 1982	8 September 1982	293	4	North East Thames	Newham
Croydon/Mayday DGH (Nucleus)	8,519,504·00	17 September 1979	15 December 1982	10 December 1982	330	8	South West Thames	Croydon
Watford (Shrodells Wing), Phase 3	13,547,351·00	24 September 1979	23 September 1983	17 February 1984	368	12	North West Thames	South West Hertfordshire
Hope Hospital, Salford, Phase 1	11,678,323·00	1 October 1979	31 March 1983	13 May 1983	83	17	North Western	Salford
Macclesfield Development (Nucleus)	8,807,136·00	21 January 1980	1 April 1983	24 June 1983	208	4	Mersey	Macclesfield
Ipswich, Phase 1-Heath Road Wing (Nucleus)	6,236,329·00	14 April 1980	13 April 1983	13 April 1983	308	6	East Anglian	East Suffolk
North Tyneside Scheme 1, Phase 1	10,364,538·00	14 April 1980	13 January 1984	13 December 1983	334	6	Northern	North Tyneside
Maidstone DGH, Phase 1 (Nucleus)	11,033,254·00	28 April 1980	27 April 1983	20 April 1983	262	—	South East Thames	Maidstone
Orpington, Phase 1	6,264,928·00	9 June 1980	3 October 1983	16 December 1983	300	—	South East Thames	Bromley
Rotherham DGH, Phase 2	6,540,543·00	8 September 1980	5 September 1983	5 May 1983	178	—	Trent	Rotherham
Glenfield DGH, Phase 1	10,925,194·00	22 September 1980	18 September 1983	13 April 1983	200	4	Trent	Leicester
Milton Keynes DGH, Phase 1	12,622,800·00	6 October 1980	9 April 1983	12 September 1983	265	4	Oxford	Milton
Colchester DGH, Phase 2	11,018,807·00	16 March 1981	15 March 1984	1 October 1984	286	4	North East Thames	North East Essex
Broomfield, Phase 5	7,558,295·00	6 April 1981	5 April 1984	23 November 1984	—	4	North East Thames	Mid-Essex
Central Public Health Laboratory, Colindale	14,620,183·00	13 April 1981	7 October 1984	20 January 1985	—	—	Special Health Authority	
Lincoln County, Phase 1	9,903,304·00	20 July 1981	19 October 1984	20 July 1984	112	4	Trent	North Lincolnshire
Queen Elizabeth Gateshead, Scheme 3, Phase 1	6,139,179·00	1 September 1981	31 December 1984	26 April 1985	200	6	Northern	Gateshead
St. George's Blocks G2 and F, Phase 2	10,239,521·00	9 November 1981	3 January 1985	9 May 1985	—	—	South West Thames	Wandsworth
Lewisham DGH, Phase 1A	6,132,680·00	8 February 1982	12 October 1984	27 March 1986	—	4	South East Thames	Lewisham and North Southwark
Halton DGH, Phase 2 (Nucleus)	6,118,514·00	22 February 1982	18 August 1984	18 August 1984	232	2	Mersey	Halton
Homerton Hospital, Phase 1	14,178,756·00	1 June 1982	30 August 1985	19 March 1986	428	4	North East Thames	City and Hackney
Derby City, Phase 1	12,066,264·00	2 August 1982	24 January 1986	20 December 1985	242	4	Trent	Southern Derbyshire
Weston-super-Mare New Hospital	11,020,359·00	6 September 1982	9 January 1986	18 April 1986	252	4	South-Western	Bristol and Weston
Bromsgrove Redditch DGH, Phase 1-Contract 2 (Nucleus)	15,285,938·00	1 November 1982	26 January 1986	11 April 1986	393	4	West Midlands	Bromsgrove and Redditch

Project/Scheme	*Construction cost (£)*	*Contract dates*		*Actual or estimated completion*	*Number of beds*	*Number of theatres*	*Region*	*District*
		Start	*Complete*					
West Somerset (Musgrove Park) DGH, Phase 1	6,499,562·00	8 November 1982	8 November 1985	10 October 1986	150	2	South-Western	Somerset
St. Mary's W2, Phase 1B	20,521,915·00	22 November 1982	22 February 1987	15 April 1987	338	8	North West Thames	Parkside
Royal Hampshire County Winchester, Phase 4 (Nucleus)	10,442,215·00	8 December 1982	6 December 1985	16 May 1986	278	4	Wessex	Winchester
Northern General, Phase 1C	6,114,955·00	31 January 1983	28 October 1985	3 May 1985	236	—	Trent	Sheffield
Blood Products Manufacturing Unit, Elstree	13,845,000·00	1 May 1983	1 November 1985	30 June 1988	—	—	Special Health Authority	
Great Ormond Street Remedial Works	7,650,000·00	15 August 1983	15 August 1985	1 September 1987	—	6	Special Health Authority	
Royal South Hampshire Southampton, Phase 3	11,044,487·00	17 October 1983	17 October 1986	15 December 1986	20	—	Wessex	Southampton
Scarborough DGH, Phase 1 (Nucleus)	6,489,486·00	7 November 1983	6 November 1986	25 July 1986	161	—	Yorkshire	Scarborough
Hemel Hempstead, Phase 1-Main block redevelopment	5,973,576·00	14 November 1983	11 August 1986	27 February 1987	84	3	North West Thames	North West Hertfordshire
Clare Hall Project	12,388,823·00	21 November 1983	22 August 1986	30 January 1987	—	—	Special Health Authority	
Derby Royal Infirmary, Phase 2	9,099,162·00	23 January 1984	19 January 1987	2 October 1986	316	—	Trent	Southern Derbyshire
Harold Wood, Phase 1	8,362,330·00	6 February 1984	6 August 1986	5 January 1987	112	3	North East Thames	Barking, Havering and Brentwood
Peterborough 2nd DGH, Phase 1	13,756,438·00	27 February 1984	20 June 1987	11 December 1987	284	4	East Anglian	Peterborough
Friarge Hospital, Phase 1 (Nucleus)	5,230,543·00	30 April 1984	31 January 1987	1 September 1986	171	—	Yorkshire	North Allerton
West Dorset DGH, Phase 1	10,681,065·00	30 April 1984	18 November 1986	22 May 1987	134	2	Wessex	West Dorset
North Sefton DGH, Southport, Phase 1 (Nucleus)	16,623,819·00	29 May 1984	28 August 1987	31 May 1988	301	4	Mersey	North Sefton
St. George's, Block H, Phase 2A	18,004,089·00	4 June 1984	22 November 1987	24 September 1987	360	6	South West Thames	Wandsworth
Tameside General, Phase 2	11,464,378·00	16 July 1984	13 March 1987	27 January 1988	139	3	North-Western	Tameside
Bournemouth DGH, Phase 1A (Nucleus)	14,636,811·00	6 August 1984	6 May 1987	3 August 1988	289	4	Wessex	East Dorset
Telford DGH, Phase 1 (Nucleus)	18,536,334·00	26 November 1984	26 May 1988	31 August 1988	338	4	West Midlands	Shropshire
Staincliffe DGH, Phase 1 (Nucleus)	13,467,122·00	7 January 1985	6 July 1988	3 August 1988	306	4	Yorkshire	Dewsbury
Walsall, Phase 4A and 4B (Nucleus)	14,679,257·00	7 January 1985	7 July 1988	2 October 1988	297	4	West Midlands	Walsall
Bridlington New Community Hospital	11,279,048·00	14 January 1985	11 January 1988	23 October 1987	219	1	Yorkshire	East Yorkshire
Oldham DGH, Phase 1	12,819,229·00	11 February 1985	7 February 1988	30 May 1988	307	7	North Western	Oldham
City General Stoke, Surgical accommodation (Nucleus)	14,724,874·00	11 March 1985	2 September 1988	4 September 1988	278	—	West Midlands	North Staffordshire
Goole New Community Hospital	9,824,153·00	20 May 1985	16 May 1988	15 January 1988	166	1	Yorkshire	Scunthorpe
South Cleveland General, Scheme 2, Phase 1B	6,154,060·00	28 May 1985	28 November 1987	5 February 1988	150	1	Northern	South Tees
Cheltenham General, Phase 1B	6,614,327·00	19 August 1985	16 May 1988	1 August 1988	120	2	South-Western	Cheltenham
Hammersmith Hospital Redevelopment, Phase 1	12,377,300·00	1 September 1985	1 May 1988	31 March 1988	60	8	Special Health Authority	
Chesterfield and NDRH, Phase 2B	6,341,580·00	21 October 1985	10 April 1988	23 November 1987	168	4	Trent	North Derbyshire
St. Mary's, Isle of Wight, Phase 3B (Nucleus)	16,986,021·00	28 October 1985	11 September 1988	15 July 1989	187	4	Wessex	Isle of Wight
Northern General, Geriatric	6,039,006·00	28 October 1985	26 April 1988	5 February 1988	196	—	Trent	Northern
Broadgreen Development, Phase 1 (Nucleus)	8,903,560·00	6 January 1986	4 January 1988	30 June 1988	292	—	Mersey	Liverpool
Furness General, Scheme 2, Phase 1	6,203,209·00	6 April 1986	21 July 1988	1 October 1988	—	—	Northern	South Cumbria
Sheffield Children's, Phase 1 Development	5,274,527·00	14 April 1986	6 May 1988	1 October 1988	49	3	Trent	Sheffield
Eastbourne New DGH, Phase 2	12,235,727·00	23 June 1986	31 December 1988	31 December 1988	140	—	South East Thames	Eastbourne
Frenchay DGH, Phase 1	6,264,327·00	7 July 1986	3 March 1989	14 July 1989	188	—	South-Western	Frenchay
Mid-Sussex, Phase 1	21,052,954·00	14 July 1986	13 July 1989	30 November 1989	330	4	South West Thames	Mid-Downs
Manchester Royal Infirmary, Phase 2	17,723,188·00	14 July 1986	13 January 1990	5 January 1990	280	10	North-Western	Central Manchester
Royal Surrey County, Guildford, Phase 2	14,025,105·00	1 September 1986	30 November 1989	30 November 1989	151	—	South West Thames	South-West Surrey
Medway DGH, Phase 3B	13,797,404·00	6 October 1986	31 March 1989	14 June 1989	186	—	South East Thames	Medway
St. Albans—Redevelopment of Main Phase	5,859,553·00	17 November 1986	23 January 1989	31 January 1989	—	4	North West Thames	St. Albans
South Shields General, Scheme 3, Phase 1	12,249,032·00	24 January 1987	25 January 1990	25 January 1990	348	5	Northern	South Tyneside
London Hospital (Mile End)	5,440,726·00	2 January 1987	29 April 1989	1 May 1989	144	—	North East Thames	Tower Hamlets
National Heart and Chest Centre, Brompton, Phase 1	17,967,623·00	2 March 1987	23 July 1989	25 July 1989	196	7	Special Health Authority	
Glenfield DGH, Phase 2	13,235,906·00	11 May 1987	7 April 1990	25 May 1990	258	4	Trent	Leicester
St. Thomas' Hospital—South Wing	9,609,200·00	1 June 1987	31 May 1989	31 May 1989	129	—	South East Thames	West Lambeth
St. Mary's, Portsmouth	7,055,040·00	24 August 1987	22 November 1989	22 November 1989	—	8	Wessex	Portsmouth
Westmoreland DGH, Scheme 1, Phase 1	15,640,127·00	7 September 1987	7 September 1990	7 September 1990	304	2	Northern	South Cumbria
Leicester Royal Infirmary, Phase 4B	16,076,376·00	26 October 1987	1 July 1990	1 July 1990	465	—	Trent	Leicester
Whittington Redevelopment, Phase 1	10,932,654·00	2 November 1987	13 August 1990	13 August 1990	244	6	North East Thames	Islington
Regional Distribution Centre	7,819,292·00	17 December 1987	13 October 1988	13 October 1988	—	—	South East Thames	—
Royal Victoria Infirmary, Scheme 1, Phase 5	23,268,389·00	4 January 1988	4 July 1991	4 July 1991	360	8	Northern	Newcastle
Bognor Community Hospital	5,064,549·00	1 February 1988	30 July 1990	30 July 1990	48	—	South West Thames	Chichester
Odstock Hospital, Salisbury, Phase 1 (Nucleus)	26,564,945·00	22 February 1988	12 July 1991	12 July 1991	212	4	Wessex	Salisbury
Milton Keynes DGH, Phase 2	12,664,533·00	11 April 1988	4 June 1990	4 June 1990	168	4	Oxford	Milton Keynes
Whipps Cross, Phase 1	11,874,130·00	18 April 1988	19 November 1990	19 November 1990	84	4	North East Thames	Waltham Forest

Departmental Office (St. Helens)

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what steps he has taken to ensure that adequate resources have been provided to meet the needs of claimants in St. Helens with regard to the social fund allocation for his Department's office in St. Helens over the next two years.

Mr. Portillo: The national social fund budget for 1988-89 is £203 million. This is broadly comparable to single payment expenditure in 1987-88. A total of £201 million has been allocated to local offices partly on the basis of past single payment expenditure and partly on the basis of caseload. A note explaining the allocation formula is in the Library. There is a central contingency reserve of £2 million to meet unforeseen and unforeseeable demands. Allocations for future years have not yet been decided.

Seasonal Unemployment Payments

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations he has received about seasonal unemployment payments from the tourism industry.

Mr. Portillo: A number of representations on unemployment benefits for seasonal workers are made every year. Some of these relate to tourism, but records are not kept of exactly how many.

Benefit Protection

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is his latest assessment of the number of people receiving benefit protection following the social security charges introduced on 11 April.

Mr. Portillo: It is estimated that around 1·4 million income support recipients are in receipt of transitional protection. Further information will not be available until the results of the annual statistical inquiry are published in summer 1989.

Health Authorities (Chairmen)

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what are the names of all the chairs of district and regional health authorities, indicating their occupation and previous experience of service on district, regional health authorities or community health councils.

Mrs. Currie: The names of the chairmen of the regional and district health authorities in England are as follows. We do not systematically update details about occupation, nor do we keep comprehensive information about any previous experience they may have had.

Region and Chairman
Northern
Sir Bernard Tomlinson
Yorkshire
Mr. B. Askew
Trent
Sir Michael Carlisle
East Anglian
Mr. C. J. S. Walker
North West Thames
Mr. W. Doughty
North East Thames
Mr. D. Berriman
South East Thames
Sir Peter Baldwin
South West Thames
Sir Antony Driver
Wessex
Professor Sir Bryan Thwaites
Oxford
Sir Gordon Roberts
South Western
Sir Vernon Seccombe
West Midlands
Sir James Ackers
Mersey
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Mrs. P. C. Solk
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Wigan
Mr. G. N. Hague

Rating Reform

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services when, pursuant to his reply given to the right hon. Member for Brentford and Isleworth (Sir B. Hayhoe) on 4 December 1987, *Official Report,* column *758,* he expects to publish the draft community charge rebate regulations; and when he expects to have models to determine the parameters of any poverty traps which would be created.

Mr. Scott: A substantial part of the first draft of the community charge rebate regulations was sent to local authorities in Scotland on 23 May, and it is expected that the local authority associations will be consulted formally on the complete draft of the regulations in August. A copy will be placed in the Library at that time.

No detailed information about any poverty trap effects that may be caused by the community charge benefit scheme is available at present. We plan to incorporate information about community charge liability and the community charge benefit scheme, so far as practicable, in the modelling relating to the years when the community charge will be in place.

National Health Service Staff (Compensation)

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what were the compensation payments for National Health Service staff in respect of redundancies and early retirements in 1987-88 in the manner used in his answer to the hon. Member for Maidstone (Miss Widdecombe) of 31 March, *Official Report,* column *660.*

Mrs. Currie: Final outturn figures for 1987-88 are not yet available. Provisional outturn figures are as follows:

	Number of cases	*Compensation cost* £	*Total cost including superannuation* £
Competitive tendering			
New cases	832	1,724,000	3,848,000
Continuing cases	3,408	3,642,000	3,991,000
Other cases			
New cases	1,545	5,812,000	19,364,000
Continuing cases	9,491	14,939,000	43,700,000

NHS Services

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what percentage by value and volume of National Health Service *(a)* catering, *(b)* cleaning and *(c)* laundry services have been put out to competitive tender;

(2) what percentage of contracts put out to competitive tender for *(a)* catering, *(b)* cleaning and *(c)* laundry services in the National Health Service have been won by either in-house tenders or outside tenders;

(3) what are the estimated savings, gross and net of redundancy and other costs on tendering for *(a)* catering, *(b)* cleaning and *(c)* laundry services in the National Health Service.

Mrs. Currie: As at 31 March 1988 it is estimated that virtually all domestic and laundry services, 96 per cent. and 97 per cent. by value respectively, had been put out to tender; and 76 per cent. of catering services. Of contracts awarded for these services, in-house teams won around 80 per cent., 85 per cent. and 97 per cent. respectively. Estimated net annual savings generated by award of all contracts, as reported by regional health authorities, were £79 million, £8·7 million and £18·2 million for domestic, laundry and catering services. No information is available centrally on gross savings.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many contracts put out to outside tender in the National Health Service have subsequently reverted to in-house tender.

Mrs. Currie: Nineteen to 30 March 1988.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what was the total spent by the National Health Service on *(a)* catering, *(b)* cleaning and *(c)* laundry services in the financial years 1983 to 1988.

Mrs. Currie: Figures of total current expenditure on the services requested derived from the annual accounts of regional and district health authorities in England together with those of the special health authorities for the London postgraduate teaching hospitals are shown in the table. Health authorities were required to subject their provision of these services to competitive tendering arrangements following the Department's competitive tendering initiative in 1983.

	Catering £ *million*	*Domestic/ Cleaning* £ *million*	*Laundry* £ *million*
1983-84	354	429	66
1984-85	354	418	64
1985-86	355	404	64
[1] 1986-87	361	381	64

[1] Latest year available. (Figures for 1987-88 will be available in the autumn).

Notes:

1. The figures for 1985-86 and 1986-87 do not include comparatively minor expenditure by family practitioner committees following their separation from health authorities on 1 April 1985.

2. The figures for 1983-84 include an element for value added tax charged by private contractors. Since 1 September 1983 health authorities have been able to reclaim this and hence exclude it from their expenditure.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what proportion of the total National Health Service cost improvement programme is accounted for by savings on catering, cleaning and laundry services in each financial year from 1983-84 to 1987-88.

Mrs. Currie: Savings on catering, cleaning and laundry services in 1985-86 and 1986-87 accounted for 11·8 per cent. and 16·8 per cent. of the total cost improvement programme in those years. Comparable figures are not available for the other years requested.

Widows

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the number of widowed mothers aged *(a)* 40 years, *(b)* 41 years, *(c)* 42 years, *(d)* 43 years and *(e)* 44 years who have lost benefits as a result of the changes implemented as from April.

Mr. Portillo: I regret that the information requested is not available.

Social Fund

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he will give figures of social fund expenditure comparable to those placed in the Library for the last month of May, for those offices that were not included in the figures; and whether he proposes to make any corrections to the original figures.

Mr. Portillo: We are making available monthly data on the operation of the social fund as soon as possible after the month to which they refer. As a result, the figures may be incomplete and provisional. We shall amend the tables as further information is obtained.

Maintenance Proceedings

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what changes have been made to his policy of giving women freedom to choose whether to take their own maintenance proceedings, without their income support being affected, as outlined in the supplementary benefits handbook para 13.11.

Mr. Portillo: None.

Property Sales

Mr. Gale: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services whether it remains his policy that capital realised from the sale of redundant Health Service property within the South East Thames region will be used for the modernisation of existing facilities and for the development of new facilities; if he will withhold his approval for any plans to convert such capital, or capital allocation, into revenue; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: Receipts from the sale of redundant Health Service property are retained by health authorities as an addition to their cash limit for capital spending. Health authorities have delegated authority to transfer up to 10 per cent. of their capital allocation to revenue or 1 per cent. of their revenue allocation to capital in any year in order to enable them to make the best overall use of available resources. Departmental approval to such transfers would be required only where a region proposed to exceed the above levels.

Benefit (Disqualification)

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services, in the last year for which figures are available, how many people have been disqualified from receiving social security benefit because they *(a)* left their jobs voluntarily or *(b)* lost their jobs through misconduct; how many of these people appealed against the decision; and how many of the appeals were successful.

Mr. Portillo: The information requested is as follows:

Disqualifictions for unemployment benefit on account of leaving a job voluntarily or being dismissed for misconduct—1987

	Leaving voluntarily	*Misconduct*
Disqualifications for unemployment benefit	324,253	97,222
Referrals/Appeals for social security appeal tribunals[1]	11,683	4,353
Referrals/Appeals found in claimant's favour	2,051	1,106

[1] Includes 1,571 cases of voluntarily leaving and 929 misconduct cases carried forward from the previous year. At the end of the year 1979 voluntarily leaving and 790 misconduct cases were outstanding.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services, in the last 25 years, what changes have been made to the maximum period of time for which claimants can be disqualified from receiving social security benefit because of leaving a job voluntarily or because of dismissal resulting from misconduct; what is the current period; and what would be the consequent loss of benefit suffered by *(a)* a single person, *(b)* a married person, *(c)* a man with wife and two children and *(d)* a man with wife and four children.

Mr. Portillo: Disqualification for unemployment benefit because of leaving a job voluntarily or because of dismissal resulting from misconduct has been a feature of the unemployment insurance scheme since 1911. Before October 1986 the maximum period of disqualification was six weeks. It was increased to a maximum of 13 weeks with effect from 5 October 1986 and to its present maximum level of 26 weeks with effect from 11 April 1988.

The weekly loss of unemployment benefit to a person disqualified in these circumstances amounts to £32·75 for a single person and to £52·95 for a claimant who is also entitled to receive an increase for an adult dependant. There are no additions for dependent children unless, exceptionally, a claimant is over state pension age.

If a person who is disqualified for unemployment benefit claims income support, that is paid at a reduced rate for the period of disqualification. The reduction amounts normally to 40 per cent. of the claimant's personal rate of benefit, but is modified to 20 per cent. if any member of the family is pregnant or seriously ill and the family has less than £200 capital. No reduction is applied to benefit payable in respect of any dependants.

The weekly rates of deduction applied to the claimant's personal allowance with effect from 11 April 1988 are shown in the table:

Category of claimant	*Lower 20 per cent. rate of deduction* £	*Higher 40 per cent. rate of deduction* £
Aged 16 or 17	3·90	7·75
Aged 18-24	5·20	10·40
Aged 25 or over	6·70	13·35
Person in a hostel or board and lodging accommodation	2·05	4·10

Teaching Hospitals

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many teaching hospitals were closed in each of England, Wales and Scotland in each year since 1975; and where they were located.

Mrs. Currie *[holding answer 30 June 1988]:* No main university teaching hospital has closed in England since 1975. Hospitals in Wales and Scotland are the responsibilities of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales and my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland.

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many teaching hospitals there were in England and Wales for each year since 1980.

Mrs. Currie *[holding answer 30 June 1988]:* I refer the hon. Member to my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Hazel Grove (Mr. Arnold) on 12 April 1988, at columns *98-99*. The list of teaching hospitals remains unaltered since 1980. Hospitals in Wales are the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

Rates Arrears

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services whether a local authority may apply part of the rent rebate of an income support claimant to meet arrears of rates.

Mr. Portillo *[holding answer 21 June 1988]:* Rent rebates are awarded to help people on low incomes with their rent and cannot be used to meet arrears of rates.

SCOTLAND

Health Boards (Tenders)

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is his policy as to how much information on competitive tendering may be given by health boards to hon. Members; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: This is essentially a matter for health boards, which will follow their normal procedures for deciding what information about their letting of tenders can be properly disclosed. Clearly it would be wrong for boards to reveal any matter covered by commercial confidentiality, and there may be other aspects of the evaluation and assessment process which boards consider it inappropriate to disclose.

Homelessness

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list in the *Official Report* the measures Her Majesty's Government are taking to provide accommodation for single homeless men in Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The Government are committed to maintaining an effective legislative framework to help the homeless. Recent initiatives designed to tackle the problem of homelessness include the provision of increased resources for capital investment by local authorities, particularly for special needs groups, and funding of voluntary organisations concerned with homeless people. Steps have also been taken to increase the availability of accommodation for rent through support of the housing association movement. Our proposals to reform the private rented sector will increase landlords' willingness to make property available for rent. We have also given guidance to local authorities on design standards and on priority allocation policies; and we are at present undertaking research into local authorities' practices in dealing with applications from homeless people. In addition, a new clause to be introduced into the Housing (Scotland) Bill will allow local authorities, with the approval of the Secretary of State, to make schemes under which they can offer tenants cash incentives to move out of council housing into the private sector. The accommodation thus vacated will then be available directly or indirectly to provide housing for the homeless.

Fire Risks

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what proposals he has to mount a publicity campaign emphasising the risks of fire in the home, what can be done to stop such risks and what can be done in the event of fire occurring prior to the arrival of rescue services; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I very much regret the recent deaths in house fires near Edinburgh.

As part of its work the Scottish Home and Health Department endeavours to alert the public to the risk of fire in the home, through national radio and television campaigns, news releases and the issue of substantial supplies of leaflets and posters to fire brigades to help them in their local publicity campaigns. I understand that, following the recent tragedies, the Lothian and Borders fire brigade has assigned additional officers to its community education unit and is stepping up its efforts to alert the public to fire risks in the home.

Guidance on fire safety in the home is given in two leaflets, copies of which are being placed in the Library. The main fire risks arise from chip pans which are left unattended, cigarettes and other smoking materials which are not properly extinguished, and faulty electrical installations. The risk of fire can be reduced by providing guards for fires, shutting internal doors at night and unplugging inessential electrical appliances. Smoke detectors can help to provide early warning. Children should not be left alone in the house. If a fire does occur, the first priority is to get out, using any available means of escape, and then to call the fire brigade.

Allergies

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will obtain a copy with a view to evaluating the findings and conclusions of "Food Allergy and Intolerance" by Dr. J. Broskoff and S. J. Challacombe, Daillière Tindall; and if he will issue any advice to health boards with regard to testing for allergies.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: No. I am aware of the existence of this publication. However, the diagnosis of and treatment for allergies (including testing) is a matter for the clinical judgment of the doctors concerned with individual patients. I do not, therefore, consider it appropriate to issue advice to health boards on this matter.

Health Care International

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he expects to be informed by Health Care International as to whether it has secured guaranteed financial backing for the proposed hospital at Clydebank.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 4 July 1988]:* Health Care International has already secured financial backing to take the project to its present stage. I understand the company's financial advisers are currently structuring finance for the next stage of the development.

DEFENCE

United States Military Facilities

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans there are to establish a United States wartime contingency hospital at RAF Cosford.

Mr. Freeman: While the feasibility of making a part of RAF Cosford site available for the basing of a United States wartime contingency hospital has been examined, it is too early to say whether this will lead to a formal request for permission to establish such a facility at Cosford or what the final decision on such a request might be.

Cruise Missiles

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what has been the total cost to date to Her Majesty's Government, including policing costs, of the deployment of cruise missiles at *(a)* RAF Greenham Common and *(b)* RAF Molesworth.

Mr. Ian Stewart: My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister set out the total construction costs of the two cruise missiles bases in her reply to the hon. Member on 4 December 1987, at column *725*. Of those total costs, £15·9 million at RAF Greenham Common and £21·0 million at RAF Molesworth were met by Her Majesty's Government. The cost of security and supervision borne by the Ministry of Defence at both bases since 1979 is about £20 million. It is estimated that additional policing costs borne by police authorities amounted to approximately £5·8 million.

Eppynt Range Extension

Mr. Livsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how much land has been purchased by his Department and its agents to extend the Eppynt range in Brecon and Radnor in each of the years 1984 to 1988; and how many complete farms have been purchased in each year.

Mr. Freeman: Since 1984 the Ministry of Defence has purchased two areas of land in Brecon and Radnor to meet Army training requirements at the Sennybridge training area (Eppynt range). Details are as follows:

1984-1987—None
1988 —Whole of Gledrydd farm, Tirabad (208 acres)
Part of Pantycelyn farm (53 acres at Mynachdy Upper Chapel)

These areas will also continue to be used for agriculture.

RAF Greenham Common

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what construction work is currently being undertaken at RAF Greenham Common.

Mr. Ian Stewart: There is no new construction work currently being undertaken at RAF Greenham Common.

Royal Navy (Radar)

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence at what range radar in Royal Navy vessels can distinguish between passenger aircraft and fighter aircraft.

Mr. Ian Stewart: It would not be in the interests of the safety of our naval forces in the Gulf to reveal specific operational capabilities of this nature.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Harland and Wolff

Mr. Patrick Thompson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement about the future of Harland and Wolff.

Mr. Viggers: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave the hon. Member for Kirkcaldy (Dr. Moonie) on Thursday 30 June 1988.

Stalker-Sampson Report

Miss Widdecombe: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if there has been any developments in the disciplinary proceedings arising out of the Stalker-Sampson investigation.

Mr. Tom King: In my statement of 17 February I informed the House that the Police Authority for Northern Ireland, as the disciplinary authority for chief officer ranks, would be considering what action, if any, was required in respect of individual senior officers in the light of Mr. Sampson's report. The Chief Constable of the RUC had invited Mr. Charles Kelly, the chief constable of Staffordshire, to consider whether disciplinary charges should be brought in the cases of RUC officers of other ranks.

On 29 June the Police Authority, having considered the comments of Mr. Sampson about the role of senior officers in the affair, and having consulted Mr. Sampson, Mr. Kelly and Sir Philip Myers, Her Majesty's Inspector of Constabulary, announced its decision not to appoint an investigating officer to carry out further inquiries and resolved that no disciplinary proceedings needed to be taken. In making its announcement the Police Authority said that Mr. Sampson had made it clear that the evidence adduced did not reveal conduct amounting to criminal behaviour so far as the chief officers were concerned, and that he had advised it that in his view disciplinary proceedings would not be justified.

The authority acknowledged that there had been criticisms concerning operational and administrative matters, but noted that these aspects had been the subject of a special inspection by Mr. Charles McLachlan, one of Her Majesty's inspectors of constabulary, of which I informed the House on 17 February. The Chief Constable has accepted in principle all the recommendations of that report.

As regards officers of other ranks, Mr. Kelly delivered his completed report to the Chief Constable of the RUC on 20 June. On 4 July the Chief Constable announced that he had accepted Mr. Kelly's recommendations and that 20 officers had been notified that they would be the subject of disciplinary proceedings. A chief constable from a mainland force will hear these charges. It is clearly important, in the interests of the public, the RUC and the officers concerned, that these matters are brought to an early conclusion. I have been assured by the Chief Constable that he will do all he can, consistent with the safeguards of the disciplinary procedures, to achieve that end.

Written Answers to Questions

Thursday 7 July 1988

HOME DEPARTMENT

Heavy Lorries (Speeding)

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many heavy goods vehicle drivers were prosecuted or convicted of exceeding the 60 mph speed limit on motorways in each of the last five years.

Mr. John Patten: The information collected centrally on proceedings and findings of guilt for speeding offences relating to goods vehicles does not include the type of road where the offence occurred or the particular limit which applied to the vehicle concerned. The available information is published annually in "Offences Relating to Motor Vehicles England and Wales, Supplementary Tables" (table 5 of the issue for 1986), copies of which are in the Library. Figures for 1987 will be published later this year.

Young Offenders

Mr. Wheeler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he intends to bring the unified custodial sentence for young offenders proposed in the Criminal Justice Bill into operation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hurd: Provided the relevant provisions in the Criminal Justice Bill secure parliamentary approval by the summer recess, it is our intention to implement the new sentence from 1 October this year.

Immigration

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a further statement on the steps being taken to prevent persons entering the United Kingdom illegally via the East Anglian coast.

Mr. Renton: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer which I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Ipswich (Mr. Irvine) on 23 June at column 1244. In East Anglia, as elsewhere, the local police, immigration service and customs representatives liaise closely to counter illegal entry.

Football Matches (Arrests)

Mr. Heffer: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the total number of arrests either inside or outside football arising from all League matches, Football Association challenge cup, Littlewoods cup, Simod cup and Sherpa van trophy for the whole of the 1987-88 football season.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The police collect statistics centrally for Football League matches only. The total number of arrests at those matches in the 1987-88 football season was 6,147.

African National Congress

Mr. Dicks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if, in view of the support of the African National Congress for recent terrorist attacks in South Africa against non-Government targets, he will make use of his powers under the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act to exclude members and officials of the African National Congress from the United Kingdom.

Mr. Hurd: The power to make exclusion orders under part II of the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1984 may by virtue of section 3(6) be exercised only in respect of persons concerned in the commission, preparation or instigation of acts of terrorism designed to influence public opinion or Government policy with respect to affairs in Northern Ireland.

Local Government Reform

Mr. Leigh: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what are the arrangements for prisons to pay local authorities money in lieu of rates; and what will be the arrangements under the community charge.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: This is a matter for my right hon. Friends the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Secretary of State for the Environment, but I understand that the rating of Government property department in the Treasury pays a contribution in lieu of rates on Crown properties including prisons; and that under the arrangements proposed in the Local Government Finance Bill now before Parliament the Government intend to continue to pay a contribution in lieu of rates on non-domestic Crown buildings.

Police Office, Birmingham (Grant)

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when it is proposed to make a decision upon an application from the West Midlands police authority for a grant towards the cost of converting a former city of Birmingham children's home at Valencia croft, Castle vale, into a police office.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: West Midlands police authority was asked last month for further information about the cost of the proposed building work and the lease of the property. When we receive this, we will consider the application along with others from police authorities, in the light of the available resources.

Police, Fire and Civil Defence (Expenditure)

Mr. Favell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he intends to take any measures to restrain expenditure in 1989-90 by the six joint police authorities and seven joint fire and civil defence authorities.

Mr. Hurd: A number of initiatives are being taken to improve value for money in the police and fire services. In the particular circumstances of the joint authorities I do not consider it appropriate to designate any of them for precept limitation in 1989-90. I do, however, expect them to continue to exercise restraint in their spending, and to have regard to efficiency, effectiveness and economy in the delivery of satisfactory levels of service.

Crime Statistics

Mr. David Young: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) for each police area, how many crimes of violence against the person were reported, and how many successful detections there were, for the last year for which figures are available; and in each case what was the percentage change since 1978;

(2) for each police area how many cases of burglary there were for the last year for which figures are available; what were the number of cases of successful detections; and what was the percentage change on the figures of burglary and the detections since 1978;

(3) how many cases of theft or handling of stolen goods in each police area there were for the last year for which figures are available; what was the successful detection rate; and what was the percentage change in such crimes and detection since 1978;

(4) how many cases of criminal damage were reported in each police area for the last year for which figures are available; what was the number successfully detected; and what was the percentage change in 1978;

(5) how many cases of fraud or forgery were reported in each police area in the last year for which figures are available; how many cases were detected; and what was the percentage change since 1978 in crimes and successful detection.

Mr. John Patten *[holding answer 27 June 1988]:* The numbers of notifiable offences recorded by the police in 1978 and 1987 are published, by offence group, in respectively table 32 of "Criminal Statistics, England and Wales, 1978" (Cmnd 7670) and table 7 of Home Office statistical bulletin, issue 6/88. Copies of these publications are available in the Library. The corresponding numbers of offences cleared up in 1978 and 1987 are given in the following two tables; the figures for 1987 will be published in "Criminal Statistics, England and Wales, 1987" later this year.

Table 1 Notifiable offences recorded by the police which were cleared-up by offence group and police force area

England and Wales 1978

Number of offences

Police force area	*Violence against the person*	*Burglary*	*Theft and handling stolen goods*	*Fraud and forgery*	*Criminal damage*[1]
Avon and Somerset	1,477	3,173	13,537	2,580	1,000
Bedfordshire	922	1,541	6,497	1,411	440
Cambridgeshire	723	2,096	9,636	2,022	443
Cheshire	1,119	3,085	9,410	799	769
Cleveland	1,127	3,535	10,456	1,825	778
Cumbria	592	1,532	5,983	1,100	561
Derbyshire	1,434	2,798	8,344	2,255	618
Devon and Cornwall	1,617	2,676	11,488	1,845	864
Dorset	411	1,303	6,557	2,545	446
Durham	1,071	2,373	7,764	1,046	594
Essex	1,474	3,267	13,398	2,309	886
Gloucestershire	400	1,502	5,055	681	410
Greater Manchester	3,624	11,703	40,912	7,819	3,213
Hampshire	1,659	4,137	16,770	3,949	1,322
Hertfordshire	943	2,122	10,801	3,177	665
Humberside	2,173	3,296	11,405	961	959
Kent	1,381	3,513	12,329	2,337	963
Lancashire	1,718	4,944	15,900	2,447	1,187
Leicestershire	1,138	3,047	9,898	1,310	757
Lincolnshire	790	1,461	5,881	544	447
London City of	107	195	654	241	80
Merseyside	2,503	11,641	26,869	1,897	1,468
Metropolitan Police District	7,883	12,686	65,264	19,036	4,738
Norfolk	356	1,742	6,601	1,175	471
Northamptonshire	892	1,730	6,513	1,125	430
Northumbria	2,130	12,949	27,743	2,139	1,698
North Yorkshire	810	1,686	6,627	1,438	497
Nottinghamshire	2,865	7,151	19,402	2,125	1,378
South Yorkshire	2,369	5,558	16,559	1,782	1,068
Staffordshire	2,043	2,869	10,407	1,472	946
Suffolk	671	1,108	5,840	1,150	517
Surrey	751	1,576	6,813	1,975	587
Sussex	1,581	3,242	14,915	3,060	1,183
Thames Valley	1,760	5,095	18,006	3,695	1,233
Warwickshire	434	1,203	3,513	552	330
West Mercia	1,429	3,193	8,967	1,538	742
West Midlands	3,563	11,166	29,618	4,103	2,053
West Yorkshire	4,261	16,205	32,684	3,122	2,310
Wiltshire	528	1,268	5,306	1,069	301
Dyfed-powys	475	750	3,868	941	443
Gwent	830	1,675	6,679	1,140	554

Police force area	*Violence against the person*	*Burglary*	*Theft and handling stolen goods*	*Fraud and forgery*	*Criminal damage*[1]
North Wales	954	2,048	7,343	2,332	552
South Wales	2,020	6,411	18,254	2,590	1,311
England and Wales	67,208	175,251	580,466	102,659	42,212

Table 2

Notifiable offences recorded by the police which were cleared-up by offence group and police force area

England and Wales 1987 *Number of offences*

Police force area	*Violence against the person*	*Burglary*	*Theft and handling stolen goods*	*Fraud and forgery*	*Criminal damage*[1]
Avon and Somerset	2,950	3,452	15,518	4,161	2,653
Bedfordshire	1,387	1,754	6,038	965	965
Cambridgeshire	1,297	1,629	6,721	641	999
Cheshire	1,916	3,286	10,548	1,370	1,883
Cleveland	1,613	4,723	10,019	1,497	1,300
Cumbria	1,228	2,519	6,383	755	1,294
Derbyshire	2,114	2,702	10,883	1,244	1,594
Devon and Cornwall	2,438	4,563	15,208	3,050	2,267
Dorset	1,066	1,531	6,997	2,358	1,109
Durham	1,712	3,560	8,448	333	2,366
Essex	2,592	3,864	15,051	1,180	1,978
Gloucestershire	952	2,246	6,767	1,117	929
Greater Manchester	5,347	15,499	39,093	10,328	5,862
Hampshire	2,608	5,080	18,088	2,825	2,659
Hertfordshire	1,359	1,606	10,864	2,268	1,529
Humberside	3,782	5,434	13,560	1,557	2,241
Kent	2,381	3,674	13,954	1,112	2,139
Lancashire	2,424	7,597	19,188	4,017	2,739
Leicestershire	1,957	4,645	11,600	1,563	1,701
Lincolnshire	1,152	2,116	7,096	570	868
London, City of	151	259	609	228	111
Merseyside	2,703	22,985	33,404	3,394	3,810
Metropolitan Police District	12,023	12,734	60,572	13,111	10,148
Norfolk	1,149	2,998	8,393	787	1,024
Northamptonshire	1,534	2,954	8,831	804	1,292
Northumbria	3,463	20,729	40,849	2,173	3,381
North Yorkshire	1,319	1,911	6,886	825	959
Nottinghamshire	4,559	4,774	16,718	1,583	2,537
South Yorkshire	3,426	8,677	21,984	1,234	2,580
Staffordshire	3,346	4,557	11,319	935	2,096
Suffolk	1,289	1,748	8,245	770	1,156
Surrey	1,406	1,211	5,799	778	1,132
Sussex	1,856	2,788	11,823	1,736	1,869
Thames Valley	2,775	4,688	20,601	2,895	2,677
Warwickshire	756	1,697	4,632	365	717
West Mercia	2,153	3,456	11,522	766	1,716
West Midlands	5,116	32,808	45,183	3,085	4,973
West Yorkshire	5,518	16,431	35,996	3,188	4,867
Wiltshire	1,238	1,192	5,055	561	885
Dyfed-Powys	946	1,020	4,030	1,506	829
Gwent	1,475	1,974	7,084	1,363	1,304
North Wales	1,760	2,729	7,380	1,687	1,338
South Wales	2,866	8,612	23,715	2,487	3,320
ENGLAND AND WALES	105,102	244,412	610,445	89,172	93,796

Remands

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department in how many petty sessional divisions, 5 per cent. or less of remanded defendants were remanded in custody; in how many petty sessional divisions over 25 per cent. of remanded defendants were remanded in custody; and what was the national average proportion of remanded defendants who were remanded in custody in each of 1986 and 1987.

Mr. John Patten *[holding answer 30 June 1988]:* The latest complete information is for 1985 and was published on 13 April 1987 in Home Office statistical bulletin 7/78 "The Use of Custodial Remand By The Courts", copies of which are in the Library. On average 13 per cent. of defendants remanded for all offences in 1985 were remanded in custody; there were nearly 80 petty sessional divisions in which over 25 per cent. of remanded defendants were recorded as remanded in custody, whereas in over 110 petty sessional divisions only 5 per cent. of remanded defendants were remanded in custody.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Dr. Frank Skuse

Mr. Flannery: To ask the Attorney-General when he next expects to discuss with the Director of Public Prosecutions the progress of the further inquiries by the City of London police into telephone calls made by Dr. Frank Skuse during his appearance as a witness at the Birmingham pub bombing appeal.

The Attorney-General: Tomorrow, Friday 8 July 1988.

Mr. and Mrs. H. W. Tombs

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Attorney-General when Mr. and Mrs. Harold W. Tombs, 3 Highfield drive, Sutton Coldfield, West Midlands B73 5HR, who were told by Her Majesty's Land Registry that their application reference WM 411308 would take an average of 39 weeks to complete assuming that no requisitions arose, on 10 August 1987, may now expect their application to be completed.

The Attorney-General: At the request of Mr. and Mrs. Tombs' solicitors the deeds were returned to them on 1 July. The application can be completed as soon as the deeds are re-lodged with the Gloucester district land registry.

Public Expenditure Survey

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Attorney-General if he will provide a detailed breakdown for the years 1982-83 to 1990-91, by nature of item and functional area of charge, of the receipts to the Lord Chancellor's Department's programme classified as charges for the purposes of the public expenditure survey.

The Attorney-General: The information is as follows:

LCD receipts £000s	*1982-83 outturn*	*1983-84 outturn*	*1984-85 outturn*	*1985-86 outturn*	*1986-87 outturn*	*1987-88 outturn*	*1988-89 estimated outturn*	*1989-90 plans*	*1990-91 plans*
Totals:	87,521	108,355	120,768	130,448	151,593	159,966	166,156	170,152	174,029
Comprising: (main elements)									
Supreme Court Fees	28,065	34,936	37,877	41,704	43,185	46,989	50,050	51,254	52,421
County Court Fees	55,014	64,994	71,132	78,387	91,498	96,358	102,635	105,103	107,498
Recovery from Home Office	734	707	689	707	720	614	724	741	758
Other Receipts	48	106	116	78	156	362	350	358	367
Recovery from NILO	2,180	2,413	3,227	3,408	4,373	4,187	3,328	3,408	3,486
Lands Tribunal Fees	23	30	59	82	86	125	135	138	141
Public Trust Office	—	4,378	4,229	4,023	3,876	3,773	3077	3,151	3,223
Recovery from N.I.F.	—	—	132	660	680	790	712	729	746
Court of Protection Fees	—	—	—	—	6,337	5,828	4,492	4,600	4,705
Legal Aid Misc Admin	46	17	19	19	21	21	15	15	16
VAT Refunds	—	—	353	363	574	775	638	653	668

Notes:

1. This breakdown does not include transfers from other Departments.
2. The figures for 1989-90 and 1990-91 are high level PES figures apportioned to reflect the spread of receipts in 1987-88.
3. Where there are gaps in the table the information is not readily available.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

HIV and AIDS (Teaching Pack)

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what was the cost to public funds of scrapping and reprinting the Health Education Authority's teaching pack on HIV and AIDS; for what reasons this was done; if he will ensure that future editions include lists of agencies and helplines; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dunn: My reply to the hon. Member for Bolton, South-East, (Mr. Young) on 28 June explained why the Government asked for certain changes to be made to the Health Education Authority's pack. I understand that the HEA has yet to establish the costs of making these changes. The retention of existing lists of agencies and helplines in future editions would be a matter for the HEA.

Mentally Handicapped Children

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will provide information on the numbers of mentally handicapped children leaving ESN(S) schools for each year from 1978-79 to 1986-87; and if he will publish data on the expected numbers leaving in each of the five years from 1987-88.

Mr. Dunn: I refer the hon. Member to my reply of 12 April at column *13*.

Capital Expenditure

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what are his criteria for determining increases in capital expenditure by local education authorities; and how he has applied those criteria in respect of Kent in each of the last four financial years.

Mr. Dunn: In formulating capital allocations for local education authorities, priority is given to committed expenditure, new projects to meet population growth and new projects to remove surplus places in the schools sector and to committed expenditure and equipment purchases in further and higher education. In accordance with these priorities, Kent's total capital allocations for the last four financial years are:

	£000's
1985-86	5,209
1986-87	6,405
1987-88	7,841
1988-89	7,588

Regional Accents and Dialects

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what action his Department takes to ensure the preservation of regional accents and dialects; how much he spends on this each year; and how many officials in his Department are employed in this area.

Mrs. Rumbold: The recent report of the Kingman committee proposed that all pupils should acquire a command of standard English alongside intelligible use of regional dialects and accents. My right hon. Friend has asked the English working group to build on relevant Kingman committee recommendations for national curriculum purposes, and he will consider the other recommendations in the light of the public response and the working group's advice. No expenditure is incurred, and no officials are employed, by my Department specifically on the preservation of regional accents and dialects.

Inner London Education Authority

Mr. Gerald Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what steps he proposes to take to restrain the expenditure of the Inner London education authority.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: I have today laid a report before the House designating the Inner London education authority for precept limitation in the 1989-90 financial year. The principle I have adopted is that ILEA's expenditure in 1988-89 is likely to exceed its grant-related expenditure by at least 12·5 per cent. I judge that this is an appropriate criterion for the ILEA. It is the same principle which the Secretary of State for the Environment has adopted in the case of general purpose authorities previously selected for rate limitation. The ILEA's budgeted spending in 1988-89 is more than 60 per cent. above its grant-related expenditure assessment.

I have determined the expenditure level for the ILEA for 1989-90 at £940 million. This represents a cash standstill on the sum which the precept maximum which I set for 1988-89 was intended to raise, once account has been taken of the net reduction in ILEA's expenditure requirement which I estimate will result from the changes in the organisation and funding of local authority higher education provided for in the Education Reform Bill.

The ILEA has today been notified of its designation for precept limitation and of the expenditure level which I have determined. It is open to the authority to apply for redetermination of the expenditure level.

Capital Allocations (Inner Cities)

Mrs. Maureen Hicks: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will now distribute the additional capital allocations for inner city areas for 1988-89 which he announced on 24 March.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: Forty local education authorities have today been informed of their supplementary allocation of prescribed capital expenditure for 1988-89. These authorities have satisfied me that they would be able to make particularly effective use of an additional allocation for inner city projects. The allocations and the projects which they are intended to cover are as follows:

Additional allocations

Local Education Authority	*Allocation*			*Institution(s) project allowed for*
	1988-89 (£ thousands)	*1989-90 (£ thousands)*	*1990-91 (£ thousands)*	
Barnsley	133	—	—	Upgrading nursery provision at 4 schools. Improve music facilities at Edward Sheerien School. Security measures at 5 secondary and 15 primary schools.
Birmingham	138	96	—	Provide indoor toilet facilities at 5 primary schools. Improvement work at Broadway School. Security measures at 10 schools.
Bolton	200	—	—	Energy conservation measures at secondary schools. Security measures in some inner city schools.
Bradford	615	440	—	Improvement work at Grange Road First, Waverley Middle, All Saints CE First, Lilycroft Nursery, Fairfax Upper, and Hutton Middle Schools. Bradford and Ilkley Community College.
Cheshire	62	2	—	Security provisions at Runcorn Norton Priory County Comprehensive.
Cleveland	102	55	—	Improvement work at Thornaby CE and West View Primary Schools, Gillbrook, Stapylton, Norton and Brierton Secondary Schools.

Local Education Authority	*Allocation*			*Institution(s) project allowed for*
	1988-89 (£ thousands)	*1989-90 (£ thousands)*	*1990-91 (£ thousands)*	
Coventry	100	150	—	Improvement work at Sidney Stringer School and Community College.
Derbyshire	200	600	35	Improvement work at Derby Dale Primary School and Derby Homelands Secondary School.
Devon	35	57	—	Improvement work at North Prospect Nursery and Primary School.
Doncaster	35	—	—	Improvement work at Hall Cross Comprehensive School.
Dudley	90	305	30	Remodel Brierley Hill Primary School.
Gateshead	160	—	—	Energy conservation work at 3 primary and 1 special school. Security measures at various schools. Adaptations at Gateshead Technical College.
Haringey	200	370	10	Improvement work at Gladesmore Community School. Adaptations at Tottenham College of Technology.
Humberside	150	115	—	Remodel Flinton Primary/Foredyke Junior High. Improvement work at Pearson Junior High School.
Inner London Education Authority	358	119	—	Improvement work to toilet facilities at Wolmholt Park JMI, Burbage JMI, Old Ford JI, Manormead MLD, Wyborne JI, Meeting House MLD, New Special education facilities at George Orwell SM and Yerbury JMI.
Kirklees	195	35	—	Improvement work at Purlwell Infant and Nursery School.
Knowsley	495	51	—	Security measures at Parkfield School. Improvement work at New Hutte, Nine Tree, Macketts, Brookside, Halsnead, Willis, and Mosscroft Primary Schools.
Lancashire	635	200	—	Energy conservation measures at 127 schools and colleges in Blackburn, Burnley and Preston. Alterations at Calder View Special School. Replacement school for Brunel Nursery. Improvement work at Lea County School. Energy management system at Lancashire Polytechnic.
Leeds	410	322	—	Improvement work at Middleton, Westfield, Ebor Gardens and Hawksworth Primary Schools.
Leicestershire	99	247	17	Improvement work at Slater Primary, Avenue Infants and Southfields Infants Schools.
Liverpool	553	—	—	Energy conservation measures at 5 schools. Improvement to toilet facilities at Longmoor and Palmerston Special Schools. Improvement work at 7 schools. Security measures at 3 schools. Improvement work at Millbrook College of F.E.
Manchester	345	18	—	Energy conservation measures at Semour Road Infant and Manley Park Junior Schools. Roof replacement at Miles Platting County Primary, Seymour Road County Primary, Gorton Brook Special School and Peacock Special School.
Newcastle-upon-Tyne	597	—	—	Security measures at 8 schools. Energy conservation measures at 12 schools.
Newham	181	70	—	Adaptations at Cumberland, Rossetta and Hallsville Primary Schools.

Local Education Authority	*Allocation* 1988-89 (£ thousands)	1989-90 (£ thousands)	1990-91 (£ thousands)	*Institution(s) project allowed for*
North Tyneside	300	70	30	Energy conservation (heating) measures at 15 schools.
Nottinghamshire	1,007	1,043	72	Improvement work at Forest Comprehensive School. Replacement school for Radford Primary. Replacement building for Berridge Infant and Nursery School. Improvement work at Edna G. Olds Primary. Replacement equipment for Basford Hall, Clarendon and People's Colleges. Improvement work at Nottingham People's College.
Oldham	145	—	—	Energy and Security measures at inner city schools. Improvement work at Failsworth Secondary School.
Rochdale	250	680	50	Replacement school for All Souls C.E Primary. Improvement work at Innes School.
Rotherham	380	500	200	Improvement work at Kimberworth Comprehensive and East Dene Primary Schools. Adaptations to Rotherham College of Arts and Technology.
Salford	270	90	—	Safety requirements in inner city schools. Adaptations at Salford College of Technology.
Sandwell	376	904	102	Replacement school for St. Paul's C.E. Replacement buildings unit for children with special needs. Security measures at schools. Rationalisation of accommodation at Sandwell College.
St. Helens	60	—	—	Improvement work at Selwyn Jones High School.
Sefton	275	250	—	Improvement work at Beech Road County Primary School, Lander Road Primary and St. George of England County High Schools.
Sheffield	245	950	50	Improvement work at Longley, Chaucer Campus, Pipworth and Waltheof Campus Schools.
Shropshire	144	182	2	Improvement work at Donnington Wood County Infant School.
South Tyneside	160	2	—	Security measures at 5 comprehensive schools. Refurbish swimming pool at Bamburgh Special School.
Sunderland	385	—	—	Improvement work at Sandhill View and Former High Southwick JI Schools. Adaptations at Castle View, Hylton Red House and Monkwearmouth Schools.
Walsall	55	320	155	Improvement work at King's Hill Annex, Darlaston.
Wirral	20	93	—	Relocation of Leasowe Nursery School in permanent accommodation.
Wolverhampton	100	—	—	Removal of asbestos from Northcote School.
TOTALS	10,260	8,336	753	

Education Reform

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he is now able to announce the names of those he proposes to appoint as university commissioners once the Education Reform Bill receives Royal Assent.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: The appointment of Lord Fraser of Tullybelton as chairman of the university commissioners was announced last week. I am now very pleased to announce the names of the other commissioners:

Lord Butterworth, former Vice Chancellor of the University of Warwick.

Mr. Alan Gregory CBE, formerly Chairman of BP Oil Ltd.

Sir James Munn, Chairman of the Training Commission.

Professor David Williams, President of Wolfson College, Cambridge.

I am grateful to this distinguished group of people for their willingness to accept appointment as commissioners. I am sure that they will command the confidence of the entire British university system. I shall appoint them formally when the Bill receives Royal Assent.

Mr. Sheerman. To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what are the overall additional estimated costs that will be incurred by local authorities as a result of the implementation of the provisions of the new Education Reform Bill.

Mrs. Rumbold *[pursuant to her reply, 24 June 1988, c. 732-33]:* I regret that the figure of £270 million referred to in line 5 of column *733* should have read £207 million. The corrected answer is therefore as follows:

The cost of the progressive implementation of the measures in the Education Reform Bill for schools and further education will vary from authority to authority according to developments already under way. Some redirection of recurrent and capital resources will be required. My right hon. Friend has announced proposals for the education support grants programme in 1989-90 which include some £65 million new expenditure related to the Bill's provisions for financial delegation and the national curriculum. A significant part of the programme of in-service training grants, currently supporting expenditure of £207 million, will be directed towards the implementation of the Bill's provisions in 1989-90 and subsequent years. There will also be implications for capital programmes within the Government's plans to enable local education authorities and voluntary bodies to spend more than £750 million on improving school buildings between now and 1990-91. The Government has set aside £65 million over the next three years mainly for the development and administration of assessment procedures, for which local authorities will not be charged fees. The Bill's provisions for the transfer of funding responsibility for polytechnics and colleges to central Government will lead to a reduction in spending and grant for local authorities of some £800 million from 1989-90.

ENERGY

Fossil Fuels

Sir Trevor Skeet: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what steps he is taking to ensure that the burning of fossil fuels is undertaken in such a way as to abate carbon dioxide emissions.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I am informed that it is generally accepted that the abatement of carbon dioxide gas (CO_2) by post combustion processes is not considered to be economically feasible. CO_2 abatement can be achieved by switching to fuels which contain less carbon, for example, from coal to natural gas, by using non-fossil fuel energy resources, for example, nuclear, hydroelectricity and other renewable energy technologies and by increased energy efficiency. The Government's commitment to continued diversity of fuel supply, including a sizeable non-fossil fuel component, is helping to control United Kingdom CO_2 emissions. My Department is carrying out R and D into renewable energy technologies which should contribute to abatement in the future.

Electricity Generation

Mr. Rost: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if, under his privatisation proposals, electricity generated from municipal and industrial waste will be classified as non-fossil-fuelled generating capacity.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Although the details are still under discussion, I propose that when the non-fossil fuel obligation is set, waste should be classified as a non-fossil fuel, in line with other renewable sources and nuclear energy.

Public Expenditure Survey

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will provide a detailed breakdown for the years 1982-83 to 1990-91, by nature of item and functional area of charge, of the receipts to his programme classified as charges for the purposes of the public expenditure survey.

Mr. Parkinson: The breakdown of receipts classified as charges for the purposes of the public expenditure survey in my Department's programmes are shown in the table (by programme as set out in table 6.1 of the public expenditure White Paper, Cm. 288-II). The figures, with the exception of those indicated in note 4 to the table, are consistent with those given in the answer from my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary to the Treasury on 27 May 1988 at columns *375-76*. They relate to receipts in respect of programme expenditure; receipts in respect of running costs expenditure are not included.

	1982-83 outturn	*1983-84 outturn*	*1984-85 outturn*	*1985-86 outturn*	*1986-87 outturn*	*1987-88 estimated outturn*	*1988-89 plans*	*1989-90 plans*	*1990-91 plans*
									£ million
				(Note 1)				(Note 2)	
Selective assistance to individual firms and undertakings	—	—	—	−0·1	−0·1	−0·1	−0·1		
Nuclear R & D[3]	−57·5	−67·4	−52·6	−61·9	—	—	—		
Non Nuclear R & D	−0·3	−0·2	−0·1	−0·2	−0·2	−0·3	−0·5		
Energy Efficiency	—	—	—	—	—	—	−0·1		
Other central and miscellaneous services	−15·8	−19·9	−19·7	−20·6	−24·0	−25·9	−26·2		
Total	−73·6	−87·5	−72·4	−82·8	−24·3	−26·3	−26·9	−27·2	−28·5

Notes:

1. Figures for 1982-83 to 1986-87 align with Appropriation Accounts.
2. A breakdown by programme is not available for 1989-90 and 1990-91.
3. No receipts after 1985-86 as a result of the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority operating as a trading fund from 1 April 1986.

PRIME MINISTER

Lord's Cricket Ground

Q54. **Mr. Harry Ewing:** To ask the Prime Minister if she has any plans to make an official visit to a cricket match at Lord's cricket ground.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to do so.

Agriculture

Q124. **Mr. Teddy Taylor:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will make a statement on the measures taken since the February meeting of the European Council to implement the proposals for agriculture agreed at that meeting.

The Prime Minister: Regulations have been agreed for the introduction or extension of stabilisers in all the main agricultural commodity regimes and for the introduction of set-aside. The improved budget discipline arrangements agreed by the European Council have also entered into legal force, and have governed the 1988 price-fixing. Regulations have also been agreed providing for the depreciation over five years of existing stocks and the depreciation in the year of entry of new stocks.

Engagements

Mr. Flannery: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 7 July.

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 7 July.

Mr. Cran: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 7 July.

Mr. Skinner: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 7 July.

Mr. Sumberg: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 7 July.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 7 July.

Mr. Patnick: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 7 July.

Miss Lestor: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 7 July.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 7 July.

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 7 July.

Mr. Hunter: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 7 July.

The Prime Minister: This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today. This evening I am presiding at a dinner in honour of the recently retired Secretary General of NATO, Lord Carrington.

European Community (Finance)

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Prime Minister what was the size of the supplementary finance for the European Economic Community agreed at the recent Council meeting; and if this spending will fall to be included within the new financial limits agreed for European Economic Community spending in 1988.

The Prime Minister: On 24 June, the member states confirmed that intergovernmental agreement to provide supplementary finance of up to 7·1 becu (some £5 billion) to help finance the 1988 Community budget, pending entry into force of the new Council decision on the Community's own resources. The United Kingdom's contribution will be up to some 1·1 becu (around £750 million), though this will be substantially offset by extra receipts and abatement. Payments under the intergovernmental agreement will be non-repayable advances of sums due when the new own resources decision enters into force. Total financing for the 1988 budget will be within the new own resources ceiling of 1·2 per cent. of Community gross national product (an increase of some 25 per cent. on the current ceiling). Indeed, it will be within the annual sub-ceiling for 1988 of 1·15 per cent. of gross national product.

Coal and Steel Imports (Duties)

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Prime Minister what were the reasons for Her Majesty's Government agreeing to duties on coal and steel imports being included within own resources at the recent Council meeting; and what is the estimated total of such duties.

The Prime Minister: The exclusion from own resources of duties under the European Coal and Steel Community treaty had been an anomaly, and the Government accepted that it would be sensible to treat them as own resources like all other duties and levies on imports from third countries. This will not add to the total resources available to the Community, the Council having also agreed a comprehensive ceiling covering all own resources. Payments of coal and steel duties are likely to be around 100 mecu in 1988 for the Community as a whole, of which the United Kingdom share is estimated to be around 10 per cent.

European Community (Own Resources)

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Prime Minister what were the reasons for Her Majesty's Government's agreement to the adjustment in the Fontainebleau abatements in the new own resources agreement of the Council; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: The Government's aim was to secure an agreement that left us no worse off than we would have been with the continuation of the Fontainebleau abatement system and the present structure of own resources. We were therefore prepared to accept that the amount of our abatement should be adjusted to take account of the effect on the United Kingdom of the changes in the structure of own resources. The overall effect of these changes is that the Fontainebleau system remains intact, as I told the House on 15 February at column 707.

European Community (Agricultural Guidelines)

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Prime Minister if she will make a statement outlining the procedures contained in the February European Council agreement to ensure that the proposed agricultural guidelines of expenditure are not breached.

The Prime Minister: There are several regulations now in place to reinforce the guideline. Stabilisers have been introduced for the main commodities. An early warning system has been set up to provide monthly reports on expenditure trends for each commodity with a requirement on the Commission and Council to take appropriate counter measures if an overspend threatens. Depreciation must take place regularly to prevent a build-up of overvalued stocks. Finally the annual price-fixing settlement must respect the guideline.

Central and South America

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list the countries she has visited in Central and South America since 1979; and which Ministers have visited Nicaragua since 1979.

The Prime Minister: I visited Mexico in October 1981. My right hon. Friend the Member for Cirencester and Tewkesbury (Mr. Ridley), then Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, visited Nicaragua in 1980.

Central America

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Prime Minister what contacts have been made between representatives of Her Majesty's Government and representatives of the Contra forces during the past 12 months; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: A representative of the Contras called on officials in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office at his request on 29 October 1987. He was informed of our consistent support for a peaceful, negotiated settlement of the problems in Central America.

Iranian Passenger Aircraft (Shooting Down)

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Prime Minister what information was available to her before she endorsed the American navy's right to reply during the incident in the Gulf on 3 July in which an Iranian passenger aircraft was shot down.

The Prime Minister: We were in touch with the Americans throughout the day of 3 July. My statement naturally took into account these contacts and the content of statements by President Reagan and the chairman of the American joint chiefs of staff.

Korean Airliner (Shooting Down)

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Prime Minister whether she will publish in the *Official Report* her public comments made when the Russians shot down a Korean airliner.

The Prime Minister: I sent a message of condolence to President Chun on 2 September 1983. The British representative at the UN made a statement in the Security Council on the same day, a copy of which has been deposited in the Library of the House.

There is no comparison between the Soviet shooting down of KAL007 in September 1983 and the tragic loss of the Iranian airliner on 3 July. This latest incident took place in an area of hostilities where military action was actually taking place and the United States Navy warned the aircraft. In the case of KAL007, no hostilities were taking place and there was no clear evidence that the airliner was warned.

SCOTLAND

Sheep (Radioactivity)

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give a county by county breakdown of where the 3,572 marked sheep were remonitored between 28 September 1987 and 1 June 1988.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Between 28 September 1987 and 1 June 1988 blue-marked sheep could be sent for slaughter only if remonitoring had confirmed that they presented no danger to public health and they had been identified as eligible for slaughter by a distinctive ear-tag.

The areas in which the 3,572 marked sheep were remonitored in Scotland in this period are as follows:

Region	*Number of sheep*
Borders	154
Central	824
Dumfries and Galloway	1,926
Fife	306
Grampian	32
Lothian	66
Strathclyde	210
Tayside	54
	3,572

Financial and Social Deprivation

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will consider setting up a number of centrally administered pilot projects to provide funds to tackle financial and social deprivation in rural areas of Scotland.

Mr. Lang: No. My right hon. and learned Friend and I are not at present aware of any evidence which would suggest that the needs of rural areas would be better met through centrally administered projects as proposed than through encouraging close co-operation at local level between those public bodies concerned with securing the economic and social development of rural Scotland.

Mackerel

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what recent representations he has received regarding access to the west coast mackerel stock.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: There have been no recent representations on access to western mackerel, but this is a matter which has been extensively discussed between Ministers and the fishing industry.

School Meals (Annual Census)

Mr. Allan Stewart: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what are the results of the annual census of school meals in Scotland held in January 1988; how these compare with the corresponding 1987 results; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information is as follows:

Education Authority Schools (including nursery and special schools)

	1988		*1987*	
	Number	*As percentage of pupils present*	*Number*	*As percentage of pupils present*
Pupils present on Census day	729,505	—	729,869	—
Pupils taking school meals				
—on payment	184,780	25·3	186,191	25·5
—free	145,219	19·9	143,194	19·6
—total	329,999	45·2	329,385	45·1
Pupils bringing own food on school premises	98,488	13·5	82,971	11·4

A detailed statement of the returns from education authorities from which these national figures are derived is being placed in the Library.

The following table shows, as percentage of pupils attending their respective sectors, those primary and secondary pupils taking meals or bringing their own food.

	Primary		*Secondary*	
	1988	*1987*	*1988*	*1987*
	Per cent.	*Per cent.*	*Per cent.*	*Per cent.*
Pupils taking school meals	50·0	50·0	41·8	41·7
Pupils bringing own food	20·6	17·9	5·3	4·1

All authorities provide the fixed traditional two-course meals and cafeteria style meals, with the latter accounting for 37 per cent. of all meals served.

The figures are as follows:

	1988				*1987*			
	Paid	*Free*	*Total*	*Per cent. of pupils present*	*Paid*	*Free*	*Total*	*Per cent. of pupils present*
Pupils taking fixed meals	97,635	109,937	207,572	28·5	97,926	107,593	205,519	28·1
Pupils taking cafeteria meals	87,145	35,282	122,427	16·8	88,265	35,601	123,866	17·0

Scottish Citylink Coaches Ltd.

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what specific measures he is taking to encourage and help management and staff to purchase Scottish Citylink Coaches Ltd. when it is privatised.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I refer the hon. Member to the replies given to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Shettleston (Mr. Marshall) on 28 June at column *178*.

Birds of Prey

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give, in respect of each region, the total number of reported deaths of golden eagles, white-tailed eagles and buzzards by unnatural causes in each year since the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 came into force.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The numbers of deaths of golden eagles, white-tailed eagles and buzzards from other than natural causes (excluding accidental deaths), as confirmed by the wildlife incident investigation service, in each of the years from 1981 to date in Scotland are given in the table.

Number of birds

Year	*Golden Eagle*		*White-tailed Eagle*		*Buzzard*	
1981	Dumfries and Galloway	1	Highland	1	Strathclyde	1
	Grampian	1			Tayside	2
	Highland	2			Grampian	1
					Highland	1
1982	Strathclyde	1			Dumfries and Galloway	1
	Tayside	1			Strathclyde	13
	Highland	4			Borders	1
					Tayside	2
					Highland	3
1983	Strathclyde	1			Tayside	6
	Highland	1			Grampian	3
					Highland	11

Year		*Golden Eagle*	*White-tailed Eagle*		*Buzzard*
1984	Highland	2		Strathclyde	1
				Grampian	1
				Highland	2
1985	Strathclyde	1		Dumfries and Galloway	1
	Highland	2		Tayside	1
				Grampian	2
				Highland	6
1986	Strathclyde	1		Dumfries and Galloway	1
				Strathclyde	3
				Borders	2
				Tayside	1
				Grampian	2
				Highland	1
1987	Highland	2		Dumfries and Galloway	4
				Strathclyde	2
				Tayside	1
				Highland	2
1988	Strathclyde	2		Strathclyde	1
	Central	1		Tayside	2
	Tayside	1		Highland	3
	Highland	1			

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland to what effect he has received advice from the Nature Conservancy Council arising from the recent deaths of birds of prey caused by poisoning; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I deplore the disregard for the law shown by individuals who lay poisoned baits as a method of pest control. The line of action pursued by officials is in accordance with the longstanding views of the Nature Conservancy Council on the unlawful killing of birds of prey. Every case is investigated with a view to initiating prosecutions wherever possible, and continuing efforts are made to persuade landowners and occupiers to take steps to ensure that no person in their employ does anything which is illegal under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.

Nuvan

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what research has been conducted into less toxic or non-toxic alternatives to the pesticide Nuvan.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The Scottish Salmon Growers Association recently commissioned the institute of aquaculture at the University of Stirling to conduct research on alternative treatment methods to control sea lice infestation at salmon farms.

Public Expenditure Survey

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will provide a detailed breakdown for the years 1982-83 to 1990-91, by nature of item and functional area of charge, of the receipts to his programme classified as charges for the purposes of the public expenditure survey.

Mr. Rifkind: The information requested is given in the table.

Public expenditure: Charges 1982-83 to 1990-91—Scotland Programme[1] [2]

	1982-83 outturn £ *million*	*1983-84 outturn* £ *million*	*1984-85 outturn* £ *million*	*1985-86 outturn* £ *million*	*1986-87 outturn* £ *million*	*1987-88 estimated outturn* £ *million*	*1988-89 Plans* £ *million*	*1989-90 Plans* £ *million*	*1990-91 Plans* £ *million*
Agriculture, fisheries and food									
Other agriculture, food services and support for the fishing industry	−7	−6	−3	−3	−2	−2	−2	−2	−2
Total agriculture, fisheries and food	−7	−6	−3	−3	−2	−2	−2	−2	−2
Industry, energy, trade and employment (tourism only)									
Promotion of tourism	−2	−3	−1	−1	−2	−2	−2	−2	−2
Total industry, energy, trade and employment (tourism only)	−2	−3	−1	−1	−2	−2	−2	−2	−2
Roads and transport									
National roads system	−1	−1	−1	−1	−1	−2	−2	−2	−2
Local roads	−2	−2	−2	−2	−2	−2	−2	−2	−2
Total roads and transport	−3	−3	−3	−3	−3	−3	−3	−3	−3

	1982-83 outturn £ million	1983-84 outturn £ million	1984-85 outturn £ million	1985-86 outturn £ million	1986-87 outturn £ million	1987-88 estimated outturn £ million	1988-89 Plans £ million	1989-90 Plans £ million	1990-91 Plans £ million
Other environmental services									
Local environmental services	−51	−71	−74	−79	−80	−97	−103	−101	−104
Other expenditure	−12	−14	−16	−15	−16	−18	−19	−19	−20
Total other environmental services	−63	−85	−90	−94	−97	−115	−122	−120	−124
Law, order and protective services									
Administration of justice and central and miscellaneous services	−8	−8	−8	−9	−9	−10	−9	−9	−10
Civil defence and fire	−1	−1	−1	−1	−2	−2	−2	−2	−2
Police	−10	−10	−10	−11	−12	−13	−14	−15	−15
Penal system	−3	−2	−2	−2	−2	−3	−3	−3	−3
Total law, order and protective services	−21	−21	−22	−24	−25	−27	−28	−28	−29
Education									
Non-advanced further education	−39	−39	−22	−36	−43	−40	−37	−38	−39
Other education[3]	−86	−91	−94	−105	−111	−117	−113	−115	−112
Total Education	−124	−130	−116	−141	−154	−157	−150	−152	−150
Arts and libraries									
Museums, galleries and Libraries	−2	−3	−3	−4	−4	−4	−4	−4	−5
Total arts and libraries	−2	−3	−3	−4	−4	−4	−4	−4	−5
Health and personal social services									
Hospital and community health services	−17	−19	−21	−24	−17	−21	−23	−23	−24
Family practitioger services	−28	−31	−33	−34	−42	−42	−44	−49	−52
Other health	—	—	—	—	−1	−1	−1	−1	−1
Personal social services	−25	−26	−27	−30	−31	−35	−37	−37	−38
Total health and personal social services	−71	−76	−82	−89	−91	−98	−104	−110	−115
Total Scotland programme	−293	−328	−320	−359	−378	−409	−416	−423	−431

[1] Due to rounding, individual figures do not necessarily sum to the totals.

[2] The figures relate to receipts in respect of programme expenditure and are consistent with those in the answer the hon. Member received from the Chief Secretary to the Treasury on 27 May 1988, at columns 375-76. Receipts in respect of running costs expenditure are not included.

[3] Includes leisure and recreation.

Seton Court, Tranent (Fatal Accident Inquiry)

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if the Lord Advocate will order a fatal accident inquiry into the death of a family of four people in a fire at Seton court, Tranent, on 7 June.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The cause of the deaths is presently being investigated and a report will be submitted in due course by the procurator fiscal for the consideration of Crown counsel. At that time a decision will be reached as to whether or not a fatal accident inquiry will be held.

Housing Association Grant

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will set out the amount of housing association grant given out *(a)* by district, *(b)* by regions, *(c)* for new build and *(d)* for rehabilitation for the period from 1979 to 1988.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 25 March 1988]:* The information requested is set out in the table.

Housing association grant paid 1979 to 1988

District Council	*New build £ million*	*Rehabilitation £ million*
Borders Region		
Berwickshire	3·70	0·65
Ettrick and Launderdale	6·83	0·97
Roxburgh	5·11	0·59
Tweeddale	4·72	0·71
Total	20·36	2·92
Central Region		
Clackmannan	4·06	0·66
Falkirk	13·70	2·99
Stirling	6·61	1·76
Total	24·37	5·41
Dumfries and Galloway		
Annandale and Eskdale	1·88	0·22
Nithsdale	4·75	2·40
Stewartry	1·49	0·12
Wigtown	4·54	0·14
Total	12·66	2·88
Fife Region		

District Council	*New build £ million*	*Rehabilitation £ million*
Dunfermline	4·48	0·96
Kirkcaldy	4·70	1·23
North East Fife	3·50	0·75
Total	12·68	2·94
Grampian Region		
Aberdeen City	21·67	5·33
Banff and Buchan	8·60	1·71
Gordon	5·82	0·71
Kincardine and Deeside	3·67	0·22
Moray	7·25	0·59
Total	47·01	8·56
Highland Region		
Badenoch and Strathspey	0·31	0·16
Caithness	1·90	0·24
Inverness	6·34	0·76
Lochaber	3·93	1·24
Nairn	1·40	—
Ross and Cromarty	2·98	1·07
Skye and Lochalsh	2·15	0·50
Sutherland	1·85	0·27
Total	21·36	4·24
Lothian		
West Lothian	11·48	1·46
East Lothian	5·98	0·67
Edinburgh city	74·49	24·45
Midlothian	9·03	4·46
Total	100·98	31·04
Strathclyde Region		
Argyll and Bute	12·67	14·67
Bearsden and Milngavie	0·10	—
Clydebank	0·55	15·05
Clydesdale	0·92	0·32
Cumbernauld and Kilsyth	0·45	—
Cumnock and Doon Valley	1·30	0·75
Cunninghame	0·84	1·69
Dumbarton	2·78	1·42
East Kilbride	0·75	—
Eastwood	0·39	0·90
Glasgow city	40·73	317·56
Hamilton	0·35	0·05
Inverclyde	6·58	12·64
Kilmarnock and Loudoun	2·20	—
Kyle and Carrick	0·22	—
Monklands	3·34	—
Motherwell	5·45	5·95
Renfrew	3·44	11·13
Strathkelvin	0·60	0·07
Total	83·67	382·20
Tayside Region		
Angus	4·74	5·05
Dundee	37·18	11·88
Perth and Kinross	10·44	1·35
Total	52·36	18·28
Islands Areas		
Orkney	0·20	0·15
Shetland	3·06	0·44
Western Isles	0·74	—
Total	4·00	0·59
TOTAL	£379·45	£459·06

Rating Reform

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what procedures will be established to determine which individuals are severely mentally handicapped, as defined in part II, section 8(9) of the Abolition of Domestic Rates (Scotland) Act; and what procedures will be established to accommodate individuals who wish to appeal against the non-classification of relatives as severely mentally handicapped.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 23 June 1988]*: Amendments have now been made to the Local Government Finance Bill in another place, for both Scotland and England and Wales, extending the definition of those covered by the exemption to include those suffering from an injury to the brain causing severe impairment of intelligence and social functioning which appears to be permanent. To assist in identifying those who will qualify for the exemption, qualifying criteria have been introduced in terms of entitlement to certain social security benefits, and a requirement of a certificate from a registered medical practitioner. My right hon. and learned Friend proposes to issue guidance on the detailed procedures involved as soon as possible after the passage of the Local Government Finance Bill. As with other registration matters, appeals may be made to the registration officer, and against his decision to the sheriff.

Rating Reform (Member's Question)

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he expects to reply to the priority written question tabled by the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan for answer on Thursday 23 June, concerning the community charge.

Mr. Lang: I have replied today.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Latin America

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many United Kingdom trade missions visited Latin American countries in each of the last five years; what were their destinations; how many were assisted by funds from his Department or the British Overseas Trade Board; and what, in each case, were the principal United Kingdom private sector companies or organisations involved.

Mr. Alan Clark: My Department provided financial support for trade missions to Latin America in each of the years 1983 to 1987 as follows:

Year	*Number of missions*	*Markets visited*
1983	5	Brazil, Colombia (2) and Venezuela (3).
1984	7	Brazil (2), Chile (3), Colombia (2), Mexico, Paraguay (3), Peru and Venezuela.
1985	5	Chile, Colombia (3), Ecuador, Mexico (2) and Venezuela (2).
1986	12	Belize, Brazil (4), Chile (4), Colombia (3), Ecuador (2), Paraguay, Uruguay and Venezuela (5).
1987	15	Brazil (6), Chile (5), Colombia (3), Costa Rica, Ecuador, Mexico (2), Panama, Paraguay, Uruguay (2) and Venezuela (3).

Some trade missions visited more than one market: the figures in brackets in the final column show the number of times the market was visited in the same year. These missions have attracted participation by many major British companies. No comparable information is available on missions not receiving DTI support.

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what proportion of total European Community exports to Latin America was represented by exports from the United Kingdom, in 1973, 1978, 1983 and the latest year for which figures are available, counting exports from Spain, Portugal and Greece with the European Community total.

Mr. Alan Clark: The information is in the table.

Proportion of EC(12) Community Exports to Latin America from United Kingdom

	Per cent.
1973	14
1978	14
1983	9
1987	12

Note:
Latin America taken as Cuba, Haiti, Dominican Republic, Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Panama, Mexico, Colombia, Venezuela, Ecuador, Peru, Chile, Bolivia, Brazil, Paraguay, Uruguay, Argentina.
Source: OECD Trade Series 'A'.

Internal Trade

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what recent discussions has he had with the European Commission on internal trade.

Mr. Alan Clark: My hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary for Corporate Affairs and I attended the Internal Market Councils on 7 to 22 June at which a range of measures relevant to completion of the single market were agreed.

Unleaded Petrol

Mr. Holt: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what percentage of British produced cars built in each of the past three years was capable, without adaptation, of using unleaded petrol.

Mr. Atkins: According to industry estimates the figures requested are as follows:

	Per cent.
1985	3·5
1986	5·5
1987	7·0

The percentage of British cars which are capable of using unleaded petrol without adaptation is expected to increase rapidly in 1988.

Inward Investment

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement on his plans for assistance by Her Majesty's Government to regional organisations established to encourage inward investment.

Mr. Atkins: I have already notified the hon. Member about the proposed funding for 1988-89 for the regional development organisations. The information is available in my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Hertfordshire, South-West (Mr. Page) on 11 March 1988 at columns *369-71*. For future years, I can give no firm commitment on funding but can assure him that I shall continue to consider sympathetically requests for support for worthwhile inward investment promotion activities. Such funding will continue to depend on continued local support from the region's local authorities and private sector. Moreover, it is my intention that this local support should assume a greater share of the total funding of the regional development organisations so that my Department's share should be only 50 per cent. by and for the financial year 1991-92.

Trade Deficit

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what is the trade deficit for the last 12 months; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Clark: In the 12 months ended May, the current account of the balance of payments was in deficit by £7·1 billion.

Manufacturing Trade Balance

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what has been the change in the manufacturing trade balance since 1979; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Clark: Trade in manufactures on a balance of payments basis was in surplus by £2·8 billion in 1979 and in deficit by £6·5 billion in 1987.

Productivity and Output Costs

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement about the latest trends in productivity and output costs.

Mr. Atkins: In the three months to April 1988 productivity in manufacturing as measured by output per head, was 5 per cent. higher than a year earlier. In the same period wages and salaries per unit of output were 3 per cent. higher than a year earlier.

Timber

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what was the total value of imports and exports, respectively, of timber in 1987.

Mr. Atkins: United Kingdom imports and exports of timber, defined as standard international trade classification division 24, less sub-group 244·0, in 1987 were £1,197·0 million and £25·6 million respectively.

Copyright, Designs and Patents Bill

Mr. Stern: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many representations he has received in respect of the proposals in the Copywright, Designs and Patents Bill [*Lords*], as they affect the aerospace industry.

Mr. Butcher: We have received around 45 representations from five aerospace companies and the Society of British Aerospace Companies. Around 30 hon. Members have written to us about representations they have received from the same sources. Ministers have also had three meetings with representatives of the aerospace industry.

High-definition Television.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what assessment he has made of Britain's competitive position in the development of high-definition television.

Mr. Butcher: United Kingdom broadcasting and industrial interests are playing a significant role in a major Eureka collaborative project to develop a high definition television system compatible with the MAC (multiplexed analogue components) transmission standard for direct broadcasting by satellite. United Kingdom participation in this project will help ensure a competitive British position in the development of this important technology.

Whisky

Sir Hector Monro: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what discussions he has had with the Japanese Government on the taxation of Scotch whisky.

Mr. Alan Clark: The Japanese authorities have now announced their intention to introduce, from April 1989, a single rate of tax for all whiskies, at a level 45 per cent. below that currently applying to Scotch. This news is most welcome. Nevertheless, since some discrimination in the tax rates applying to other competing spirits will remain, the impact of the proposed changes would need to be kept closely under review, and the possibility of further recourse to the general agreement on tariffs and trade left open.

Elstree Studios

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what representations he has received concerning the effect of the proposed disposal by the Cannon Group of the Elstree studios in respect of the interests of the British film industry; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Butcher: Representations have been received from organisations representing film producers and trades unions; from individual film producers; from another place; and, of course, from the hon. Member.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what information he has sought concerning the intentions of the new owners of Elstree studios to maintain film making on the site; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Butcher: The future use of the studio property is a matter for the commercial judgment of the new owners, subject to any consents which may have to be obtained from the planning authorities.

Regional Policy

Mr. Clelland: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement on the Government's regional policy.

Mr. Atkins: Regional industrial policy operates within a general economic framework designed to encourage enterprise and growth in all parts of the country. Particular policy instruments are targeted on the assisted areas where additional measures are needed. The changes in regional industrial policy announced in the DTI White Paper, "DTI—the department for Enterprise", were designed to make that policy more effective in encouraging enterprise in the regions.

Post Office

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement on the future of Post Office counter services.

Mr. Butcher: The Post Office's proposals for the future of its counters subsidiary will be considered in the context of the revised counters business plan which will be submitted to me later this year.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

European Court of Human Rights

Mr. Radice: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list all the judgments made against the United Kingdom in the European Court of Human Rights, giving the date, the relevant articles of the European convention, and a brief description of the subject matter.

Mrs. Chalker: The information is as follows:

Date	*Articles in question*	*Brief details*	*Name of case*
21 February 1975	6, 8	Prisoner's access to Court	Golder
18 January 1978	3	Interrogation techniques (Northern Ireland)	Government of Ireland
25 April 1978	3	Judicial birching (Isle of Man)	Tyrer
26 April 1979	10	Freedom of expression; contempt of court	Sunday Times
13 August 1981	11	Closed Shop	Young, James and Webster
22 October 1981	8	Homosexuality (Northern Ireland)	Dudgeon
5 November 1981	5	Mental patient; right to have detention reviewed	X
25 February 1982	Protocol 1 Article 2	Corporal punishment in schools (respect of parents' philosophical convictions)	Campbell and Cosans
25 March 1983	6, 8, 13	Prisoners, correspondence	Silver and Others
28 June 1984	6, 8, 13	Boards of Prison visitors: conduct of disciplinary proceedings	Campbell and Fell
2 August 1984	8	Telephone tapping	Malone
28 May 1985	8 with 14.13	Immigration—discrimination on grounds of sex	Abdulaziz, Cabales and Balkandali
24 November 1986	8	Guernsey housing law	Gillow
2 March 1987	5	Parole Conditions	Weeks
8 July 1987	6	Child Care Procedures	O
8 July 1987	6, 8	Child Care Procedures	H
8 July 1987	6, 8	Child Care Procedures	W
8 July 1987	6, 8	Child Care Procedures	B
8 July 1987	6, 8	Child Care Procedures	R
27 April 1988	8	Prisoners' Correspondence	Boyle and Rice

Central America

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the countries in Central America visited by departmental Ministers since 1979 with the date and duration of each visit.

Mr. Eggar: The following list gives details of FCO departmental Ministers' visits to Central America and Mexico since 1979.

	Date
Belize	
Lady Young	9-11 November 1983
Lady Young	7-10 March 1985
Mr. Patten	23-26 September 1987
Mr. Eggar	7-9 May 1988
Costa Rica	
Mr. Ridley	5-7 May 1980
Lady Young	15-17 November 1983
Sir Geoffrey Howe	28-29 September 1984
Lady Young	8-9 January 1986
El Salvador	
Mr. Ridley	8 May 1980
Guatemala	
Lady Young	9-10 February 1987
Honduras	
Mr. Ridley	4-5 May 1980
Nicaragua	
Mr. Ridley	7 May 1980
Mexico	
Lord Carrington	3-5 August 1980
Lady Young	4-10 February 1984
Lady Young	9-12 January 1986
Sir Geoffrey Howe	3-6 January 1987
Mr. Patten	20 September 1987
Mr. Eggar	1-3 June 1988

Nicaragua

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when the last visit was made by a Government Minister from his Department to Nicaragua.

Mr. Eggar: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment, then Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, visited Nicaragua in May 1980.

Honduras, Guatemala and El Salvador

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations have been made by Her Majesty's Government to the Governments of Honduras, Guatemala and El Salvador concerning their failure to abide by the terms of the Esquipulas II agreement.

Mr. Eggar: We and our European partners have on a number of occasions called on all the signatories of the Esquipulas II peace accord to fulfil their outstanding obligations under the accord without delay.

United Nations (United Kingdom Vote)

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will provide details of the explanation of vote made by Her Majesty's Government's representative at the United Nations on the occasion of United Nations General Assembly resolution 42/231; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: The explanation of vote made by the United Kingdom representative on United Nations resolution 42/231 was as follows:

"In welcoming the adoption of this Resolution I should like to make the following points about my Government's position. The British Government has consistently made clear its support for the efforts of the Central American countries to achieve a comprehensive and lasting solution to the region's problems.

We welcomed the Guatemala Agreement, and have likewise welcomed subsequent steps to implement it. We also recognise that efforts towards economic and social development are an important element in the success of the peace process and the achievement of political stability in the region.

My Government fully endorses the statement by the Representative of the Federal Republic of Germany on behalf of the European Community and its member states. We would like to reiterate to the Secretary General and to his personal representative, Senor Ramirez Ocampo, our sincere appreciation for the leadership shown in elaborating the Special Plan of Economic Co-operation for Central America. We undertake to use our best efforts to ensure that our assistance to the Central American countries is co-ordinated with other donors, though specific suggestions and proposals contained in the Special Plan will require urgent study by all the competent organisations.

Mr. President, my Government shares the concerns expressed in this debate at the burden of foreign debt which is acting as a brake on the economic recovery of the region. For this reason we have welcomed recent developments in the so-called 'menu-approach', involving as they do market based solutions voluntarily agreed between debtors and commercial bank creditors, such as debt equity conversions and recent debt exchange schemes which reduce the existing stock of debt. My Government is not able to enter into any commitment on the new proposals concerning debt made in the relevant paragraphs and annexes of the Special Plan, but I can assure you that they will be studied carefully.

My Government has always considered that bilateral commercial debt is a matter between debtor governments and the creditor banks. We should therefore like to encourage the Central American governments to discuss the proposals in the plan with the creditor institutions concerned. We believe that such discussions are the best way of finding solutions to the debt problem suited to the individual requirements of debtor governments. It is in this spirit that we have supported the Resolution."

Central American Parliament

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on information available to him on the progress achieved in setting up the Central American Parliament following the San José IV meeting in Hamburg.

Mr. Eggar: We understand that the Central American Parliament treaty has yet to be ratified by the Parliaments of Costa Rica and El Salvador. In consequence, no date has yet been set for elections to the Central American Parliament.

Panama

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if any requests have been received from the United State authorities to co-operate in actions being taken against the Government of Panama; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: We have not been asked by the United States authorities to co-operate in actions being taken against the Government of Panama.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when discussions last took place between representatives of Her Majesty's Government and those of the United States Government in respect of the situation in Panama; what matters were discussed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: The situation in Panama has been discussed in the course of our normal contacts with the United States Government. Our interest is to see internal peace and democracy in Panama.

Public Expenditure Survey

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will provide a detailed breakdown for the years 1982-83 to 1990-91, by nature of item and functional area of charge, of the receipts to his programme classified as charges for the purposes of the public expenditure survey.

Mr. Eggar: The breakdown for the Foreign and Commonwealth Office is set out in the following table.

£ million (rounded)

	1982-83 Outturn	*1983-84 Outturn*	*1984-85 Outturn*	*1985-86 Outturn*	*1986-87 Outturn*	*1987-88 Outturn*	*1988-89 Outturn*	*1989-90 Outturn*	*1990-91 Outturn*
BBC Monitoring Service	2·0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Foreign Compensation Commission	—	—	—	—	0·4	2·8	0·8	0·4	0·4
ODA Contribution to FCO Scholarships Award Scheme	—	—	—	0·6	0·6	0·6	0·7	0·7	0·7
TOTAL	2·0	—	—	0·6	1·0	3·4	1·5	1·1	1·1

The figures given are consistent with those given by the Chief Secretary to the Treasury in his answer on 27 May 1988, at column *375*, updated to take account of decisions subsequent to the 1987 public expenditure survey; figures relate to receipts in respect of programme expenditure only; receipts in respect of running costs expenditure are not included.

Mr. Jacques Delors (Speech)

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will place in the Library a copy of the recent speech made to the European Parliament by the President of the European Commission, Mr. Delors, on the percentage of social, financial and economic decisions which would shortly be decided in such a way as to exclude consideration by national Parliaments; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: Copies of the "Debates of the European Parliament" annex to the *Official Journal of the European Communities,* which includes the texts of speeches, are received in the House and made available to hon. Members.

WALES

Urban Programme

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what has been the urban programme allocation to each qualifying district in Wales, in cash and real terms, for each of the last five financial years; and what is the estimate for 1988-89.

Mr. Grist: The information requested in respect of the urban programme allocations to local authorities in Wales is as follows:

	1983-84		*1984-85*		*1985-86*		*1986-87*		*1987-88*		*1988-89*
Welsh Counties and Districts	*Cash terms (£)*	*Real terms (£)*	*Cash terms (£)*	*Real terms (£)*	*Cash terms (£)*	*Real terms (£)*	*Cash terms (£)*	*Real terms (£)*	*Cash terms (£)*	*Real terms (£)*	*Cash terms (£)*
Clwyd CC	1,231,094	1,545,835	1,618,703	1,946,497	1,684,622	1,911,585	922,632	1,012,690	1,116,840	1,167,102	715,739
Alyn and Deeside DC	409,557	514,264	592,540	712,531	554.803	629,549	817,500	897,296	398.500	416.434	269.627
Colwyn BC	53,500	67,177	78,570	94,480	24,704	28,032	21,841	23,972	40,250	42,061	30,158
Delyn BC	851,000	1,068,566	1,406,175	1,690,931	1,936,836	2,197,779	904,500	992,788	723,098	755,640	440,845
Glyndwr DC	—	—	—	—	31,398	35,628	147,391	161,777	44,676	46,686	16,320
Rhuddlan BC	—	—	—	—	—	—	54,500	59,819	50,800	53,086	52,534
Wrexham Maelor BC	760,391	954,792	404,637	486,577	948,365	1,076,135	1,269,762	1,393,703	804,621	840,832	476,641
Dyfed CC	432,957	543,646	433,747	521,582	222,353	252,309	477,259	523,844	376,903	393,865	244,135
Carmarthen DC	112,000	140,633	15,000	18,037	—	—	—	—	25,000	26,125	—
Ceredigion DC	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	15,700	16,406	16,511
Dinefwr BC	197,700	248,243	111,000	133,477	240,000	272,334	331,300	363,638	129,621	135,454	237,051
Llanelli BC	625,708	785,676	650,628	782,383	347,151	393,921	591,243	648,954	561,160	586,414	314,697
Preseli Pembs DC	463,000	581,370	580,750	698,354	405,889	460,573	377,668	414,532	290,684	303,766	210,443
South Pembs DC	168,078	211,048	551,750	663,481	428,687	486,442	403,399	442,774	347,084	362,704	249,202
Gwent CC	974,041	1,223,064	835,417	1,004,592	527,202	598,230	567,066	622,417	699,967	731,468	801,705
Blaenau Gwent BC	951,430	1,194,672	1,273,841	1,531,799	820,887	931,482	989,710	1,086,315	691,031	722,130	737,460
Islwyn BC	223,360	280,464	368,022	442,548	283,631	321,843	497,689	546,268	455,461	475,958	398,819
Monmouth DC	61,309	76,983	48,838	58,727	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Newport BC	669,524	840,694	1,022,634	1,229,721	763,003	865,800	971,273	1,066,078	1,190,041	1,243,598	657,206
Torfaen BC	360,239	452,337	242,638	291.773	234,887	266,532	333,244	365,771	354,627	370,586	437,006
Gwynedd CC	412,188	517,567	500,969	602,417	766,973	870,304	632,800	694,567	437,664	457,360	383,157
Aberconwy BC	—	—	20,000	24,050	—	—	12,000	13,171	38,000	39,710	15,352
Arfon BC	324,675	407,681	104,803	126,026	91,861	104,237	221,543	243,167	389,328	406,849	479,361
Dwyfor DC	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Meirionnydd DC	130,817	164,261	—	—	—	—	150,000	164,641	150.000	156,750	272.000
Ynys Mon BC	124,034	155,744	94,947	114,174	77,035	87,413	289,815	318,103	189,049	197,557	177,260
Mid Glamorgan CC	982,799	1,234,061	1,210,466	1,455,590	962,419	1,092,082	1,384,184	1,519,294	1,272,570	1,329,841	1,284,076
Cynon Valley	269,481	338,376	794,842	955,801	701,692	796,228	618,882	679,291	642,086	670,982	648,098
Merthyr Tydfil BC	541,986	680,550	551,521	663,206	519,351	589,321	782,048	858,383	692,172	723,322	701,515
Ogwr BC	268,000	336,516	63,000	75,757	227,000	257,583	522,990	574,039	631,440	659,857	631,365
Rhondda BC	978,549	1,228,724	1,051,926	1,264,945	674,251	765,090	1,005,508	1,103,655	878,878	918,431	861,154
Rhymney Valley DC	453,362	569,268	588,780	708,010	606,297	687,981	607,5611	666,919	697,991	729,403	710.246
Taff-Ely BC	160,156	201,101	50,293	60,477	125,378	142,269	303,829	333,485	321,963	336,452	298,380
Powys CC	66,799	83,876	72,051	86,641	87,807	99,636	65,679	72,089	88,926	92,928	110,338
Brecknock BC	—	—	240,000	288,601	65,000	73,757	—	—	98,500	102,932	—
Montgomeryshire DC	6,444	8,091	6,383	7,675	6,383	7,242	3,192	3,503	—	—	—
Radnor DC	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	5,000	5,225	5,225
South Glamorgan CC	867,356	1,089,104	1,534,540	1,845,291	1,228,476	1,393,984	1,546,998	1,698,000	1,126,606	1,177,308	790,375
Cardiff CC	802,439	1,007,590	1,102,821	1,326,147	714,041	810,241	842,718	924,975	806,454	842,748	829,111
Vale of Glamorgan BC	258,884	325,070	271,527	326,512	349,512	396,600	432,915	475,171	374,324	391,170	289,863
West Glamorgan CC	431,443	541,745	770,147	926,105	650,799	738,479	695,874	763,798	700,570	732,098	761,466
Port Talbot BC	420,292	527,743	581,571	699,341	262,119	297,433	623,308	684,149	609,466	636,894	647,823
Llfw Valley BC	54,025	67,837	238,425	286,707	110,000	124,819	233,400	256,182	33,295	34,793	106,985
Neath BC	473,201	594,179	412,472	495,999	510,521	579,301	646,278	709,361	408,656	427,047	409,627
Swansea CC	701,026	880,250	1,309,209	1,574,329	649,836	737,386	678,825	745,085	704,018	735,701	654,528

Note: The allocations in real terms have been derived by the application of the GDP deflator at market prices with 1988-89 as base year.

Mentally Handicapped People

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether his Department intends to change any aspects of its policy or guidelines on the integration of mentally handicapped people into the community as a result of the recent statements by the Health Service Commissioner on the need to consult neighbours prior to moving mentally handicapped people from institutional care into homes in the community; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: Our policy, as set out in the all-Wales strategy published in March 1983, is based on the principle that people with a mental handicap should have a right to normal patterns of life within the community and that they should not be devalued because of their intellectual impairment. We have no intention of altering that policy. It is for local bodies responsible for individual proposals to decide in each case how to ensure that the best interests of people with mental handicaps are served, in ways consistent with the all-Wales policy.

NHS

Mr. Geraint Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what steps he is taking to improve the quality of service to patients in the National Health Service in mid-Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: Responsibility for the management of health services delivered to the people of mid-Wales rests with the relevant district health authorities and family practitioner committees in the first instance. Between 1978-79 and 1988-89 recurring revenue resources allocated to Gwynedd and Powys health authorities increased by 43 per cent. and 35 per cent. respectively in real terms. The increase in allocation to East Dyfed from its creation in 1982-83 was 19 per cent. Expenditure on family practitioner services in Dyfed, Gwynedd and Powys increased by 40 per cent. in real terms between 1978-79 and 1987-88. The corporate management programme for the Health Service in Wales, published on 22 June, details the work which must be undertaken to enable the NHS throughout Wales to adapt to changing demands, improve productivity and ensure the highest standards of care.

Music Teachers

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if, in view of Her Majesty's inspectorate report and survey of music in the primary schools in Flint and Colwyn Bay, he will release extra funds to the Clwyd local education authority to facilitate the increased in-service training of teachers of music; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The funding of in-service training for music teachers is entirely within the discretion of local education authorities. The Clwyd authority can draw upon the £1·14 million allocated to it in the current year for its locally determined training priorities. This expenditure attracts a 50 per cent. grant from the Department. The authority is free to spend more than this amount on in-service training for teachers, but expenditure above the £1·14 million would not attract grant.

Pupil Costs

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what estimates he has as to the relative costs per primary pupil in *(a)* rural and *(b)* urban schools in each Welsh county; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: It is not possible to differentiate between costs incurred in urban and rural schools because the relevant information is collected on a countrywide basis only.

Public Expenditure

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will provide a detailed breakdown for the years 1982-83 to 1990-91 by nature of item and functional area of charge of the receipts to his programme classified as charges for the purposes of the public expenditure survey.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Consistent with the figures published in "The Government's Expenditure Plans 1988-89 to 1990-91" Cm. 288, the information is as follows:

Public Expenditure: Charges 1982-83 to 1990-91

£ million

	1982-83	*1983-84*	*1984-85*	*1985-86*	*1986-87*	*1987-88*	*1988-89*	*1989-90*	*1990-91*
Agriculture									
Agriculture and food services	−2	−2	−2	−1	−1	−1	−2	−2	−2
Roads and Transport									
Local authority maintenance	—	−1	−1	−2	−2	−2	−2	−2	−2
Local authority other current expenditure	−3	−4	−6	−6	−7	−7	−8	−8	−8
Housing									
Local authority administration	−2	−3	−3	−3	−3	−3	−3	−3	−3
Other Environmental Services									
Ancient monuments and historic buildings	−1	−1	−1	−1	−1	−1	−2	−1	−1
Local authority records and surveys	−1	−1	−1	−1	−1	−1	−1	−1	−1
Local environmental services	−28	−32	−32	−42	−44	−47	−49	−50	−52
Education									
Primary schools	−1	−1	−1	−1	−1	−1	−1	−1	−1
Secondary schools	−1	−1	−1	−1	−1	−2	−2	−2	−2
Other educational services	−1	−2	−2	−2	−2	−2	−2	−2	−2
Catering (meals and milk)	−16	−17	−16	−15	−16	−17	−17	−18	−18
Further education and awards to students	−25	−27	−28	−31	−34	−38	−40	−41	−42
Arts and Libraries									
Libraries and museums	−1	−1	−1	−1	−1	−1	−1	−1	−1
Health and Personal Social Services									
Hospital and community health services[1]	−10	−11	−7	−13	−14	−14	−15	−15	−16
Other centrally funded health services	—	—	−1	−1	−1	−1	−1	−1	−1
Family Practitioner Services	−15	−17	−18	−17	−19	−20	−22	−23	−24
Personal social services—local authority	−23	−24	−23	−25	−26	−28	−29	−30	−31
TOTAL	−129	−144	−145	−164	−175	−186	−197	−202	−208

[1] Includes direct credits which were not included as charges in Cm. 288.

On account of roundings, the individual items may not always sum to the totals shown.

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will now respond to the report of the Select Committee on Welsh Affairs, "The Government's Public Expenditure Plans 1988-89 to 1990-91" (CM 288): first report Session 1987-88.

Mr. Peter Walker: The Government welcome the first report of the Select Committee on Welsh Affairs on the

Government's public expenditure plan 1988-89 to 1990-91 (CM 288). The Committee's recommendations and the Government's responses are as follows:—

Recommendation 1

We therefore recommend that the Welsh Office issue a commentary designed to complement and expand upon the text and figures in Volume II of the Public Expenditure White Paper, similar to the commentaries produced by the Scottish and Northern Ireland Offices.

Response

The Government accepts this recommendation. A first Welsh Office commentary will be published in 1989. By this means additional information will be provided to give a more comprehensive picture of departmental objectives, performance and plans.

Recommendation 2

In its recent report on the White Paper, the Treasury and Civil Service Committee recommended that "individual Departments should publish their own forward-looking annual reports including the kind of financial information at present included in the departmental chapters of Volume II of PEWP, but considerably expanded". The Government agreed to consider the proposal sympathetically. We support this recommendation of the Treasury and Civil Service Committee and consider that a Welsh Office commentary of the type outlined in the previous paragraph could form the basis of a Welsh Office Annual Report, if and when departmental annual reports are introduced.

Response

As the Committee will be aware, the Government has published its proposals for financial reporting to Parliament (CM 375) following the report from the Committee of Public Accounts (Eighth Report of 1986-87—HC 98) and the report from the Treasury and Civil Service Committee on the1988 Public Expenditure White Paper (Second Report of 1987-88 —HC 292). The views of the PAC and the TCSC are awaited.

Labour Statistics

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the current level of unemployment in *(a)* the Cynon Valley, *(b)* Mid Glamorgan and *(c)* Wales as a whole.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: On 12 May 1988, the numbers of unemployed claimants in the Cynon Valley, Mid Glamorgan and Wales were 4,018, 26,874 and 132,962 respectively.

Student Nurses

Mr. Geraint Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the figure for the number of student nurses in Wales; how that figure is expected to change over the next five years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist *[holding answer 6 July 1988]:* The number of student nurses in Wales studying for a first level registration as at May 1988 was 2,785.

Figures are not yet available to show how numbers are expected to change over the next five years. Nurse training in Wales is provided in a number of schools managed by individual health authorities, and future intakes are determined by the operational requirements and service proposals of the authorities concerned. The information requested is currently being collated at the all-Wales level through a manpower resource planning exercise involving all health authorities and will be available later in the year.

TRANSPORT

Freight Traffic

Mr. Cran: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the estimated daily flow of freight traffic between the south-east of England and the north-east; and what was the comparable figure for 10 years ago.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The table gives details of the freight flows between the south east and north-east regions of England. Information for road goods traffic is available for the period requested. For rail and coastal shipping the earliest comparable data are given.

Average daily freight flows between South-East and North-East England by mode of carriage

Mode	*From*	*To*	*Tonnes per day*	
Road			*1977*	*1987*
1977	NE	SE	3,100	3,700
	SE	NE	2,800	2,900
Rail[1]			*1983*	*1986-87*
1983	N	SE	730	820
	SE	N	550	350
Coastal shipping[2]			*1981*	*1986*
1981	NE	SE	18,000	15,000
	SE	NE	2,800	2,000

[1] Rail figures are for the Northern region and include traffic to and from Cumbria. The figures for 1986-87 are for the year ending 31 March 1987.

[2] Coal makes up over 80 per cent. of the goods carried from the north-east to the south-east by coastal shipping.

British Rail (Funding)

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he will make a statement on his policy towards funding of British Rail in the light of the proposals made in the report entitled "Reviving the Railways", published by the Centre for Policy Studies, a copy of which has been sent to him.

Mr. David Mitchell: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State is considering the long-term options for British Rail including privatisation. Publications such as the Centre for Policy Studies report are a useful contribution to the public debate.

Municipal Airports (Privatisation)

Mr. Stern: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on progress in the privatisation of municipally owned airports.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: All the larger municipal airports are now owned by Companies Act companies. At present, shares in the companies are wholly owned by local authorities. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State is keen to see the authorities sell shares or otherwise involve the private sector wherever it makes commercial sense to do so.

Road Signs

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what research is being conducted by his Department into improving the visibility of traffic road signs.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Research is being undertaken by or on behalf of the Department on the conspicuity of warning signs, the obscuring of traffic signs by large vehicles on heavily trafficked roads and the conspicuity and legibility of variable message signs.

Flags of Convenience

Sir David Price: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what progress has been made in negotiations with flag of convenience states to help ensure the availability of flagged-out British-owned ships in the event of crisis or war.

Mr. Channon: On 28 June representatives of Her Majesty's Government and the Commonwealth of the Bahamas signed a memorandum of understanding under which the Government of the Bahamas agreed to allow British-controlled ships to be made readily available to Her Majesty's Government in the event of crisis and war. In doing so, the Bahamas have agreed to waive their sovereign authority over those vessels at such a time.

This is the first such agreement we have reached with an open registry state; We hope, however, that others will follow later this year.

British shipowners who agree to make their vessels available to Her Majesty's Government under this memorandum of understanding will be eligible for war risks insurance under arrangements that have recently been concluded with the British War Risks Associations.

Passenger Transport Authorities

Mr. Charles Wardle: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he intends to take measures to restrain the expenditure of the passenger transport authorities in 1989-90.

Mr. Channon: In the circumstances I do not consider it appropriate to designate the passenger transport authorities for precept limitation in 1989-90. I expect the PTAs, however, to be able to maintain satisfactory public transport support in that year at close to their present levels of expenditure.

Smoke Hoods

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he has discussed with the chairman of the Civil Aviation Authority the specification for smoke hoods on civil aircraft; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The Civil Aviation Authority is responsible for the regulation of air safety. The authority has published a final specification for smoke hoods. I understand that none has yet been shown to meet it and no manufacturer has applied for approval against the specification. The authority has told us that, when a suitable hood does exist, it will review the arguments for and against the provision of smoke hoods and decide if a mandatory requirement would be appropriate.

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what recent representations he has received seeking the mandatory installation of smoke hoods on passenger aircraft; what reply he has sent; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: We have received no recent representations seeking the mandatory installation of smoke hoods on passenger aircraft. Any decision to make smoke hoods mandatory is wholly the responsibility of the Civil Aviation Authority.

Aircraft Accident (Manchester Airport)

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he has now received the report of the chief inspector of accidents arising from the inquiry by the air accidents investigation branch into the Boeing 737 accident at Manchester airport in August 1985; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The report on the exhaustive investigation into the accident to Boeing 737 G-BGJL which took place at Manchester airport on 22 August 1985 was completed in draft form in April 1988. Following this, persons and organisations whose reputations might be affected had two months to make representations. These are being considered by the inspector who is expected to be able to finalise the report for submission to the Secretary of State for Transport in the autumn. Unless a request for a review board is requested the report will then be published.

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what recent discussions he has had with the chairman of the Civil Aviation Authority concerning air safety, in the light of the inquiry by the air accidents investigation branch into the Boeing 737 accident at Manchester airport in August 1985; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: My right hon. Friend has not recently discussed the Boeing 737 accident at Manchester airport with the chairman of the Civil Aviation Authority. The air accidents investigation branch report on the accident is not yet finalised, though its findings have been made known to the authority informally as they have emerged and the authority has already implemented a number of safety improvements in consequence. It is entirely the authority's responsibility to decide what action to take on changes in air safety regulation recommended by the AAIB.

Driving Instructors (Examination)

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport why the written qualifying examination for the register of approved driving instructors, due to take place in the conference room at the National Sports Centre of Wales, Sophia gardens, Cardiff, on 13 June at 9.30 am, did not proceed; why the candidates were not informed until approximately one hour after the examination should have commenced; and whether the candidates who attended on that day will be reimbursed their out-of-pocket expenses.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: A mistake was made. I am sorry. I am writing to my hon. Friend about this unfortunate occurrence.

Barking Bypass

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Eltham (Mr. Bottomley), will reply to the letter of mid-June from the hon. Member for Newham, North-East concerning the South Woodford to Barking bypass.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I replied to the hon. Member for Newham, North-East on 6 July.

Charges

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will provide a detailed breakdown for the years 1982-83 to 1990-91, by nature of item and functional area of charge, of the receipts to his programme classified as charges for the purposes of the public expenditure survey.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The table shows the information sought.

Receipts in the Department of Transport programme classified as charges for the purposes of the Public Expenditure Survey

£ million

	1982-83 outturn	*1983-84 outturn*	*1984-85 outturn*	*1985-86 outturn*	*1986-87 outturn*	*1987-88 estimated outturn*	*1988-89 plans*	*1989-90 plans*	*1990-91 plans*
Central government									
National roads (mainly Severn Bridge tolls)	−5	−4	−5	−7	−6	−10	−9	−9	−9
Shipping services (mainly survey fees)	−12	−8	−9	−10	−8	−7	−8	−8	−9
Civil aviation services (mainly receipts from Eurocontrol)	—	−7	−7	−9	—	—	—	—	—
and testing schemes etc (mainly vehicle tests)	−18	−21	−23	−26	−30	−31	−31	−33	−34
Local transport (recoveries in respect of traffic control systems)	—	—	—	—	−11	−13	−14	—	—
Local authority									
Roads	−22	−26	−25	−29	−32	−33	−38	−39	−40
Car parks	−103	−113	−130	−155	−148	−162	−234	−243	−249
Professional and technical services	−11	−13	−15	−5	−4	−5	−4	−4	−4
Total	−171	−192	−214	−241	−239	−261	−338	−336	−345

Note:
Figures in the table are consistent with Cm. 288.

EMPLOYMENT

Agricultural Inspectors

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the latest number of agricultural inspectors.

Mr. Nicholls: On 1 June 1988 there were 150 agricultural inspectors in post in the Health and Safety Executive's agricultural inspectorate.

Community Programme

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what representations he has received regarding forthcoming changes to the remuneration of those engaged in community programme projects which promote greater energy efficiency.

Mr. Nicholls: We have received representations from a number of hon. Members about the arrangements for taking forward energy efficiency projects into employment training.

Adult Training

Mr. Baldry: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many representations he has received on adult training following the publication of the White Paper, "Training for Jobs"; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: We have received over 250 representations from hon. Members and others about our important and ambitious training plans set out in the White Paper "Training for Employment". The new programme—employment training—referred to in the White Paper, will come into operation on 5 September and will aim to train some 600,000 people a year.

Hazards (Costs)

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is his policy towards the balance to be struck by the Health and Safety Commission between hazards to people and costs to industry.

Mr. Nicholls: The Health and Safety Commission in its last published plan of work (for 1985-86 and onwards) stated that the protection of those at work and of the public is its indispensable aim, and that this must be achieved at realistic cost to industry, with technical understanding, and by the use of practical common sense.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has endorsed the Commission's policy, and in considering proposals put to him by the Commission for new legislation under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 he uses the same criteria.

Enterprise Allowance

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a further statement on the enterprise allowance scheme

Mr. Cope: The enterprise allowance scheme has been a great success. Since the scheme began in 1982, over 350,000 unemployed people have been helped to start their own businesses. These people have created viable small businesses that have secured a future for themselves and in many cases have created jobs for others. Recent surveys show that of those who complete a full year on the scheme, 65 per cent. are still trading three years after start-up. At this point 114 additional jobs have been created for every 100 businesses still trading.

Industrial Investment

Mr. Cran: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he has any plans to meet the chairman of the British Venture Capital Association to discuss industrial investment; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Cope: I met Mr. Lionel Anthony, the then chairman of the British Venture Capital Association, on 18 January. We had a wide-ranging discussion on ways in which venture capital investment in smaller businesses might be further encouraged, particularly in areas outside the south-east.

We met again in May in connection with the European Venture Capital Association conference.

Labour Statistics (Slough)

Mr. Watts: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people were registered as unemployed in the borough of Slough and the Slough travel-to-work area in June; and what were the comparable figures for June 1983.

Mr. Lee: Information for June 1988 is not yet available, The table shows the number of unemployed claimants in Slough local authority district and the Slough travel-to-work area in June 1983 and May 1988. The figures are affected by changes in coverage and seasonal influences.

Number of Unemployed Claimants

Area	*June 1983*	*May 1988*	*Percent. change*
Slough Local Authority District	4,850	2,813	−42
Slough Travel-to-work Area	10,996	6,491	−41

Bristol (Unfilled Vacancies)

Mr. Stern: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment by how much the total of unfilled vacancies in the Bristol travel-to-work area exceeds that of a year ago.

Mr. Lee: On 8 May 1988 there were 3,656 unfilled vacancies, excluding community programme vacancies, at jobcentres covering an area closely corresponding to the Bristol travel-to-work area, 37 less than in May 1987. Vacancies at jobcentres do not represent the total number of vacancies in the economy. Estimates suggest that nationally only about a third of all vacancies are notified to jobcentres, but equivalent local estimates are not available.

Insulation Projects

Mr. Kennedy: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment when he next expects to meet the chairman of the Manpower Services Commission to discuss insulation projects co-ordinated by the Commission.

Mr. Nicholls: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has no plans to do so at present.

Holidays

Mr. Greg Knight: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many holidays were taken in the United Kingdom by residents of Great Britain in 1987.

Mr. Lee: It is estimated that residents of Great Britain took 73 million holidays of one or more nights in Britain in 1987. There is no equivalent estimate available for holidays taken in the United Kingdom.

Yorkshire

Mr. Patnick: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the current levels of unemployment in Yorkshire.

Mr. Lee: In May 1988, the number of unemployed claimants in the counties of South Yorkshire, North Yorkshire and West Yorkshire was 197,847, a fall of 38,575 compared with a year ago.

Employment Training Programme

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what proportion of expenditure on the employment training programme will be financed from the European social fund.

Mr. Cope: The forecast expenditure for the employment training programme for the period 1 September 1988 to 31 December 1988 will be £425 million.

The European Commission's recent decision has allocated European social fund assistance towards the employment training programme totalling £24,217,418 for this period. This represents 6 per cent. of the forecast.

Textile Industry

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list in the *Official Report* the number of workers employed in the British textile industry, both full-time and part-time, in 1970 and 1988.

Mr. Lee: The following table gives the available information on the textile industry in Great Britain on a consistent basis for June 1971 and June 1987 (the longest period for which comparable estimates are available). March 1988 estimates are also given, but these are not directly comparable with the estimates for June 1971 and June 1987 because of seasonal variation.

Employees in employment in the textile[1] industry in Great Britain

	Males			*Females*		
	Full-time	*Part-time*	*All*	*Full-time*	*Part-time*	*All*
June 1971	n.a.	n.a.	255·4	201·3	42·8	244·1
June 1987	112·4	2·3	114·7	91·7	15·2	106·9
March 1988	119·6	2·2	111·8	91·2	14·1	105·3

[1] The textile industry is defined as Class 43 of the 1980 standard industrial classification.

Public Expenditure Survey

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will provide a detailed breakdown for the years 1982-83 to 1990-91, by nature of item and functional area of charge, of the receipts to his programme classified as charges for the purposes of the public expenditure survey.

Mr. Cope: The figures given, which are consistent with those given in the reply that the hon. Member received from my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary to the Treasury on 27 May 1988, at columns *375-76*, relate to receipts in respect of programme expenditure: receipts in respect of running costs expenditure are not included. The following table for the years 1982-83 to 1990-91 give a breakdown of receipts received by the Department of Employment group.

Breakdown of Individual Programme Receipts (£ millions)

	1982-83 Outturn	*1983-84 Outturn*	*1984-85 Outturn*	*1985-86 Outturn*	*1986-87 Outturn*	*1987-88 Estimated Outturn*	*1988-89 Plans*	*1989-90 Plans*	*1990-91 Plans*
Receipts relating to the repayment of premium in respect of small firms loan guarantee scheme	4	7	7	7	2	3	6	6	6
Receipts of reclaimed VAT in respect of jobclubs	—	—	—	—	—	2	1	1	1
Receipts from the sale of assets of disbanded industrial training boards	16	3	2	—	—	—	—	—	—
Receipts from direct training service fees	3	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Receipts from youth opportunities programme fees	8	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Receipts from sale of sheltered employment workshops products	17	22	24	25	27	31	30	31	33
Departmental Totals	48	32	33	32	29	36	37	38	40

Labour Statistics

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment, pursuant to his answer of 23 June, *Official Report*, column *670*, if he will now supply the same data for each quarter after December 1984 relating to number of persons in employment.

Mr. Lee: There was a printing omission in the reply given on 23 June, at column *670*. The full text of the reply, containing information for all the years requested, is as follows:

Great Britain/Thousand

	Employed Labour Force	*Working Population*	*Employed Labour Force as a percentage of the Working Population*	*Difference between working population and employed labour force as a percentage of the working population*
1979				
March	24,699	25,894	95	5
June	24,767	25,916	96	4
September	24,844	25,957	96	4
December	24,886	26,014	96	4
1980				
March	24,824	26,052	95	5
June	24,706	26,088	95	5
September	24,470	26,117	94	6
December	24,205	26,176	92	8
1981				
March	23,966	26,058	92	8
June	23,754	26,028	91	9
September	23,630	26,038	91	9
December	23,489	25,995	90	10
1982				
March	23,435	25,989	90	10
June	23,329	25,944	90	10
September	23,202	25,907	90	10
December	23,060	25,857	89	11
1983				
March	22,997	25,841	89	11
June	23,039	25,947	89	11
September	23,165	26,077	89	11
December	23,293	26,217	89	11

	Employed Labour Force	*Working Population*	*Employed Labour Force as a percentage of the Working Population*	*Difference between working population and employed labour force as a percentage of the working population*
1984				
March	23,398	26,361	89	11
June	23,483	26,451	89	11
September	23,577	26,613	89	11
December	23,708	26,776	89	11
1985				
March	23,796	26,882	89	11
June	23,871	26,967	89	11
September	23,913	27,020	89	11
December	23,938	27,065	88	12
1986				
March	23,950	27,137	88	12
June	23,967	27,157	88	12
September	24,046	27,197	88	12
December	24,150	27,234	89	11
1987				
March	24,273	27,273	89	11
June	24,426	27,291	90	10
September	24,510	27,220	90	10
December[1]	24,654	27,212	91	9

[1] The latest date for which figures are available.

Notes:

The employed labour force is the sum of employees in employment, the self-employed, and members of HM forces.

The working population is the sum of the employed labour force and unemployed claimants.

The figures have been adjusted for the effects of seasonal variations, and the working population estimates also allow for changes in the coverage of the unemployment count as far as is possible.

DEFENCE

British and Soviet Personnel

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he has any plans to encourage meetings between senior British and Soviet military personnel; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ian Stewart: We welcome the prospect of an improvement in East-West relations resulting from a Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan and will take this into account when considering contacts between the British and Soviet armed forces.

Special Constables

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many of those persons who, at the coming into force of the Ministry of Defence Police Act 1987, were special constables by virtue of appointment under section 3 of the Special Constables Act 1923 on the nomination of the Defence Council remain special constables now that the Ministry of Defence Police Act is in force.

Mr. Sainsbury: None. With the passage of the Ministry of Defence Police Act 1987 all members of the force have the full powers and privileges of constables.

Firearms

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what guidance Ministry of Defence police officers are given on the use of firearms.

Mr. Sainsbury: All Ministry of Defence police officers are fully trained both in the use of firearms and in firearms safety, and in their legal responsibilities when authorised to be armed on duty.

Cruise Missiles

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the planned schedule for the removal of cruise missiles from *(a)* RAF Greenham Common and *(b)* RAF Molesworth.

Mr. Ian Stewart: We expect that the missiles based at RAF Molesworth will be withdrawn in the autumn. Some of the missiles based at RAF Greenham Common are likely to be removed about halfway through the three-year elimination period specified under the terms of the INF treaty. The remainder will be withdrawn by the end of this period.

Shell Foundry (Entrance Gates)

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what progress he has made in his efforts to persuade Royal Ordnance plc to return the entrance gates of the Shell foundry at Woolwich Arsenal which were removed in 1967.

Mr. Freeman: Royal Ordnance plc has not so far been persuaded to return the entrance gates. A further approach is being made to the chief executive, and I intend to draw the matter to the attention of English Heritage.

RAF Personnel (Pensions)

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will set out the basis on which the pensions of retired Royal Air Force personnel with 22 years service or more are funded, together with any changes which may have been made in the funding of their pensions since 1964.

Mr. Freeman: Pensions paid to RAF personnel, in common with those paid to retired members of the armed forces generally, are met direct from Defence funds voted annually by Parliament. This has always been the case.

Belize

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will provide details of flights made by British fighter aircraft based in Belize outside the territorial area of that country in the past 12 months.

Mr. Ian Stewart: In the past 12 months, Harrier aircraft from Belize have been deployed outside that country only to practise arrangements for removing them from the danger area in the event of a hurricane.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what contact has been made in the past 12 months between British military personnel in Belize and United States military personnel from southern command in Panama; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ian Stewart: Visits were paid to Belize in February this year by Major General Loeffke, commanding general US Army, South; and in June by General Woerner, commander-in-chief, US Southern Command. Both visitors were briefed by British forces Belize as well as making calls elsewhere. These were courtesy visits of a routine nature. Observers from US Southern Command also regularly attend joint exercises between British forces and the Belize defence force.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will provide details of the different categories of military personnel and equipment currently based in Belize.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The following units are currently based in Belize: an infantry battalion; an armoured reconnaissance troop equipped with Scorpion reconnaissance vehicles; an engineer squadron; a field artillery battery equipped with the 105 mm light gun; an Army Air Corps flight with Gazelle helicopters; RAF Belize equipped with Puma helicopters and Harriers; and half a RAF Regiment squadron with Rapier fire-units.

Public Expenditure Survey

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will provide a detailed breakdown for the years 1982-83 to 1990-91, by nature of item and functional area of charge, of the receipts to his programme classified as charges for the purposes of the public expenditure survey.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The following table shows for the years 1985-86 to 1990-91 a detailed breakdown of the income to the defence programme classified as charges for the purposes of the public expenditure survey. Figures on the same basis for 1982-83 to 1984-85 are not readily available and could be produced only at disproportionate effort.

The figures given are consistent with those provided by the Chief Secretary to the Treasury in answer to the hon. Member on 27 May 1988 at columns *375-76*.

£ million

Vote	*[1]Section*	*Description*	*1985-86*	*1986-87*	*1987-88*	*1988-89*	*1989-90*	*1990-91*
		Appropriations-in-Aid of:						
1	AZ	Naval personnel costs	·2	·2	·2	·2	·2	·2
	BZ	Army personnel costs[2]						
	CZ	Air Force personnel costs	·6	·2	·1	·2	·2	·2
	FZ	Accommodation etc. stores	2·1	·9	2·1	1·0	1·0	1·0
	GZ	Clothing and victualling	3·0	3·0	3·4	3·4	3·5	3·6
	HZ	Liquid fuels and utilities	61·4	37·2	34·9	26·4	27·1	27·8
	IZ	Lands and buildings	15·7	16·5	18·6	18·3	18·8	19·3
	JZ	International activities	63·9	63·8	133·9	118·5	121·5	124·5
	LZ	Other services	44·9	40·4	46·0	46·0	47·2	48·4
		Total Vote 1	191·8	162·2	239·2	214·0	219·5	225·0
2	CZ	Other PE outstations costs	2·2	2·5	2·5	3·2	3·3	3·4
	DZ	Other procurement by contract	29·5	29·5	24·9	24·1	24·7	25·3
	EZ	Sea systems development by contract	1·7	2·1	2·3	4·2	4·3	4·4
	FZ	Sea systems production and repair	30·8	39·7	99·6	18·9	19·4	19·9
	HZ	Miscellaneous procurement	18·8	18·9	19·6	20·3	20·8	21·3
	IZ	Land systems development by contract	18·7	15·5	22·2	16·2	16·6	17·0
	JZ	Land systems production and repair	38·8	78·3	57·4	44·1	45·2	46·3
	KZ	Land systems maintenance	1·8	2·5	1·5	2·6	2·7	2·8
	LZ	Air systems development by contract	20·5	63·6	36·1	51·2	52·5	53·8
	MZ	Air systems production and repair	10·5	76·0	15·4	14·3	14·7	15·1
	NZ	Air systems package deal contracts[2]		·1		1·7	1·7	1·7
		Total Vote 2	173·3	328·7	281·5	200·8	205·9	211·0
3	AZ	Armed forces pensions	·8	·7	·7	·7	·7	·7
4	AZ	Defence works services	55·8	55·9	64·7	89·1	91·3	93·6
	BZ	Agency services for US forces in United Kingdom	115·2	143·6	180·7	165·1	169·2	173·4
		Total Vote 4	171·0	199·5	245·4	254·2	260·5	267·0
5	AZ	Ship refitting and repair	·4	7·1	34·6	35·3	36·2	37·1

Vote	[1]Section	Description	1985-86	1986-87	1987-88	1988-89	1989-90	1990-91
		Total Defence	537·3	698·2	801·4	705·0	722·8	740·8

[1] Sections reflect the 1988-89 Supply Estimates structure.

[2] The absence of an entry indicates receipts of less than £0·1 million.

Petty Officer John Black

Mr. Latham: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence on what date he asked the Metropolitan police, following a request from the hon. Member for Rutland and Melton, for their agreement that the solicitors for Mr. and Mrs. K. Crane should be allowed to see the police report on the death in Spain of Petty Officer John Black, Royal Navy; what response has been received; and whether he will insist upon an immediate substantive reply from the police.

Mr. Freeman: Ministry of Defence officials wrote to the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis on 26 May 1988 seeking his agreement to a limited release of the police report on the death of Petty Officer J. Black to the solicitors for Mr. and Mrs. Crane. A reply was received on 4 July 1988. In it, the police state that, in view of the knowledge of the outcome of the police inquiries already available to Mr. and Mrs. Crane, the Commissioner sees no reason to make an exception to the general rule that police reports following inquiries remain confidential and declines to release the report. The matter is now outside my responsibilities.

Royal Ordnance plc (Agreement)

Mr. Gerald Howarth: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when, pursuant to his answer of 28 June, *Official Report,* column *232,* he expects to announce his decision regarding the agreement between his Department and British Aerospace for the supply by Royal Ordnance of explosives and propellants; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: The timing of any announcement will depend upon the result of the discussions referred to in the reply to which my hon. Friend refers and I cannot at present add to the reply I gave then.

Low Flying

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what limits are imposed by the West German authorities on the number of low-flying sorties conducted by British military aircraft over the Federal Republic of Germany.

Mr. Freeman *[holding answer 5 May 1988]:* Within the seven areas in the Federal Republic of Germany, where low-flying aircraft are permitted to operate down to 250 ft, weekly allocations are notified to British users. Otherwise no specific limits on sortie numbers are imposed.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what representations he has received from the Federal Republic of Germany about flying accidents and low-flying by United Kingdom and other NATO airplanes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what representations he has received from the West German Government in regard to Royal Air Force low-level flying over the territory of the Federal Republic of Germany.

Mr. Freeman *[holding answers 26 May 1988 and 7 June 1988]:* My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence and my hon. Friend the Minister of State for the Armed Forces have each received representations from their Federal German counterparts recently about different aspects of military low flying. We will continue to do our best to ensure that any disturbance caused by this essential activity in the United Kingdom, the Federal Repulbic of Germany, or elsewhere, is reduced to an absolute minimum.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Maternity Services

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will state, by regional health authority and area health authority, for the years since 1980, the number of hospital maternity beds available, by year; and what the birth rates were by year in these two respective areas;

(2) why the number of hospital maternity beds available has been falling since 1980; and what has been the trend in the birth rate during the same period;

(3) if he will state, by year and for each regional health authority and district area health authority, since 1980, the number of special care baby unit cots available.

Mrs. Currie: The information requested is given in the tables; 1980 birth rates are given by RHA only, since birth rates were not published by DHA in that year.

With women returning home earlier following birth the number of maternity beds required has been reduced. There is now a more efficient use of the available beds. The turnover interval, that is the interval of time the beds are vacant between cases, has fallen from 2·6 days in 1980 to 2·4 in 1986; the average length of stay has fallen from 5·7 days in 1980 to 4·4 in 1986; and in the same period the death rate for babies under one week including stillbirths fell from 13·4 to 9·5; and the death rate for mothers in childbirth fell from 11 per 100,000 births to six.

Crude birth rate (live births per 1,000 resident population), England, 1980-86

	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986
England	13·3	12·8	12·6	12·7	12·8	13·1	13·2
Health Authority							
Northern RHA	13·4	12·8	12·6	12·6	12·7	13·2	13·1
Hartlepool	n/a	13·2	13·5	13·6	14·5	14·2	15·0
North Tees	n/a	15·1	14·7	14·4	15·4	14·9	14·7

	1980	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*
South Tees	n/a	14·5	14·4	15·2	14·6	15·4	15·4
East Cumbria	n/a	11·9	11·1	11·6	11·2	11·8	10·8
South Cumbria	n/a	10·6	10·7	10·7	10·9	11·7	11·0
West Cumbria	n/a	13·3	12·8	12·8	13·2	13·0	13·0
Darlington	n/a	12·8	11·7	12·0	11·9	12·4	11·9
Durham	n/a	13·0	12·4	12·4	12·4	12·7	12·3
North West Durham	n/a	11·5	12·4	12·1	12·1	12·1	12·2
South West Durham	n/a	12·7	13·1	12·6	12·0	13·0	13·4
Northumberland	n/a	12·2	12·1	11·8	11·9	12·1	11·8
Gateshead	n/a	12·2	12·3	11·6	12·3	12·8	12·5
Newcastle	n/a	12·3	12·3	12·3	12·3	13·2	13·3
North Tyneside	n/a	12·1	11·6	11·5	11·8	12·7	12·4
South Tyneside	n/a	11·7	11·8	11·5	12·1	13·6	14·5
Sunderland	n/a	13·9	14·1	14·1	13·7	14·6	14·1
Yorkshire RHA	13·3	12·9	12·7	12·9	13·0	13·3	13·4
Hull	n/a	13·8	13·5	14·1	13·9	15·0	15·3
East Yorks	n/a	9·7	9·8	9·6	9·6	10·3	10·0
Grimsby	n/a	13·6	13·0	13·9	14·1	15·0	14·6
Scunthorpe	n/a	12·7	12·4	12·6	13·1	12·9	13·1
Northallerton	n/a	12·4	11·9	11·5	11·2	11·4	11·3
York	n/a	11·5	11·0	11·4	11·4	11·6	11·8
Scarborough	n/a	10·2	10·2	10·2	10·7	11·0	10·7
Harrogate	n/a	10·5	10·7	10·4	10·6	10·5	11·2
Bradford	n/a	17·0	16·8	16·9	17·2	17·5	17·0
Airedale	n/a	12·4	12·0	12·1	12·0	12·6	12·2
Calderdale	n/a	13·1	12·7	12·9	13·6	13·8	13·4
Huddersfield	n/a	13·2	12·9	13·2	13·1	12·5	13·1
Dewsbury	n/a	14·2	14·6	15·1	14·9	15·5	15·7
Leeds Western	n/a	12·4	12·0	12·2	11·9	12·7	12·9
Leeds Eastern	n/a	12·4	12·6	12·9	12·8	12·8	13·9
Wakefield	n/a	13·5	12·9	12·9	12·6	13·5	13·2
Pontefract	n/a	13·1	13·0	13·6	13·5	14·0	13·9
Trent RHA	13·2	12·6	12·3	12·4	12·5	12·7	12·8
North Derbyshire	n/a	11·8	11·3	11·3	11·6	11·5	11·8
Southern Derbyshire	n/a	13·1	12·6	12·8	12·6	13·0	12·9
Leicestershire	n/a	13·6	13·4	13·3	13·5	13·6	13·4
North Lincolnshire	n/a	12·3	12·0	12·0	11·7	11·9	12·2
South Lincolnshire	n/a	11·7	10·7	10·8	11·3	11·3	10·9
Bassetlaw	n/a	11·8	11·2	11·0	11·9	11·9	12·0
Central Nottinghamshire	n/a	12·9	12·8	12·8	12·4	13·3	13·2
Nottingham	n/a	12·3	12·1	12·5	12·5	12·8	12·9
Barnsley	n/a	13·0	12·6	12·7	13·0	12·6	13·1
Doncaster	n/a	13·8	13·4	13·8	13·7	14·1	14·3
Rotherham	n/a	13·7	13·1	13·5	13·2	13·8	13·6
Sheffield	n/a	10·5	10·6	11·1	11·3	11·4	12·2
East Anglia RHA	13·2	12·5	11·9	12·0	12·2	12·5	12·3
Cambridge	n/a	12·2	11·6	11·7	11·9	12·3	11·9
Peterborough	n/a	15·1	14·0	13·7	14·0	14·6	14·2
West Suffolk	n/a	13·5	12·6	12·4	12·9	12·4	13·0
East Suffolk	n/a	12·7	12·5	12·3	12·7	13·0	12·7
Norwich	n/a	11·3	10·6	10·9	10·8	11·3	11·2
Great Yarmouth and Waveney	n/a	11·4	11·1	11·8	12·1	11·9	12·2
West Norfolk and Wisbech	n/a	11·5	11·5	11·4	11·2	11·8	11·5
Huntingdon	n/a	14·7	13·6	13·7	14·2	14·4	13·9
North West Thames RHA	13·9	13·5	13·2	13·2	13·3	13·6	13·8
North Bedfordshire	n/a	14·6	13·9	13·5	13·7	14·0	13·4
South Bedfordshire	n/a	16·5	16·1	15·9	16·3	16·3	17·3
North Hertfordshire	n/a	13·9	13·1	13·1	13·6	13·6	14·2
East Hertfordshire	n/a	11·9	11·2	11·8	11·2	11·8	12·1
North West Hertfordshire	n/a	12·2	12·2	12·3	12·0	12·1	12·5
South West Hertfordshire	n/a	12·1	11·7	11·4	11·6	11·7	12·3
Barnet	n/a	13·0	12·8	12·5	12·5	12·5	13·1
Harrow	n/a	12·9	12·4	12·5	12·8	13·0	13·7
Hillingdon	n/a	12·8	12·8	12·6	13·1	13·5	13·5
Hounslow and Spelthorne	n/a	13·4	13·1	13·1	13·8	14·8	14·3
Ealing	n/a	15·2	15·1	15·0	14·7	14·7	14·3
Brent	n/a	15·3	15·2	15·0	14·8	15·7	15·2
Paddington and Kensington	n/a	13·5	13·5	14·4	14·8	15·4	15·8
Riverside	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	12·7	12·7
Hammersmith and Fulham	n/a	13·2	13·4	12·6	13·2	n/a	n/a
Victoria	n/a	10·0	10·5	11·4	11·0	n/a	n/a
North East Thames RHA	14·0	13·5	13·3	13·4	13·7	13·9	14·1
Basildon and Thurrock	n/a	14·4	13·6	13·9	14·2	14·8	14·4

	1980	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*
Mid Essex	n/a	14·0	13·3	13·1	13·1	13·0	13·3
North East Essex	n/a	11·8	11·1	11·3	11·4	11·3	11·4
West Essex	n/a	12·5	12·2	11·9	12·6	12·2	12·6
Southend	n/a	12·4	11·7	11·8	12·1	12·2	12·6
Barking Havering and B'Wood	n/a	12·0	11·4	11·2	11·7	12·4	12·1
Hampstead	n/a	11·0	12·3	12·3	10·6	11·8	11·2
Bloomsbury	n/a	10·6	10·7	11·2	12·3	11·5	12·8
Islington	n/a	14·1	13·9	14·5	14·6	14·7	14·8
City and Hackney	n/a	17·1	17·1	17·0	17·5	17·4	17·7
Newham	n/a	17·2	17·7	18·0	18·9	19·1	19·8
Tower Hamlet	n/a	18·0	19·0	19·5	20·5	19·4	19·6
Enfield	n/a	12·6	12·1	12·4	13·0	13·2	13·3
Haringey	n/a	14·6	14·6	14·7	15·0	16·1	16·2
Redbridge	n/a	12·1	11·0	12·1	12·2	12·3	12·6
Waltham Forest	n/a	14·0	14·6	14·7	14·8	15·2	16·0
South East Thames RHA	12·9	12·4	12·2	12·3	12·4	13·0	13·1
Brighton	n/a	10·2	10·3	10·5	11·1	11·5	12·0
Eastbourne	n/a	9·6	9·3	9·6	9·4	9·7	9·4
Hastings	n/a	10·0	9·8	10·2	10·4	11·0	10·6
South East Kent	n/a	11·6	11·7	11·5	11·4	12·1	12·5
Canterbury and Thanet	n/a	10·8	10·4	10·9	10·8	11·2	11·7
Dartford and Gravesham	n/a	13·5	12·6	12·5	12·7	13·6	13·6
Maidstone	n/a	12·9	12·5	11·5	12·3	12·2	12·4
Medway	n/a	15·5	14·7	14·9	15·0	15·5	15·2
Tunbridge Wells	n/a	10·5	9·7	10·7	10·2	11·2	11·0
Bexley	n/a	12·0	12·0	12·1	12·7	13·1	13·2
Greenwich	n/a	14·5	14·2	14·4	14·3	15·5	15·2
Bromley	n/a	10·9	10·8	10·5	10·7	11·3	11·5
West Lambeth	n/a	14·6	15·2	15·0	15·6	15·6	15·8
Camberwell	n/a	15·5	15·6	16·1	16·2	17·2	17·4
Lewisham and North Southwark	n/a	13·4	14·3	13·6	13·8	14·7	15·3
South West Thames RHA	12·3	12·1	11·7	11·8	11·8	12·3	12·4
North West Surrey	n/a	12·3	12·0	11·0	12·0	12·2	12·5
West Surrey and North East Hampshire	n/a	13·7	13·1	13·3	12·5	13·0	13·2
South West Surrey	n/a	11·2	10·0	10·2	10·8	11·0	11·2
Mid Surrey	n/a	9·3	9·0	9·5	9·6	9·6	9·5
East Sutton	n/a	11·1	10·4	10·3	10·8	11·4	11·5
Chichester	n/a	9·8	9·4	9·3	9·4	9·5	9·3
Mid Downs	n/a	13·2	12·8	13·1	12·2	13·0	12·6
Worthing	n/a	10·0	9·5	9·4	9·8	9·5	10·0
Croydon	n/a	14·0	13·5	13·3	13·5	14·3	14·4
Kingston and Esher	n/a	11·3	11·2	11·8	11·8	12·2	12·6
Richmond, Twickenham and Roehampton	n/a	11·2	11·4	11·5	11·4	12·2	12·1
Wandsworth	n/a	15·0	14·7	15·2	14·9	15·7	15·5
Merton and Sutton	n/a	12·2	12·2	12·4	12·7	13·4	13·9
Wessex RHA	12·7	12·0	11·8	11·8	12·0	12·2	12·4
East Dorset	n/a	9·9	9·6	9·8	10·1	10·6	10·6
West Dorset	n/a	10·8	10·4	10·0	10·6	10·7	11·0
Portsmouth and South East Hampshire	n/a	12·9	10·5	12·9	13·0	13·5	13·8
Southampton and South West Hampshire	n/a	12·7	12·4	12·3	12·3	12·5	12·6
Winchester	n/a	11·9	11·6	11·7	11·4	12·1	11·3
Basingstoke and North Hampshire	n/a	13·7	13·2	13·1	13·3	13·0	13·7
Salisbury	n/a	12·4	12·0	12·4	11·4	12·2	11·9
Swindon	n/a	14·3	14·8	14·4	14·7	14·9	15·4
Bath	n/a	11·5	11·7	11·1	11·9	11·8	12·1
Isle of wight	n/a	9·7	10·0	10·0	10·0	10·4	10·8
Oxford RHA	14·3	13·6	13·2	13·0	13·2	13·6	13·4
East Berkshire	n/a	14·3	13·5	13·2	13·6	14·1	13·9
West Berkshire	n/a	13·1	12·6	12·7	13·1	13·4	13·5
Aylesbury Vale	n/a	13·5	13·6	13·0	13·3	13·7	13·4
Wycombe	n/a	12·2	11·6	11·8	11·4	11·7	11·7
Milton Keynes	n/a	18·6	17·7	17·5	17·9	17·9	17·0
Kettering	n/a	13·2	13·3	12·9	12·7	13·8	13·6
Northampton	n/a	13·8	13·2	13·1	13·5	13·6	13·6
Oxfordshire	n/a	13·2	12·9	12·7	12·8	12·9	12·5
South Western RHA	12·1	11·6	11·4	11·5	11·6	11·9	12·0
Bristol and Weston	n/a	12·1	11·9	11·5	12·4	12·9	12·8
Frenchay	n/a	12·5	12·2	12·5	13·2	13·5	13·5
Southmead	n/a	12·0	11·9	11·8	11·3	11·9	12·1
Cornwall and Isles of Scilly	n/a	11·4	11·0	11·5	11·6	11·7	11·7
Exeter	n/a	10·7	10·5	10·6	10·7	10·7	11·3
North Devon	n/a	10·8	11·0	10·1	10·7	11·0	11·3
Plymouth	n/a	12·8	12·9	12·8	12·8	13·3	12·8

	1980	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*
Torbay	n/a	9·8	9·0	9·5	9·2	10·1	10·7
Cheltenham and District	n/a	11·3	11·1	11·3	11·2	11·4	11·5
Gloucester	n/a	12·2	12·4	12·2	12·3	12·9	12·6
Somerset	n/a	11·3	11·2	11·1	11·1	11·1	11·4
West Midlands RHA	13·8	13·0	13·1	13·2	13·3	13·6	13·6
Bromsgrove and Redditch	n/a	14·6	14·6	14·4	13·9	13·6	14·0
Herefordshire	n/a	11·6	11·6	11·9	11·3	12·0	11·6
Kidderminster and District	n/a	12·4	12·2	12·3	12·2	12·3	12·0
Worcester and District	n/a	11·3	10·9	11·2	11·2	11·6	11·5
Shropshire	n/a	12·2	12·3	12·4	12·4	12·7	12·8
Mid Staffordshire	n/a	13·0	12·8	13·0	12·8	13·4	13·1
North Staffordshire	n/a	12·4	12·6	12·4	12·7	12·7	12·8
South East Staffordshire	n/a	14·4	13·9	13·9	14·1	13·8	13·5
Rugby	n/a	12·2	11·4	11·7	11·7	12·0	13·0
North Warwickshire	n/a	13·1	13·1	13·1	12·8	13·6	13·3
South Warwickshire	n/a	11·3	11·0	11·0	11·0	10·9	11·2
Central Birmingham	n/a	14·8	15·2	16·1	16·1	16·3	16·6
East Birmingham	n/a	15·7	16·0	15·8	16·0	16·9	17·1
North Birmingham	n/a	10·8	11·0	11·3	12·0	12·0	12·4
South Birmingham	n/a	13·8	13·3	13·3	14·3	14·4	14·4
West Birmingham	n/a	17·5	18·8	18·8	18·6	18·9	18·5
Coventry	n/a	13·9	13·9	14·0	14·4	14·8	14·9
Dudley	n/a	12·2	12·2	12·4	12·5	12·7	13·0
Sandwell	n/a	12·8	13·6	13·6	13·7	14·2	14·4
Solihull	n/a	10·8	11·2	11·0	11·2	11·7	11·8
Walsall	n/a	12·6	13·0	13·3	13·4	14·1	13·7
Wolverhampton	n/a	13·1	13·1	12·8	13·3	13·5	13·6
Mersey RHA	13·2	13·0	12·9	13·1	13·0	13·6	13·6
Chester	n/a	12·3	12·1	12·9	12·2	13·5	12·8
Crewe	n/a	12·8	12·2	12·6	12·6	13·2	12·9
Halton	n/a	14·9	14·4	14·4	14·4	15·1	15·3
Macclesfield	n/a	11·1	11·0	11·0	10·8	11·3	11·2
Warrington	n/a	12·9	12·7	12·8	13·4	13·1	13·5
Liverpool	n/a	13·5	13·2	13·8	14·2	14·8	15·0
St. Helens and Knowsley	n/a	14·4	14·7	14·5	13·8	14·5	14·4
Southport and Formby	n/a	9·7	10·0	8·8	9·8	9·8	10·0
South Sefton	n/a	12·5	12·5	13·7	13·0	13·6	13·6
Wirral	n/a	12·8	12·8	12·8	12·7	13·3	13·3
North Western RHA	13·6	13·2	13·3	13·4	13·6	13·9	13·9
Lancaster	n/a	11·0	11·4	11·4	12·1	11·9	12·0
Blackpool Wyre and Fylde	n/a	9·8	9·9	10·1	10·1	10·5	11·3
Preston	n/a	13·7	13·4	14·2	14·5	14·8	14·4
Blackburn, Hyndburn and Ribble Valley	n/a	14·5	14·5	14·2	14·6	14·7	14·5
Burnley, Pendle and Rossendale	n/a	14·4	14·1	14·7	14·5	15·2	15·4
West Lancaster	n/a	13·7	13·1	13·9	13·6	13·9	13·7
Chorley and South Ribble	n/a	13·0	13·3	13·5	13·4	13·2	13·1
Bolton	n/a	14·2	14·0	14·4	14·5	14·7	14·1
Bury	n/a	13·3	12·8	13·0	13·1	14·1	13·8
North Manchester	n/a	13·8	14·6	14·2	15·2	15·4	15·9
Central Manchester	n/a	16·1	16·8	15·6	16·7	17·0	17·6
South Manchester	n/a	12·6	12·9	12·8	13·7	14·4	14·1
Oldham	n/a	14·4	14·4	14·5	14·5	15·1	14·8
Rochdale	n/a	15·1	14·9	14·7	15·0	15·1	15·1
Salford	n/a	12·4	12·7	13·1	13·0	14·1	13·9
Stockport	n/a	12·0	12·5	12·5	12·3	12·7	12·8
Tameside and Glossop	n/a	13·1	13·2	13·6	13·7	14·3	14·2
Trafford	n/a	12·2	12·4	12·5	12·8	13·1	13·2
Wigan	n/a	13·6	13·3	13·5	13·5	13·6	13·5

Average daily number of available beds in the maternity sector, NHS hospitals, England 1980-86

District health authority	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*
Hartlepool	46	47	46	46	47	45	71
North Tees	94	94	94	94	94	91	85
South Tees	143	143	142	142	140	124	124
East Cumbria	[1]—	[1]—	72	71	65	61	59
South Cumbria	[1]—	[1]—	58	58	57	59	60
West Cumbria	64	62	62	62	61	59	53
Darlington	46	46	46	46	46	46	46
Durham	53	53	53	51	52	53	53
North West Durham	52	49	48	48	48	43	35
South West Durham	60	52	54	54	54	54	54
Northumberland	111	111	109	107	114	110	99
Gateshead	66	65	65	65	65	65	65

District health authority	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*
Newcastle upon Tyne	157	171	165	164	146	147	153
North Tyneside	56	54	58	59	59	60	60
South Tyneside	60	60	60	60	59	58	58
Sunderland	149	147	149	149	146	134	101
Northern RHA	1,285	1,272	1,280	1,276	1,252	1,208	1,176
Hull	101	90	79	76	78	75	75
East Yorkshire	106	103	106	105	105	82	72
Grimsby	78	75	73	69	68	68	64
Scunthorpe	67	67	75	70	62	58	58
Northallerton	28	28	28	28	25	25	25
York	81	81	81	81	86	75	68
Scarborough	54	54	53	54	55	45	40
Harrogate	61	64	63	62	56	56	58
Bradford	177	183	178	175	179	179	179
Airedale	76	72	74	75	73	70	68
Calderdale	95	92	93	93	93	92	95
Huddersfield	97	97	96	91	86	64	57
Dewsbury	120	120	119	116	104	84	84
Leeds Western	[1]—	[1]—	106	109	112	120	121
Leeds Eastern	[1]—	[1]—	151	145	152	143	151
Wakefield	58	58	58	58	58	57	58
Pontefract	78	82	82	82	82	82	82
Yorkshire RHA	1,532	1,523	1,514	1,489	1,474	1,374	1,354
North Derbyshire	96	96	102	99	96	96	96
South Derbyshire	126	173	182	182	179	181	172
Leicestershire	320	332	332	328	323	322	312
North Lincolnshire	81	80	83	90	82	72	70
South Lincolnshire	101	95	80	80	82	82	78
Bassetlaw	31	31	31	31	31	31	31
Central Nottinghamshire	109	97	97	95	95	94	94
Nottingham	268	271	278	257	248	251	243
Barnsley	75	75	75	75	75	74	67
Doncaster	[1]—	[1]—	196	192	177	145	108
Rotherham	[1]—	[1]—	65	66	66	67	67
Sheffield	[1]—	[1]—	243	240	227	203	199
Trent RHA	1,747	1,743	1,764	1,735	1,680	1,617	1,536
Cambridge	[1]—	[1]—	92	96	104	94	93
Peterborough	110	114	102	102	97	97	97
West Suffolk	[1]—	[1]—	99	87	88	88	79
East Suffolk	[1]—	[1]—	126	125	123	123	103
Norwich	128	128	144	147	130	108	107
Great Yarmouth	64	64	64	64	64	68	59
West Norfolk and Wisbech	98	79	69	59	59	59	59
Huntingdon	[1]—	[1]—	22	24	33	34	40
East Anglian RHA	732	726	718	704	698	670	636
North Bedfordshire	68	64	63	62	54	45	45
South Bedfordshire	95	93	95	95	95	91	95
North Hertfordshire	71	71	71	71	76	80	75
East Hertfordshire	80	76	66	60	44	49	54
North West Hertfordshire	85	84	84	83	83	76	75
South West Hertfordshire	80	80	74	76	76	75	75
Barnet	134	128	132	127	119	115	110
Harrow	125	130	130	129	101	106	100
Hillingdon	80	80	81	77	77	77	77
Hounslow and Spelthorne	[1]—	[1]—	[illegible]	124	110	108	110
Ealing	67	67	57	66	64	64	55
Brent	47	50	54	53	52	52	58
Paddington and North Kensington	69	69	62	61	60	60	60
Riverside[2]	[1]—	[1]—	98	97	97	96	79
North West Thames RHA[3]	1,287	1,277	1,208	1,181	1,110	1,092	1,067
Basildon and Thurrock	123	123	120	122	122	122	122
Mid Essex	106	105	105	105	105	105	105
North East Essex	101	102	105	105	104	84	83
West Essex	100	96	95	84	83	83	85
Southend	95	95	95	95	94	95	95
Barking, Havering and Brentwood	111	108	108	108	108	103	101
Hampstead	[1]—	[1]—	57	57	56	56	58
Bloomsbury	[1]—	[1]—	116	116	115	88	84

District health authority	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*
Islington	[1]—	[1]—	105	85	84	71	74
City and Hackney	127	114	108	107	107	106	109
Newham	86	86	86	86	86	87	85
Tower Hamlets	107	102	92	94	94	94	83
Enfield	82	80	84	90	89	88	89
Haringey	92	94	95	87	70	71	69
Redbridge	105	107	105	102	102	100	103
Waltham Forest	85	90	89	147	92	92	89
North East Thames RHA[3]	1,581	1,544	1,565	1,589	1,510	1,446	1,434
Brighton	62	61	61	61	61	61	61
Eastbourne	50	50	50	50	49	49	44
Hastings	42	39	38	37	37	37	37
South East Kent	86	86	86	86	86	81	70
Canterbury and Thanet	109	107	103	103	100	99	100
Dartford and Gravesham	110	109	108	104	104	99	88
Maidstone	50	50	50	50	50	50	50
Medway	116	114	117	120	120	116	118
Tunbridge Wells	101	97	90	85	83	77	73
Bexley	57	56	54	53	68	83	83
Greenwich	121	121	12[illegible]	121	125	88	90
Bromley	105	92	86	85	86	86	77
West Lambeth	[1]—	[1]—	94	85	80	85	77
Camberwell	93	93	93	93	92	93	93
Lewisham and North Southwark	141	132	131	127	117	120	108
South East Thames RHA[3]	1,342	1,304	1,283	1,260	1,258	1,224	1,170
North West Surrey	120	120	120	120	91	78	61
West Surrey and North East Hampshire	65	65	65	65	62	54	45
South West Surrey	53	54	54	54	50	43	42
Mid Surrey	63	63	63	63	63	59	56
East Surrey	56	56	53	55	44	44	37
Chichester	50	50	50	51	51	51	52
Mid Downs	117	111	106	106	106	96	89
Worthing	56	55	50	50	50	49	44
Croydon	107	102	111	95	78	79	64
Kingston and Esher	[1]—	[1]—	63	62	69	59	59
Richmond, Twickenham and Roehampton	[1]—	[1]—	37	37	36	37	35
Wandsworth	110	103	103	103	114	80	80
Merton and Sutton	79	78	76	71	56	56	55
South West Thames RHA[3]	1,034	1,013	950	932	860	785	718
East Dorset	123	110	113	116	117	116	116
West Dorset	72	74	74	74	74	74	74
Portsmouth	204	204	199	196	194	184	189
South West Hampshire and Southampton	145	145	148	141	145	149	142
Winchester	73	73	72	72	72	72	72
Basingstoke	70	66	66	65	56	50	44
Salisbury	55	54	59	60	60	54	51
Swindon	100	99	93	92	97	96	89
West Wiltshire and Bath	177	157	159	152	149	148	146
Isle of Wight	40	40	40	37	36	36	36
Wessex RHA	1,059	1,021	1,024	1,005	999	980	958
East Berkshire	121	121	118	111	95	105	107
West Berkshire	165	163	157	147	130	130	130
Aylesbury	[1]—	[1]—	75	69	62	55	49
Wycombe	81	79	81	74	64	69	68
Milton Keynes	[1]—	[1]—	36	36	50	66	68
Kettering	79	79	79	67	72	73	62
Northampton	102	100	100	97	90	81	79
Oxfordshire	232	227	216	213	215	213	202
Oxford RHA	879	874	863	813	778	793	765
Bristol and Weston	154	159	154	136	136	140	155
Frenchay	10	10	10	10	10	11	10
Southmead	145	145	150	136	121	121	120
Cornwall and Isles of Scilly	122	125	125	125	118	119	119
Exeter	103	96	97	96	96	95	97
North Devon	[1]—	[1]—	51	51	51	51	46
Plymouth	[1]—	[1]—	139	140	140	139	130
Torbay	60	57	59	58	57	57	58
Cheltenham	[1]—	[1]—	78	78	78	65	75

District health authority	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*
Gloucester	[1]—	[1]—	120	123	107	102	93
Somerset	137	136	134	135	135	120	129
South Western RHA	1,122	1,113	1,117	1,087	1,049	1,020	1,030
Bromsgrove and Redditch	48	47	47	46	36	34	36
Herefordshire	47	49	48	49	49	47	46
Kidderminster and District	38	22	22	22	22	23	24
Worcester and District	90	91	91	91	91	91	83
Shropshire	130	130	130	130	131	136	131
Mid Staffordshire	71	71	63	62	66	67	67
North Staffordshire	181	181	183	173	177	175	166
South East Staffordshire	67	69	68	67	68	60	67
Rugby	42	42	42	32	30	30	30
North Warwickshire	[1]—	[1]—	77	77	74	63	57
South Warwickshire	[1]—	[1]—	68	64	65	62	56
Central Birmingham	[1]—	[1]—	159	150	150	136	125
North Birmingham	156	156	156	153	125	125	101
South Birmingham	[1]—	[1]—	88	89	89	77	73
West Birmingham	[1]—	[1]—	97	97	93	89	90
Coventry	141	141	141	140	120	113	109
Dudley	107	105	104	107	100	95	95
Sandwell	63	66	69	69	69	69	69
Solihull	[1]—	[1]—	144	130	136	126	116
Walsall	69	61	63	66	66	66	66
Wolverhampton	143	143	143	141	141	141	141
West Midlands RHA	2,008	1,980	2,002	1,955	1,897	1,825	1,746
Chester	110	110	110	107	84	84	84
Crewe	[1]—	[1]—	84	82	84	83	81
Halton	18	17	18	18	9	0	0
Macclesfield	[1]—	[1]—	50	47	40	39	39
Warrington	80	69	70	70	70	70	70
Liverpool	242	236	217	240	221	212	207
St. Helens and Knowsley	103	103	103	103	103	103	103
Southport and Formby	42	42	42	42	42	42	42
South Sefton	93	84	92	94	95	96	96
Wirral	153	152	139	127	112	112	112
Mersey RHA	979	949	924	931	859	840	834
Lancaster	48	48	48	48	48	47	48
Blackpool, Wyre and Fylde	90	94	107	88	91	89	90
Preston	—[1]	—[1]	111	111	111	111	94
Blackburn, Hyndburn and Ribble Valley	116	116	117	122	121	117	123
Burnley, Pendle and Rossendale	96	97	100	100	98	99	80
West Lancashire	37	32	31	34	35	32	34
Chorley and South Ribble	—[1]	—[1]	28	28	28	28	26
Bolton	101	101	101	105	106	103	108
Bury	72	72	72	71	72	72	72
North Manchester	69	70	71	71	69	59	66
Central Manchester	125	125	125	124	124	125	125
South Manchester	158	157	158	156	155	150	152
Oldham	74	79	73	76	86	86	87
Rochdale	66	71	71	61	51	47	51
Salford	84	89	101	100	90	92	93
Stockport	116	114	109	100	100	95	94
Tameside and Glossop	103	112	99	82	82	82	82
Trafford	57	51	51	50	47	46	41
Wigan	131	131	131	123	110	110	106
North Western RHA	1,683	1,695	1,703	1,650	1,624	1,589	1,572
Special Health Authorities[3]	137	137	192	192	183	187	171

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[1] Comparable figures are not available due to National Health Service restructuring in 1982.

[2] Hammersmith and Fulham District Health Authority and Victoria District Health Authority prior to 1985.

[3] Figures for the Thames regions and Special Health Authorities are not comparable over the whole period due to National Health Service restructuring in 1982.

Number of maternities, available beds, occupied beds and length of stay, maternity sector, NHS hospitals, and live birth rate. England 1980-86

Year	*Number of maternities*[1]	*Average daily available beds*[2]	*Average daily occupied beds*[2]	*Average length of stay (days)*[2]	*Live birth rate*[1]
1980	601,094	18,406	12,659	5·7	13·3
1981	582,010	18,176	12,047	5·5	12·8
1982	573,517	18,108	11,508	5·3	12·6
1983	577,120	17,800	11,181	5·1	12·7
1984	584,916	17,198	10,824	4·8	12·8
1985	603,127	16,648	10,755	4·6	13·1
1986	606,976	16,166	10,500	4·4	13·2

[1] *Source:* OPCS.

[2] *Source:* SH3.

"Home Life"

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services, pursuant to his answer of 23 June to the hon. Member for Wakefield, how he proposes to monitor the implementation of his Department's guidelines as set out in the publication entitled "Home Life".

Mrs. Currie: Registration authorities are responsible for determining their policy on standards in residential care homes having regard to official guidance and to the code of practice "Home Life" and for monitoring compliance with that policy. The Department's Social Services Inspectorate has conducted a national survey of the way registration authorities were discharging their functions. We are currently considering the recommendations [illegible] its report "Certain Standards" together with Sir Roy Griffiths' report "Community Care: Agenda for Action" and Lady Wagner's report "Residential Care—A Positive Choice". Copies of all three reports are in the Library.

NHS Review

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations about his review of the National Health Service he has received from trade unions and other bodies representing health service staffs; and what has been the nature of their representations.

Mr. Moore: We have received a number of representations from such bodies, covering a wide range of issues.

Community Hospitals

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on his Department's policy regarding community hospitals in rural areas in the light of the report from the Cornwall and Isles of Scilly local medical committee entitled "The Community Hospital Review for the Cornwall and Isles of Scilly Health Authority".

Mrs. Currie: I understand that the review of community hospitals, produced by the Cornwall and Isles of Scilly health authority, is to be considered by South Western RHA through its own working party on the role and future use of community hospitals. It would be inappropriate to comment on a locally prepared report before the RHA has been able to examine it in detail.

Hospital and Clinical Waste

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will take steps to improve the methods employed to dispose of hospital and clinical waste.

Mrs. Currie: Guidance on good practice for the safe disposal of all waste was issued to the Health Service under Health Notice (82)22. The Department is currently discussing with the Department of the Environment the implementation of new statutory BPM (best practical means) controls on incinerator operation and emission proposed in the consultation paper "Air Pollution Control in Great Britain", published in December 1986. Copies are available in the Library.

Health Market

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services which commodities and services his Department has identified as viable for health authorities to buy and sell in a health market.

Mrs. Currie: We are keen to encourage better use of all health care capacity and to build on the growing cost-awareness of Health Service managers. We are considering how this might best be achieved.

Pathology

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services when the [illegible]t on pathology staffing will be published in full; when the National Health Service Management Board is due to discuss this report; and when he expects to be able to make a statement on the future staffing of National Health Service pathology services.

Mr. Newton: The report has been considered by the NHS Management Board and will be published shortly together with a consultative document.

Unemployment Benefit

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what were the total numbers of disallowances of unemployment benefit in 1983 and 1987 made by adjudication officers, broken down by reasons for disallowance, that permit reconciliation with the summaries in the annual analysis of decisions of adjudication officers *(a)* in Britain, *(b)* in each standard region and *(c)* by the smallest areas used for adjudication analysis.

Mr. Portillo: The information requested for Great Britain and each standard region is in the table. The information for the smallest areas used for adjudication analysis could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Total numbers of disallowances of unemployment benefit made by adjudication officers Great Britain and by Region—1 January 1983 to 31 December 1983

	Great Britain	*South East Region*	*East Anglia*	*South West*	*West Midlands*	*East Midlands*	*Yorks and Humberside*	*North West*	*Northern*	*Wales*	*Scotland*
All questions	977,978	258,512	28,053	76,841	86,585	71,180	113,048	127,990	66,988	40,317	108,464
Capability	5,518	1,155	31	656	366	220	297	440	577	453	1,323
Employment not terminated	94	30	4	—	4	8	2	4	1	39	2
Engaged in employment	96,760	8,512	448	10,071	8,677	6,866	19,463	17,695	12,277	2,900	9,851
Employed to full extent normal	11,636	385	171	667	1,399	1,027	1,654	1,704	2,091	1,314	1,224
Normal idle day	1,912	331	101	247	80	47	335	133	161	61	416
Payment in lieu of notice or wages	232,355	63,380	6,966	12,153	28,760	16,566	23,098	34,029	12,776	7,071	27,556
Recognised or customary holiday	5,725	1,376	137	324	381	366	1,013	622	592	479	435
Whether unemployed	47,596	14,777	1,277	3,848	3,810	3,586	5,323	2,872	3,635	1,967	6,501
Share fishermen—work as	309	31	14	97	—	—	10	2	39	4	112
—No work available	502	1	5	34	—	—	140	—	15	1	306
Dependent's benefit—Child	5,162	465	234	475	345	430	1,353	485	755	276	344
—Ault	4,249	398	223	427	226	356	980	475	595	206	363
Delayed claim	104,478	29,094	3,639	10,422	8,123	6,308	9,612	12,407	7,967	5,967	10,939
Failure to attend for interview	325	149	2	5	38	5	18	42	22	22	22
Failure to keep to signing time	32	9	—	3	1	3	2	4	4	3	3
Occupational pensioners	191	28	7	34	7	8	15	42	6	22	22
Availability	50,243	12,461	1,412	4,525	3,861	4,053	7,948	6,249	2,799	1,838	5,097
Restricted availability	6,994	1,882	198	549	608	653	803	1,292	306	177	526
Share fishermen—Neglect to avail	176	13	4	25	—	—	6	4	7	6	111
Trade dispute	976	270	34	10	88	40	103	196	70	73	92
Seasonal workers	5,015	510	380	1,279	83	480	363	619	258	569	474
Leaving voluntarily	261,284	83,959	8,813	20,703	18,606	20,309	24,883	29,755	14,205	11,582	28,469
Misconduct	94,696	31,181	2,463	6,561	7,482	7,200	9,715	12,567	4,204	3,775	9,548
Employment—Neglect to avail	433	52	11	28	53	37	54	39	57	31	71
—Refusal of	1,450	481	54	99	138	146	158	138	64	76	96
Refusal or premature termination of training	1,249	164	31	83	121	139	84	241	150	106	130
Refusal to carry out written recommendations	94	44	1	5	7	5	9	1	4	3	15
Other questions	38,524	7,374	1,393	3,511	3,321	2,322	5,607	5,933	3,351	1,296	4,416

Total numbers of disallowances of unemployment benefit made by adjudication officers Great Britain and by Region—1 January 1987 to 31 December 1987

	Great Britain	*South East Region*	*East Anglia*	*South West*	*West Midlands*	*East Midlands*	*Yorks and Humberside*	*North West*	*Northern*	*Wales*	*Scotland*
All questions	1,078,819	298,488	44,900	103,141	86,582	72,610	115,911	128,526	71,828	42,928	113,905
Capability	7,174	1,674	61	906	547	159	473	692	859	642	1,161
Employment not terminated	119	19	—	9	7	1	2	1	50	5	25
Engaged in employment	37,562	1,866	416	7,481	3,033	3,331	7,937	5,673	4,447	405	2,973
Employed to full extent normal	25,694	1,990	620	1,485	1,803	1,484	4,820	3,402	4,206	1,860	4,024
Normal idle day	1,731	295	54	66	64	71	186	42	145	94	714
Payment in lieu of notice or wages	179,436	47,975	6,137	13,656	18,751	13,573	17,772	23,290	10,242	5,807	22,233
Recognised or customary holiday	7,944	2,140	263	747	582	339	1,355	697	500	458	863
Whether unemployed	59,167	15,106	2,459	5,723	4,429	3,117	6,863	5,857	4,759	2,466	8,388
Share fishermen—work as	136	13	1	11	—	—	8	2	12	—	89
—No work available	154	13	—	—	—	—	37	—	3	—	101
Dependent's benefit——Child	302	159	7	12	6	6	53	24	8	2	25
—Adult	3,031	370	89	287	134	142	743	213	416	176	461
Delayed claim	161,001	51,889	8,394	17,646	10,973	7,858	12,749	16,262	14,356	6,846	14,028
Failure to attend for interview	153	51	15	33	6	8	6	16	3	11	4
Failure to keep to signing time	22	8	3	4	1	1	—	2	1	—	2
Occupational pensioners	92	27	3	10	1	1	25	14	3	2	6
Availability	85,319	29,312	4,343	8,134	4,638	4,809	11,249	6,724	3,778	2,807	9,525
Restricted availability	16,455	5,480	759	1,992	1,110	1,092	1,806	1,826	752	685	953

	Great Britain	South East Region	East Anglia	South West	West Midlands	East Midlands	Yorks and Humberside	North West	Northern	Wales	Scotland
Share fishermen—Neglect to avail	101	—	1	1	—	—	1	7	3	24	64
Trade dispute	495	88	6	37	47	—	135	88	41	26	27
Seasonal workers	5,723	447	518	1,237	252	468	585	488	247	891	590
Leaving voluntarily	328,424	101,431	14,703	29,382	26,417	25,122	30,964	40,596	16,909	13,142	29,758
Misconduct	98,004	28,894	3,558	7,931	8,304	7,499	10,225	13,813	4,668	4,179	8,933
Employment—Neglect to avail	2,013	191	127	156	312	516	202	224	40	84	161
—Refusal of	2,308	699	135	262	179	179	248	244	106	101	155
Refusal or premature termination of training	6,496	1,165	330	998	385	550	794	1,334	355	97	488
Refusal to carry out written recommendations	58	26	—	4	2	5	5	8	2	1	5
Restart—Failure to attend interview	751	289	1	110	25	40	13	74	109	—	90
Other questions	48,954	6,871	1,897	4,821	4,574	2,239	6,655	6,913	4,808	2,117	8,059

Children (Illegal Employment)

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many convictions were secured in each of the last five years for illegal employment of children.

Mrs. Currie: The available figures are as follows:

Industrial Undertakings

Prosecutions taken by the Health and Safety Executive under section 1 of the Employment of Women, Young Persons and Children Act 1920 resulting in convictions

	Number
1983	3
1984	6
1985	6
1986 (January—March)	4
1986-87 (April—March)	[1]9

[1] Provisional.

Agriculture

Information is not available in the form requested. Between 1977 and 1986 there were 241 convictions for offences against legislation which prohibits the involvement or employment of children in certain agricultural operations (the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 and regulations under the Act).

Non-Industrial Undertakings

Figures notified to the Home Office for convictions under Sections 18, 19 and 20 of the Children and Young Persons Act 1933

	Number
1983	12
1984	9
1985	9
1986	2

Figures for 1987 are not yet available.

Information is not available centrally on convictions following proceedings brought by local authorities for breaches of byelaws under the Act.

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many staff are employed by his Department to check for illegal employment practices in relation to children; and how these staff are organised.

Mrs. Currie: Responsibility for the enforcement of legislation prohibiting and regulating the employment of children lies with the Health and Safety Executive and with local authorities.

The Health and Safety Executive has powers under section 1 of the Employment of Women, Young Persons and Children Act 1920 to take immediate action if a child is found to be working illegally in any industrial undertaking; and through its Agricultural Inspectorate to enforce legislation which prohibits the employment or involvement of children in certain agricultural operations.

The staffing of Her Majesty's Factory and Agricultural Inspectorates is a matter for the Health and Safety Commission and Executive. There are 542 inspectors in the Factory Inspectorate and 150 in the Agricultural Inspectorate: no inspectors deal exclusively with the illegal employment of children.

The Children and Young Persons Act 1933 prohibits the employment of children aged under 13 and restricts the part-time employment of children between 13 and 16. Local authority byelaws made under the Act place further restrictions on the hours and occupations of schoolchildren's employment. Local authorities have powers which may be exercised through the education welfare service to enforce the byelaws. Some 3,000 education welfare officers are employed nationally. Their terms of employment are for agreement with individual local education authorities.

Grandchildren

Mr. Ray Powell: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) how many grandparents are awaiting the court's decision on their application to adopt their grandchildren who have been taken into care;

(2) how many children are in care, whose grandparents had offered to be guardians, and had their offers turned down by the social services.

Mrs. Currie: I regret that the information requested is not available centrally.

Leukaemia and Lymphoma

Mr. Rost: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what was the number of recorded and reported leukaemia and lymphoma cases in children under 18 years of age, for each year from 1958 to 1987.

Mrs. Currie: I regret that the exact information requested could be provided only at disproportionate cost. The readily available information is shown in the table, which covers the years 1962-84: 1984 is the latest year for which data are available, whilst prior to 1962 no complete national data are available.

Number of newly-diagnosed cases of (a) leukaemia[1], (b) lymphomas[2] age-group and sex, England and Wales, 1962-84

Year and age-group	*Leukaemia*		*Lymphomas*	
	Male	*Female*	*Male*	*Female*
1984				
0 -14	192	167	95	39
15-19	53	31	86	56
0-19	245	198	181	95
1983				
0-14	220	172	79	37
15-19	52	31	93	68
0-19	272	203	172	105
1982				
0-14	190	159	85	34
15-19	58	21	90	59
0-19	248	180	175	93
1981				
0-14	186	172	96	42
15-19	50	27	93	58
0-19	236	199	189	100
1980				
0-14	179	136	94	55
15-19	52	35	83	63
0-19	231	171	177	118
1979				
0-14	210	154	94	40
15-19	40	24	81	65
0-19	250	178	175	105
1978				
0-14	224	153	107	31
15-19	62	33	79	53
0-19	286	186	186	84
1977				
0-14	199	176	101	45
15-19	59	38	75	61
0-19	258	214	176	106
1976				
0-14	256	180	112	45
15-19	58	28	71	62
0-19	314	208	183	103
1975				
0-14	245	177	99	37
15-19	40	33	67	46
0-19	285	210	166	83
1974				
0-14	254	165	67	41
15-19	50	31	82	46
0-19	304	196	149	87
1973				
0-14	269	193	65	33
15-19	43	36	72	47
0-19	312	229	137	80
1972				
0-14	221	166	95	44
15-19	40	30	77	65
0-19	261	196	172	109
1971				
0-14	267	160	83	44
15-19	43	30	55	44
0-19	310	190	138	88
1970				
0-14	192	177	89	44
15-19	40	26	66	43
0-19	232	203	155	87
1969				
0-14	199	164	96	25
15-19	55	21	87	45
0-19	254	185	183	70
1968				
0-14	189	159	86	35
15-19	41	25	72	42
0-19	230	184	158	77
1967				
0-14	166	139	94	37
15-19	29	19	74	50
0-19	195	158	168	87
1966				
0-14	145	140	92	50
15-19	45	24	78	54
0-19	190	164	170	104
1965				
0-14	184	150	99	43
15-19	43	36	100	52
0-19	227	186	199	95
1964				
0-14	138	119	74	29
15-19	36	17	63	46
0-19	174	136	137	75
1963				
0-14	150	119	77	26
15-19	25	22	60	37
0-19	175	141	137	63
1962				
0-14	166	139	69	38
15-19	44	39	76	38
0-19	210	178	145	76

[1] Leukaemia: International Classification of Diseases (ICD) codes:
1962-67: 204
1968-78: 204-207
1979-84: 204-208

[2] Lymphomas: 1962-84: 200-202.

AIDS

Mr. Rost: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what are the individual percentages in the high-risk groups, intravenous drug abusers, promiscuous male homosexuals and haemophiliacs, who have been identified as having antibodies to HIV but who have not developed AIDS or ARC;

(2) to what factors his Department and its medical advisers attribute differences in the percentages of people in the high risk AIDS groups, intravenous drug abusers, promiscuous male homosexuals and haemophiliacs, who are HIV positive and who then fail to become actively ill.

Mr. Newton: Available evidence suggests that the most important factor determining the percentage of HIV positive people who become actively ill is the passage of time. The earlier infections are likely to have been principally among homosexual men, and a higher percentage of infected men in this group have become ill than is the case for haemophiliacs or for intravenous drug abusers.

Research into the possible effect of other factors is in progress, but results are not yet available.

The names of those tested for HIV are not routinely submitted to the surveillance centres. It is not therefore possible to determine, in the data submitted to the national surveillance centres, which people known to be HIV positive developed AIDS.

Family Credit

Mr. Clay: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many family credit applications were outstanding at 30 June.

Mr. Portillo: A total of 73,383, which included 29,000 claims where initial action had commenced but replies to inquiries were awaited.

Mr. Clay: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the average time being taken to process and complete family credit assessments *(a)* nationally and *(b)* by Department of Health and Social Security region.

Mr. Portillo: The most recent information is derived from a small-scale sample of cases cleared in week commencing 20 June and indicated an average clearance

Single Payments

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many single payment applications were made to each local office of his Department in Coventry between 1 January and the date when the scheme ended; how much money was paid out between those dates; how many applications are still pending; how much money has been paid since the closing date for receipt of single payment applications, to date; when he expects all outstanding applications to be determined; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: The Department has two local offices in Coventry—Coventry, East and West. The latest available information is given in the table. The figures are provisional and subject to amendment.

	Coventry, East	*Coventry, West*
Number of decisions on single payment claims 13 January 1988 to 8 April 1988	3,605	2,203
Amount paid 13 January 1988 to 8 April 1988	£328,218	£175,915
Claims awaiting action on 30 June 1988	4,440	382
Amount paid 9 April 1988 to 31 May 1988	£121,428	£389,184

Local offices do not count claims received; instead the number of decisions made is recorded. One application may produce a number of different decisions.

Coventry, East anticipates clearing all cases awaiting action within the next four weeks, and Coventry, West by early autumn.

Bioplan Holdings plc and Kingston Hospital

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement about the joint venture between Bioplan Holdings plc and Kingston hospital.

Mrs. Currie: I understand Kingston and Esher health authority is considering a joint venture with Bioplan Holdings plc. We welcome collaboration between the NHS and the private sector where this is a cost-effective means of providing services. The hon. Member may wish to contact the chairman of Kingston and Esher health authority for further information.

NATIONAL FINANCE

EC (Farm Support Policies)

Mr. Andrew Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what response he has made to the representations made to him at the conference organised by the Trade Policy Research Centre and the Centre for International Economics in Canberra, Australia, relating to the alleged loss of 1 million jobs in Britain as a consequence of the EEC farm support policies; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lilley: I was privileged to address the Trade Policy Research Centre conference on 4 May 1988 which considered a multinational study of the burden to consumers, taxpayers and employment of agricultural protection policies in many different countries. I am placing in the House of Commons Library a copy of my speech to that conference.

Government Expenditure

Mr. Andrew Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what is the percentage of value added by the farming industry which is accounted for by public money;

(2) what is the percentage of value added by the manufacturing industry which is accounted for by public money;

(3) what is the percentage of value added by the service industry which is accounted for by public money;

(4) what is the percentage of value added by the coal industry which is accounted for by public money.

Mr. John Major: The table shows general Government expenditure in each sector as a percentage of each sector's contribution to gross domestic product. The information is drawn from the United Kingdom national accounts 1987 (CSO) except for the coal industry figures, which are based on Treasury estimates. I regret that more recent compatible data are not yet available. The information is subject to revision.

The figures for agriculture underestimate the true level of support, as they relate solely to expenditure by the Government and by the European Community and do not include costs borne by the consumer of holding CAP support prices above the levels obtainable on world markets. These agricultural estimates, together with those for the coal industry, are further understated because they are calculated using gross domestic product based on United Kingdom supported prices rather than value added at world market prices.

The figure for the c[illegible] industry in 1984 is heavily distorted by the loss in output resulting from the miners' strike.

General Government expenditure as a percentage of gross domestic product by industry grouping

	1983	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*
Agriculture, forestry and fishing	46	35	48	41
Mining and mineral resources (excluding fuels), manufacturing and construction	4	3	3	2
Transport and communications, distribution, hotels and catering, banking, finance and business services	10	8	8	6
Coal and coke supply	27	68	20	22

Balance of Payments

Ms. Quin: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will give, for each year since 1983, the annual balance of payments figure; and if he will indicate what his estimate is now for the current year.

Mr. Major: I give the historical figures as follows:

	Current account balances £ billion
1983	3·7
1984	2·0
1985	3·3
1986	0·1
1987	−1·6

Source: DTI Monthly Review of External Trade Statistics.

As my right hon. Friend has already said, recent figures suggest that the current account deficit in 1988 will be larger than the £4 billion forecast at the time of the Budget.

Unit Labour Costs

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the current level of increase in unit labour costs.

Mr. Major: The latest figures show that in the fourth quarter of 1987 unit labour costs for the whole economy rose by 3·9 per cent. over the previous year. In the three months ending April 1988, manufacturing unit wage and salary costs rose by 3·2 per cent. over the previous year.

Departmental Budgeting

Mr. David Martin: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what progress has been made in implementing the recommendations of the multi-department review of budgeting following the then Chief Secretary's announcement of 29 April 1986, *Official Report*, column *371*.

Mr. Major: Departments were asked to draw up action plans for achieving the four principles highlighted by my predecessor and by the Prime Minister in her foreword to the 1986 report. A report has been prepared which shows that, overall, Departments have made good progress in implementing its recommendations. Thirteen Departments have arrangements in place which meet all four of the principles in respect of all or nearly all of their running costs and programme expenditure. Another 16 have satisfactory arrangements for at least two of the four principles. In a number of Departments further work needs to be done, particularly in the field of output and performance measures, as a contribution to the continuing drive to improve financial management. This work will provide an important contribution to the development of policy and resource frameworks for executive agencies under the arrangements announced by the Prime Minister on 18 February 1988 at column 1149.

I am today arranging for copies of the second report on the implementation of the recommendations of the multi-department review of budgeting to be placed in the Library of the House.

EC Budget

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the E[illegible]hequer if he will publish a revised table of the estimated o[illegible]rn of the United Kingdom's net contribution to the European Economic Community in 1987-88, in the light of the decisions of the February European Council; and if he will identify the changes of policy which relate to the change in this estimate by comparison with the £1,400 million referred to on page 33 of the public expenditure White Paper.

Mr. Brooke: The revised table is set out. It shows that the provisional outturn for our net payments to Community institutions in 1987-88 is £1,649 million. The increase compared with the White Paper estimate arose because the White Paper assumed the 1988 budget would be adopted before the end of the 1987-88 financial year, whereas in the event the Community had to operate on provisional twelfths until the budget's adoption on 1 June. This meant higher VAT contributions and a smaller abatement (that is abatement at the rate in the 1987 budget and not at the much higher rate in the 1988 one) during the last quarter of 1987-88.

	million £[1]
Gross payments	4,906
Public sector receipts	−1,958
VAT abatements	−1,137
Net contribution to EC budget	1,811
Contributions to EIB	10
ECSC grants	−58
Payments to EC budget attributed to the aid programme	−114
Net payments to EC institutions	1,649

[1] Provisional outturn.

EC (Expenditure)

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his latest estimate of the cash spent by the European Economic Community in 1987; and what was the budget estimate for that year.

Mr. Brooke: Provision for payment appropriations in the 1987 amending and supplementary budget number 1 is 36,168 mecu, about £24,325 million at current rates of exchange. According to the Commission's revenue and expenditure account and balance sheet (Com(88)212) outturn expenditure in 1987 was 35,469 mecu (£23,855 million).

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the estimated expenditure of the European Economic Community in 1988 and 1989, respectively.

Mr. Brooke: Provision for payment appropriations in the preliminary draft supplementary and amending budget number 1 for 1988 is 43,820 mecu, about £29,500 million at current rates of exchange. The provisional figure likely to be included in the 1989 preliminary draft budget is 46,462 mecu (£31,250 million).

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if the 25 per cent. increase in European Economic Community resources following the recent decisions of the European Council include the extra resources provided in the interim by the intergovernmental agreement; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: Yes. I refer my hon. Friend to my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister's reply to him today.

Public Expenditure (Cash Limits)

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table, showing for the years 1975-76 to 1990-91, the proportion of each public expenditure programme which is cash-limited.

Mr. Major *[holding answer 27 June 1988]:* The proportion of expenditure in each public expenditure programme subject to cash limit control is shown in the table for the years 1982-83 to 1988-89.

The data in this table are consistent with outturns and plans published in the 1988 public expenditure White Paper (Cm. 288) apart from a number of minor reallocations made subsequent to the publication of Cm. 288. The outturn figures in the table for years prior to 1988-89 have been reclassified where necessary to align with the application of cash limit controls planned for 1988-89, in order to present a comparable sequence of data.

Payments of rate support grant made to local authorities in England, Scotland and Wales are also subject to cash limits although they do not directly score in the planning total.

Due to changes in the application of cash limit control from year to year, it is not practical to present a consistent series going back to 1975-76. Cash limits have not yet been set for years after 1988-89.

Percentage of expenditure on Departmental programmes subject to cash limits

percentages

	1982-83 outturn	*1983-84 outturn*	*1984-85 outturn*	*1985-86 outturn*	*1986-87 outturn*	*1987-88 estimated outturn*	*1988-89 plans*
Defence	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Overseas services	62	56	54	54	49	46	58
Agriculture, fisheries, food and forestry	25	22	22	19	25	21	23
Trade, industry, energy and employment	41	49	42	59	69	87	88
Arts and libraries	44	44	45	45	47	47	47
Roads and transport	38	41	41	39	39	41	41
Housing	48	62	63	58	47	44	56
Other environmental services	32	30	32	30	27	24	21
Law, order and protective services	36	38	36	37	37	39	40
Education and science	19	19	19	19	18	18	18
Health and personal social services	67	66	66	66	65	65	65
Social security	2	2	2	2	2	3	3
Miscellaneous	58	81	80	78	61	59	55
Scotland	42	42	41	43	43	44	45
Wales	43	46	43	44	44	46	47
Northern Ireland	46	47	46	45	49	49	49
Total departmental programmes	38	40	39	39	39	39	39

NORTHERN IRELAND

Housing Transfers

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many persons are listed by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive as seeking transfer or exchange from their present accommodation in Rathcoole, Carrickfergus and Larne offices of the Housing Executive; and how many transfers requests have been satisfied in each of the last three years at each of the above offices.

Mr. Needham: This is a matter for the Northern Ireland Housing Executive. I understand from the chief executive that the information is as follows:

District Area	*Tenants*[1]	*Allocations made from transfer list (including exchanges)* 1985-86	1986-87	1987-88
Newtownabbey 1 (Rathcoole)	637	218	213	195
Carrickfergus	551	155	192	146
Larne	390	104	105	104

[1] Seeking transfer or exchange at June 1988.

Car Thefts

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many cars have been stolen from DOE Northern Ireland car parks in Belfast since 1 January.

Mr. Needham: Sixty-eight cars have been reported stolen from the Department's attended car parks in Belfast since 1 January 1988.

Mr. Roy Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, if he will provide control barriers at entrances and exists to those DOE(NI) car parks to prevent unauthorised removal of cars.

Mr. Needham: Department of the Environment charged car parks in Belfast are barrier-operated. Outside Belfast most of the Department's charged car parks are operated by the pay and display system. There are no plans at present to convert these to barrier operation.

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish the duties of attendants at DOE (NI) car parks with particular reference to monitoring care of vehicles and follow-up action by DOE (NI) in respect of a car theft from any of its car parks.

Mr. Needham: The Department of the Environment does not have responsibility for the safeguarding from theft of vehicles using its car parks. The Department nevertheless expects its attendants and those employed by its agents to notify the police in the event of a theft and to inform the Department of such incidents.

Car Parks

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many car parks DOE (NI) controls within Belfast's city limits; and how many parking places are provided at these car parks.

Mr. Needham: The Department of the Environment for Northern Ireland is responsible for 38 car parks containing a total of 3,770 parking places within Belfast city limits.

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will instal telephones in the office at each attended car park to ensure that attendants can quickly obtain assistance when cars are being interfered with.

Mr. Needham: Telephones are installed selectively at car parks where the greatest incidence of thefts of vehicles has occurred. There are no plans to instal telephones at all car parks.

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what relative priority is given by his Department to *(a)* raising additional revenue from car parks and *(b)* providing safe controlled parking.

Mr. Needham: The Department of the Environment's main priority is to contribute to traffic management through the provision of orderly and controlled car parking facilities rather than raising additional revenue. The Department does not accept responsibility for the problem of parked vehicles.

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will take steps to protect the interests of those who require all-day parking in Belfast arising from business operations in the city.

Mr. Needham: The Department of the Environment does not accept responsibility for the protection of parked vehicles. The Department nevertheless takes selective measures to safeguard car parks under its control.

Navan Fort

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what plans currently exist to enhance Navan fort as a tourist attraction.

Mr. Needham: In 1986 various interests including DOE (Northern Ireland) came together to form the Navan fort initiative group, under the chairmanship of the vice-chancellor of Queen's University, to consider the best future for Navan and its area. With help from the International Fund and Northern Ireland Tourist Board the group has commissioned a feasibility study, to be completed shortly. This will consider all aspects—economic, social, tourism, academic, physical, financial—and suggest ways of developing and managing the monument and area.

Betting and Gaming

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if the definition of "society" in the Betting, Gaming, Lotteries and Amusements (Northern Ireland) Order 1985 includes political parties in this classification.

Mr. Needham: This is a matter for determination by the courts on the facts and circumstances of particular cases.

Irish Language

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish a list of all Northern Ireland schools and colleges in which the Irish/Gaelic language is taught.

Dr. Mawhinney: The Department of Education does not hold a definitive list of Northern Ireland schools and colleges in which Irish/Gaelic language is taught. Accurate information could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Voluntary Maintained Schools (Trustees)

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what action he proposes to take regarding the position of trustees of voluntary maintained schools who under paragraphs 57 to 67 of the White Paper on education will have their school properties confiscated without compensation or consultation, if governors and parents elect to apply for grant maintained status.

Dr. Mawhinney: No decisions will be reached on matters raised in the consultative document on education reform until all representations have been fully considered. The consultative document does, however, indicate that trustee appointees would comprise at least half of the membership of the board of governors of a grant-maintained school and that any legislation would ensure that the religious ethos of a school would not be changed at the time when it became grant-maintained.

Public Expenditure Survey

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will provide a detailed breakdown for the years 1982-83 to 1990-91, by nature of item and functional area of charge, of the receipts to his programme classified as charges for the purposes of the public expenditure survey.

Mr. Stanley: The table shows for the years 1982-83 to 1990-91 the income from charges to the Northern Ireland programme. The figures are consistent with those given in the answer the hon. Member received from my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary to the Treasury on 27 May

1988, at columns *375-76*, and relate to receipts in respect of programme expenditure; receipts in respect of running costs expenditure are not included.

Public expenditure: Charges 1982-83 to 1990-91[1]

£ million

	1982-83	*1983-84*	*1984-85*	*1985-86*	*1986-87*	*1987-88*	*1988-89*	*1989-90*	*1990-91*
Agriculture, Fishery and Forestry Support—									
Abbatoirs, Veterinary and Livestock Services and other Agricultural Support	2	6	7	6	6	4	4	4	4
Industry, Energy, Trade and Employment—									
Tourism	3	1	1	1	1	—	—	—	—
Environmental and Miscellaneous Services—									
Health Inspection	2	3	3	3	3	3	4	4	4
Building Regulations	2	3	3	3	4	4	4	4	4
Administration and Miscellaneous	2	3	3	3	4	4	4	4	4
Refuse Collection	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Other	1	1	2	2	2	2	1	2	2
Law, Order and Protective Services—									
Police	13	16	17	19	21	23	17	18	19
Education and Science, Arts and Libraries—									
School Meals	9	9	8	9	9	9	9	10	10
Youth, Sport and Allied Services	5	5	5	6	7	9	9	10	10
Health and Personal Social Services—									
Hospital and Community Health Services	14	14	11	12	12	14	14	15	15
Family Practitioner Service	8	8	8	8	9	9	10	10	11
Personal Social Services	3	3	2	3	3	3	3	3	3
Total Programme[2]	66	72	72	75	81	83	81	84	87

[1] Figures in the table are consistent with Cm288.

[2] Individual figures may not sum to totals because of roundings.

Housing Executive

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if, further to his answers to the hon. Member for Londonderry, East regarding Housing Executive contracts on 23 March, *Official Report,* column *169,* and 29 April, *Official Report,* columns *304-6,* he will indicate the reasons why the sums due to the contractors for contract A were not paid on a monthly basis as per normal contract conditions and why payment of £72,886 was not paid for 17 months after the end of the contract period; if he will show for that contract how much of the sums due at the end of each month were paid, and how much not paid or as much of such information as is available to him; and if he will show for that contract the contract price, the total sums actually paid to complete the contract, including sums awarded at arbitration, the date of final payment and the date of practical completion.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 21 June 1988]:* This is a matter for the Northern Ireland Housing Executive but I have been advised by the chief executive that payments were generally made in accordance with the tems of contract. In most cases payments were made monthly and in all but two cases payments were made within 14 days of amounts due being agreed with the contractor. No sums due were deliberately withheld and no amount of £72,886 was withheld for 17 months after the end of the contract period. Payments were made to the contractor during this period as the final account was progressively agreed. The other details requested are:

1. Contract price: £147,636·96.
2. Total sums paid to complete the contract, including sums awarded at arbitration: £261,359·00.
3. Date of final payment: 30 May 1986.
4. Date of practical completion: 22 January 1982.

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, further to his answers to the hon. Member for Londonderry, East of 29 April, *Official Report,* columns *305-6,* if he will indicate the costs to the Housing Executive for in-house work and for work carried out externally, in respect of the four arbitrations referred to, and in respect of *(a)* clerks of works, *(b)* legal fees, *(c)* technical costs and *(d)* staff costs.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 21 June 1988]:* This is a matter for the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, but I have been advised by the chief executive that the cost of work carried out by in-house staff in respect of the four arbitrations cannot be identified.

The following external costs were incurred:

Contract	*(a)* £	*(b)* £	*(c)* £	*(d)* £
Legal Fees	6,835·60	4,611·03	3,189·50	5,546·12
Technical Costs	4,856·40	Nil	2,018·49	3,449·93

Michael Tighe

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what action he intends to take to ensure that the Chief Constable of the Royal Ulster Constabulary makes available immediately to the coroner for Armagh all the evidence necessary for the inquest into the death of Michael Tighe at Ballyneery, County Armagh in 1982.

Mr. Tom King *[holding answer 4 July 1988]:* It is the responsibility of the Chief Constable to provide the necessary evidence to the coroner, and the responsibility of the coroner to satisfy himself as to its sufficiency and availability.

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will call for a report from the Chief Constable of the Royal Ulster Constabulary as to the reasons why all the evidence necessary for the inquest into the death of Michael Tighe, killed at Ballyneery in 1982, has not yet been made available to the coroner for Armagh and as to how many requests for this information have been received by the Chief Constable from the coroner and on what dates; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Tom King *[holding answer 4 July 1988]:* The queston of the provision of evidence for inquests is a matter between the coroner and the Chief Constable. I am advised that some material has already been provided and that more will follow as soon as possible.

Housing Order (Code of Guidance)

Mr. Hume: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what provisions are being made for a publicly accessible code of guidance in relation to the Housing (NI) Order; and if there will be full consultation with interested agencies before such a code is published.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 6 July 1988]:* It is intended that a code of practice and guidance on the operation of the homelessness provisions in the Draft Housing (Northern Ireland) Order should be drawn up by the Housing Executive in conjunction with other statutory bodies and made widely available. Interested agencies will be consulted on the proposed content of the code of practice and guidance and a seminar will be arranged later this year to give interested groups an opportunity to express their views on the operation of the homelessness legislation.

Homelessness

Mr. Hume: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is his estimate of the number of households which will present themselves as homeless to the Housing Executive in 1989-90 and 1993-94, and of the proportion of such households for whom the Housing Executive will have a statutory obligation to provide accommodation.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 6 July 1988]:* The best estimate of the number of households who currently present themselves as homeless is the total number of applicants who qualify for the award of A1 status (ie in emergency need of accommodation) under the Northern Ireland Housing Executive's housing selection scheme. In 1987 this number was 2,200. The number who had temporary accommodation arranged or provided by the area health and social services boards was 587 in 1986 (the latest year for which statistics are available). I have no reason to believe that the number of persons presenting themselves as homeless will, after an initial period following the introduction of the proposed new legislation, increase significantly.

Mr. Hume: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement regarding proposals for a housing (NI) order outlining under what circumstances a single person who as a result of sectarian intimidation has no accommodation in which they can reasonably be expected to reside will be regarded as *(a)* homeless and *(b)* in priority need of accommodation.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 6 June 1988]:* Housing problems arising from sectarian intimidation are already dealt with satisfactorily by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive under its housing selection scheme, and in the case of owner occupiers under the scheme for the purchase of evacuated dwellings (SPED). These arrangements apply to all householders including single people. Apart from providing a statutory framework for SPED, the Draft Housing (Northern Ireland) Order will not affect these arrangements.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

European Council

17. **Mr. Conway:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what he expects to be the key agricultural decisions reached during the Greek presidency of the European Council.

Mr. MacGregor: I expect the Greek presidency to be concerned with the continuing implementation of the decisions on agriculture of the European Council in Brussels in February. I understand that it would wish to make progress in a number of specific areas, including direct income aids and Community structural measures.

Whaling

18. **Mr. Knowles:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what part the United Kingdom delegation played in the recent discussions at the International Whaling Commission.

Mr. Gummer: The United Kingdom continued to play a leading role within the International Whaling Commission and decisions were taken to strengthen and improve the conservation of the world's whale stocks. In particular, we sponsored a resolution which improves the procedure for the review of scientific research whaling programmes and co-sponsored resolutions recommending Norway and Iceland to reconsider their proposed programme.

25. **Mr. Greg Knight:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what he expects to be the effect of the recent agreement by the International Whaling Commission.

Mr. Gummer: At the recent annual meeting the International Whaling Commission took decisions which will further strengthen the conservation of whale stocks. The three resolutions, sponsored or co-sponsored by the United Kingdom, on whaling for scientific research, together with the rejection of Japan's request to continue her coastal whaling operations in 1988, enforce the Commission's important moratorium decision.

73. **Mr. Brazier:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what pressure the United Kingdom delegation was able to bring on the positions of other delegations at the International Whaling Commission, particularly the Japanese, Icelandic and Norwegian delegations.

Mr. Gummer: The United Kingdom delegation to the 40th annual meeting of the International Whaling Commission played a full and leading role on all issues. In particular, we sponsored a successful resolution to improve procedures for the consideration of any mid-year proposals for research whaling programmes, and we co-sponsored resolutions asking Norway and Iceland to reconsider their proposed programmes. The United Kingdom also highlighted the commercial aspects of Japanese coastal whaling and was among the majority rejecting Japan's request for these operations to take 210 minke whales in 1988.

75. **Mr. Bellingham:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the policy adopted by the Faroese delegation at the International Whaling Commission talks.

Mr. Gummer: At the recent International Whaling Commission (IWC) annual meeting, Denmark, which acts on behalf of the Faroe Islands in the IWC, provided a report, as requested, on measures taken to make the killing methods in the Faroese pilot whale hunts more humane. Denmark then reserved her position on any future discussion of this topic given her view that the IWC does not have any competence in respect of small cetaceans like the pilot whale. The United Kingdom is clear that pilot whales are covered by the convention and we recommend to press for more humane methods of killing to be used in the Faroes.

Meat and Livestock Commission

19. **Mr. Nicholas Baker:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he last met the chairman of the Meat and Livestock Commission; and what was discussed.

Mr. Donald Thompson: My right hon. Friend and I maintain regular contacts with the chairman of the Meat and Livestock Commission to discuss matters of mutual interest.

EEC Surpluses

20. **Mr. Nellist:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what are the latest figures for storage, by type and value, of EEC surpluses in Coventry, Nuneaton and Warwick warehouses; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: As at 31 May 1988, stocks and values were as follows:

	Coventry	*Nuneaton*	*Warwick*
Cereals			
Tonnes	26,184	0	0
Value	£2,165,417	—	—
Beef			
Tonnes	0	0	28
Value	—	—	£57,715
Butter			
Tonnes	0	955	234
Value	—	£1,870,825	£458,401
Skimmed Milk Powder			
Tonnes	0	0	0
Value	—	—	—

Chernobyl

21. **Miss Emma Nicholson:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what evidence he has to show that the food chain was fully protected in the period immediately after the Chernobyl incident.

Mr. Gummer: Full compendia of the results of the Department's extensive monitoring programme have been published and copies are in the Library of the House. This work has been backed up by dietary surveys and independent whole-body monitoring programmes in various parts of the country. Considered alongside the controls introduced on the movement and slaughter of sheep in certain areas, these fully demonstrate the excellent protection afforded to consumers both at home and abroad in relation to United Kingdom food protection.

45. **Mr. Cox:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the estimated number of animals still affected by radioactivity in the United Kingdom following the Chernobyl accident.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The restrictions imposed following the Chernobyl accident now apply to some 650,000 sheep in the United Kingdom.

Monetary Compensatory Amounts

22. **Mr. Boswell:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on progress in eliminating monetary compensatory amounts affecting United Kingdom farms.

71. **Mr. Nicholas Bennett:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the negotiations for changes in the value of monetary compensatory amounts.

92. **Mr. Gale:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what further steps he envisages being taken on the green pound between the present time and 1992.

96. **Sir Peter Emery:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what recent steps he has taken to bring about the full devaluation of the green pound.

Mr. MacGregor: As the next stage in dismantling MCAs by 1992, the recent Council of Ministers meeting agreed, as part of the price fixing and following United Kingdom pressure, that the green pound will be devalued on 1 January 1989 so as to reduce United Kingdom MCAs by 3·2 points. It was also agreed that the Commission should now examine the measures to adopt for future stages.

Countryside Commission

23. **Mr. Burns:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he last met the chairman of the Countryside Commission; and what was discussed.

Mr. MacGregor: My last formal meeting with Sir Derek Barber was on 11 February, but my right hon. Friend and I have many informal contacts with him.

White Fish (Quotas)

24. **Mr. Mans:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement with regard to the white fish quotas off the west coast for the rest of the current year.

Mr. Gummer: White fish quotas off the west coast will continue to be managed under the existing arrangements and in full consultation with the industry.

Farm Inspectors

26. **Mr. Leadbitter:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many farm inspectors were employed by the Agricultural Development and Advisory Service in 1987; and what is the figure for the current year.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Officers of the Agricultural Development and Advisory Service visit farms for a variety of purposes, including the provision of technical advice to farmers at their request as well as for certain statutory purposes. There is no distinct category of ADAS farm inspectors as such.

Cereals

27. **Miss Lestor:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the expected size of cereal surpluses in *(a)* the United States of America and *(b)* the EEC in 1988; and what is the expected effect on the world price of cereals.

Mr. MacGregor: It is too early to make a realistic assessment of the size of United States and EEC cereals harvests and the implications for cereals prices.

72. **Mr. Teddy Taylor:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if the proposals agreed by 11 member states at the recent Council meeting on the 1988-89 price review were designed to curb cereal production; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. MacGregor: The agreement reached by 11 member states on the 1988-89 price-fixing proposals contains some further steps to restrain cereal production. However, it has to be seen in the light of the European Council agreement in February which provides for cumulative price cuts of up to 12 per cent. over the next four years, as well as an additional 3 per cent. co-responsibility levy. These measures are clearly designed to curb cereals production.

57. **Mr. Tredinnick:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether, in the light of the drought in the United States of America, he will be seeking the lifting by the EEC Commission of the 160 million tonne ceiling placed on cereal producers.

Mr. MacGregor: No. It is too early to make any realistic assessment either of the impact of the current drought in north america or of the likely level of the Community cereals harvest. However, even if reduced cereal supplies in north America lead to increased export opportunities for Community cereals, it remains probable that the supply of cereals in the Community will considerably exceed demand for Community cereals, particularly if intervention stocks are taken into account.

58. **Mr. Yeo:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations he has received regarding his proposals for the cereals set-aside scheme.

68. **Mr. Chapman:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations he has received from environmental bodies to his recent set-aside proposals; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. MacGregor: I have received comments from many quarters and welcome the widespread interest which has been shown in this new scheme.

Horses

28. **Sir Michael McNair-Wilson:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food in what circumstances he treats a horse as an agricultural animal.

Mr. Gummer: A horse is treated as an agricultural animal when it is kept for agricultural work.

Pollution

29. **Mr. Cummings:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he next hopes to meet representatives of the farming unions to discuss pollution issues; and if he will make a statement.

70. **Mr. Ingram:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he next plans to meet representatives of the farming unions to discuss pollution issues; and if he will make a statement.

83. **Mr. McKelvey:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what discussions he is having with the National Farmers Union about reducing pollution in fresh water arising from agricultural activities.

Mr. MacGregor: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given earlier today to the hon. Member for Sheffield, Attercliffe (Mr. Duffy).

74. **Mr. Boyes:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement about farm pollution incidents in the Yorkshire water authority region in 1987.

Mr. Gummer: The numbers of farm pollution incidents rose by over one third in the Yorkshire water authority region between 1986 and 1987. Although the number of serious cases in the region showed a decline over the same period, there is no room for complacency. Grant aid to help with projects for waste disposal has been increasingly taken up in recent years and this has proved helpful, but the whole industry must take even more seriously the effect of pollution on the environment. The Government will shortly be announcing some new measures which should help reduce the number of pollution incidents.

81. **Ms. Walley:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement about farm pollution incidents in the Severn-Trent water authority region in 1987.

Mr. Gummer: Farm pollution incidents in the Severn Trent water authority region increased by 19 per cent. last year with the number of serious cases up from 92 in 1986 to 130 in 1987. The number of cases brought before the courts also rose from 12 to 54. I fully support the more active policy being followed by the water authority of bringing such offenders to book. The polluting farmer damages his neighbours as well as the watercourse, and undoes all the good which their proper management of farm waste achieves. The Government will shortly be announcing some new measures which should help reduce the number of such incidents.

Less-favoured Areas

30. **Mr. Livsey:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the present state of farming in the less-favoured areas.

Mr. Kennedy: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the current levels of income within the hill farming sector.

Mr. MacGregor: We shall shortly be embarking on the normal autumn review of economic conditions in the hills and uplands. I expect to make a statement on the outcome of the review later in the year.

64. **Mr. Martyn Jones:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he next intends to meet representatives of the farming unions to discuss the redesignation of less-favoured areas.

Mr. Gummer: I have no immediate plans to meet representatives of the farming unions to discuss this matter.

Arable Land

31. **Mr. Ronnie Campbell:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the area of arable land *(a)* inside and *(b)* outside the less-favoured areas in England and Wales at the latest available date.

Mr. MacGregor: The latest information available is as follows:

	Hectares
Arable land on	
Lfa holdings in England and Wales	413,000
Non-lfa holdings in England and Wales	5,168,000

Pig Production

32. **Mr. Martlew:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations he has received concerning the Farm Animal Welfare Council's report on pig production systems; and if he will make a statement.

36. **Mr. Vaz:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations he has received concerning the Farm Animal Welfare Council's report on pig production systems; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The Government have consulted interested parties on the Farm Animal Welfare Council's report. Replies have already been received from a wide range of organisations and more are expected. No decisions will be taken on the council's recommendations until these comments have been fully considered.

Pigs

33. **Mr. Steinberg:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what has been the pattern of growth in the national pig herd in recent years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The information is given in the table.

United Kingdom pig herd (thousand head)[1]

	[2] *April*	[3] *June*	[2] *August*	[3] *December*
1984	7,546	7,689	7,649	7,793
1985	7,933	7,865	7,958	7,930
1986	8,052	7,937	8,017	7,955
1987	8,300	[4]7,906	7,988	7,915
1988	7,980	—	—	—

[1] The figures in each column denote the total size of the herd for the month in question.

[2] Pig Survey Returns—United Kingdom

[3] Agricultural Census for the United Kingdom

[4] Provisional figures

Ancient Monuments

34. **Mr. John M. Taylor:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what advice he gives to farmers with ancient monuments on their land who are anxious about trespass and damage.

Mr. Gummer: Officers of my Department's Agricultural Development and Advisory Service give advice, on request, to farmers with ancient monuments on their land, who are anxious about trespass and damage. The content of such advice will depend on the individual characteristics of the site concerned. If my hon. Friend is aware of any particular problem relating to ancient monuments on farm land, I would be very willing to look into it.

Brewers (Tenancies)

35. **Sir John Farr:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what action he is taking in relation to representations made to him by the National Association of Licensed Victuallers, in relation to its request asking him to encourage brewers to include an agreed code of practice in future tenancy agreements between brewery companies and their tenants.

Mr. Donald Thompson: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply which I gave to my hon. Friend for Leeds, North-West (Dr. Hampson) on 14 June 1988 at column *135*.

Irradiated Food

37. **Ms. Ruddock:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, pursuant to his answer of 9 June, *Official Report*, column 970, if he will make a statement on the progress of his inquiry into irradiated food dumping on Third-world countries.

Mr. Gummer: I understand that the hon. Member is referring to food which could be affected post Chernobyl. I am quite satisfied that all United Kingdom produce remained perfectly safe to eat following the Chernobyl accident, and that this applied just as much to supplies for export as to foodstuffs consumed in this country.

Council for Agriculture Ministers

38. **Dr. Thomas:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he next hopes to meet his counterparts in the European Community; and what matters he hopes to discuss.

Mr. MacGregor: The next Council of Agriculture Ministers is scheduled to meet in Brussels on 18 and 19 July, to discuss various agricultural issues.

48. **Mr. Heathcoat-Amory:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he last attended a meeting of the European Council of Agriculture Ministers; and what subjects were discussed.

65. **Mr. Clelland:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what recent discussions he has had about the common agricultural policy with other EC Agriculture Ministers.

89. **Mr. Spearing:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement concerning the outcome of the last meeting of the Agriculture Ministers of the European Economic Community.

Mr. MacGregor: I refer the hon. Members to the replies I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Daventry (Mr. Boswell) on Monday 27 June, at columns *91-92*, and to my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, West (Mr. McLoughlin) on 20 June, at columns *425-26*.

Retirement Tenancies

39. **Mr. Ken Hargreaves:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is his policy on retirement tenancies; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. MacGregor: The Agricultural Holdings Act 1984 introduced retirement tenancies on statutory smallholdings. If there was sufficient agreement on proposals for retirement tenancies on other holdings and that they would be likely to have a worthwhile effect in practice, I should certainly be willing to consider them.

Industrial Dredging

40. **Mr. David Porter:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what controls are applied to ensure that the nature of the sea-bed and fish breeding grounds are not changed by industrial dredging; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: Licences, issued by the Crown Estate Commissioners, to extract material state the precise location within which dredging is permitted, and the maximum quantities which may be extracted. Where necessary, additional controls can be applied, including a maximum depth for dredging, restrictions on the time of year for dredging, and a ban on discharge of fine material if adjacent shellfish deposits or spawning grounds might be blanketed. The controls applied in a particular case will be designed to allow recolonisation of the seabed once extraction has finished and to prevent dredging damaging sensitive fisheries.

Coastal Erosion

41. **Mr. Holt:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what plans he has to visit Langbaurgh to discuss coastal erosion; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: I have no plans to visit Langbaurgh to discuss coastal erosion. I understand that the borough council is considering a coast protection scheme for its area; and any proposal it makes to me will be considered as quickly and sympathetically as possible.

Country Landowners Association

42. **Mr. David Davis:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he last met the president of the Country Landowners Association; and what was discussed.

Mr. MacGregor: I last met the president of the Country Landowners Association on 25 April, when we discussed agricultural research and development.

Horse Sales

43. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he expects to introduce the Department's code of practice for horse sales and markets; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The Government's response to the Farm Animal Welfare Council report on the welfare of livestock at markets, announced in October 1987, accepted that legislation should be introduced to cover horse markets and sales. This legislation, which will be introduced as an order made under the Animal Health Act 1981, will provide statutory safeguards. The code of practice referred to by my hon. Friend will provide supplementary guidance. Proposals for the new order and the code of practice will be issued shortly for public consultation.

Agriculture Workers Union

44. **Mr. Strang:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he last met representatives of the agriculture workers union; and what subjects were discussed.

Mr. Donald Thompson: I last met representatives of the agricultural and allied workers' national trade group on 18 November 1987, to discuss the poultry industry and associated health and safety matters.

ADAS

46. **Mr. McAllion:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he has had discussions with the National Farmers' Union about the future of the Agricultural Development and Advisory Service.

Mr. MacGregor: No.

Sheep

47. **Mr. Knapman:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food to what factors he attributes the 30 per cent. increase in sheep numbers since 1979.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The health and buoyancy of the sector is in large measure due to the efficiency of our industry, its export record, and the opportunities it has taken under the Community's sheepmeat regime which this Government negotiated prior to its introduction in 1980.

Bovine Somatotropin

49. **Mr. Morgan:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he has made an assessment of the economic consequences arising from the use of bovine somatotropin.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Assessments of the possible economic consequences of bovine somatotropin are possible only by making assumptions about the large number of uncertain factors involved. These include the longer term effects, world-wide, on milk yield potential, production costs, the pattern of uptake by producers, agricultural policy, alternative resouce use and consumer reactions. A discussion of some of the factors involved, and their implications, is contained in a paper given by Professor A. Buckwell at the 5th European congress of agricultural economists in September 1987. I am arranging for a copy to be sent to the hon. Member. The particular results outlined in that paper would of course differ if alternative assumptions were deployed.

67. **Mr. Litherland:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what discussions he has had with animal welfare organisations about the use of bovine somatotropin.

Mr. Donald Thompson: My officials and I have discussed the licensing procedures under the Medicines Act and the possible welfare implications of using bovine somatotropin with the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals and Compassion in World Farming.

Torry Research Station

50. **Mr. Buchan:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he last visited the Torry research station, Aberdeen; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: My right hon. Friend has not visited Torry research station; I visited the station in 1986 and hope to do so again this year.

Research and Development

51. **Mr. Wall:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what discussion he has had with the trade union movement about the future of research and development in agriculture and fisheries.

Mr. Donald Thompson: My noble Friend the Parliamentary Secretary has expressed her willingness to meet that part of the trade union movement which represents civil servants employed in research and development and agriculture, fisheries and food, when they wish.

61. **Mr. Gregory:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he has reached a decision on future funding of basic agricultural and food research and development.

66. **Mr. Worthington:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he expects to reach a decision on the future of research and development in agriculture.

82. **Mr. George Howarth:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what discussions he has had with the agriculture industry about the future funding of research and development in agriculture.

87. **Mr. Doran:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what proposals he has for the future funding of research and development in fishing.

Mr. Donald Thompson: No firm decisions have yet been taken following the recent internal review of expenditure by the Agricultural Departments on R and D but I shall inform the House of the outcome as soon as it is available. It remains our policy that the Government should be responsible for funding basic and strategic research as well as work in support of policy and statute, but that applied research likely to be of direct commercial benefit should be funded by industry. Against this background my right hon. Friend the Minister held a number of meetings with representatives of the agriculture, fisheries and food industries earlier in the year and my noble Friend the Parliamentary Secretary has recently begun a further series of meetings with the sectors concerned.

Council of Fisheries Ministers

52. **Dr. Moonie:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he last attended a meeting of the EEC Council of Fisheries Ministers; and if any agreement was reached concerning multiannual guidance programmes.

Mr. Gummer: No discussions took place on multiannual guidance programmes at the last Fisheries Council meeting on 23-24 June. The programmes were approved by the Standing Committee for Fisheries Structures in December 1987.

55. **Mr. Graham:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he last attended a meeting of the EEC Council of Fisheries Ministers; and if any decisions were taken concerning the pressure-stock licences scheme.

Mr. Gummer: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Waveney (Mr. Porter) on 24 June. The detailed management of national quotas is a matter for each member state, and there was therefore no discussion of the pressure stock licensing scheme at the council.

60. **Mr. Hood:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement concerning the outcome of the last meeting of the Fisheries Ministers of the European Economic Community.

Mr. Gummer: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to my Friend the Member for Waveney (Mr. Porter) on 24 June at column *747*.

Pesticides

53. **Mr. Evennett:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he has any plans to improve the existing controls on pesticide production and use.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The Control of Pesticides Regulations 1986 and their accompanying consents do not seek to impose controls on the production of pesticides, but control their advertisement, sale, supply, storage and use in Great Britain. Detailed controls on use are being introduced progressively. As from 1 January this year, conditions of use attached to individual product approvals were given the force of law. From 1 January next year certain users of specified pesticides will have to hold an appropriate, officially recognised, certificate of competence. I am satisfied that the introduction of these controls is resulting in higher standards of training and more care being taken in the use of pesticides and I have no plans for changing these basic arrangements.

Family Farms

54. **Mr. Alex Carlile:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will introduce a set of specific measures to asssit upland family farms of less than 50 hectares; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: All sizes of family farms in the less favoured areas already benefit from a range of measures, including particularly hill livestock compensatory allowances which are exclusive to the LFAs and which we extended to the upland areas in 1985.

Set-aside Scheme

56. **Mr. McCartney:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what he estimates to be the area of land within the less-favoured areas eligible to apply for grants under his recently announced set-aside scheme.

Mr. MacGregor: An area within less favoured areas in the United Kingdom amounting to about 450,000 hectares is eligible for set-aside provided it meets the requirements of the scheme.

80. **Mr. Win Griffiths:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement about progress on the implementation of the set-aside scheme in the United Kingdom.

Mr. MacGregor: The necessary statutory instrument has now been laid in draft. The scheme will start to operate as soon as parliamentary approval has been given.

85. **Mr. Colin Shepherd:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps he has taken to ensure that the set-aside proposals will have no adverse effect on farmers whose principal activity is in the sheep sector; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. MacGregor: It was precisely with the objective of avoiding adverse effects on sheep producers that I decided against taking up the option of permitting extensive grazing under the set-aside scheme.

Mr. Hunter: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on research into the implications for the environment of his recently announced set-aside scheme.

Mr. MacGregor: I attach considerable importance to establishing the impact of the set-aside scheme on the environment. Two scientific research projects are already being undertaken to this end.

Wheat

59. **Mr. John Carlisle:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what assessment he has made as to whether the reduction of 500,000 hectares of wheat production in Europe this season will keep production below the 160 million tonne target.

Mr. MacGregor: The latest forecast of area planted to wheat in the Community this year is 15·61 million hectares, 0·27 million hectares below the 1987 figure. It is too early to make a realistic assessment of the 1988 Community wheat harvest.

Intervention Board

62. **Mr. Fallon:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what assessment he has made of the benefits to agriculture of the current location of the Intervention Board for Agricultural Produce at Reading; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. MacGregor: The possibility of relocating the Intervention Board for Agricultural Produce was examined in 1986. The Government concluded that the benefits of relocation would be outweighed by the potential costs and that the Department should remain at Reading.

The location of all Government work is now regularly considered in the context of the public expenditure survey.

Wool Marketing Board

63. **Mr. John Greenway:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he last met the chairman of the Wool Marketing Board; and what was discussed.

Mr. Donald Thompson: I last met the chairman of the Wool Marketing Board on 1 February 1988 to review the prospects for the 1988 clip year and the level of the wool guarantee.

Women's Farmers Union

69. **Mr. McLoughlin:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he last met the president of the Women's Farmers Union; and what was discussed.

Mr. MacGregor: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer given to my hon. Friends the Members for Maidstone (Miss Widdecombe) and for Congleton (Mrs. Winterton) on 9 June 1988 at column *678*.

Price Fixing

76. **Mr. Latham:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the latest position regarding the price fixing.

Mr. MacGregor: Since I replied to my hon. Friend the Member for Daventry on 27 June, the Greeks have withdrawn their agreement to the price-fixing package. This was on the grounds that it was of vital national interest to them to reduce their negative MCAs from the present very high level, and that they had misunderstood what was proposed in the package for the green drachma. It has not so far been possible to resolve this problem.

Sea Fish Industry Authority

77. **Mr. McFall:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what recent discussions he has had with the fishing industry concerning the Sea Fish Industry Authority levy.

Mr. Gummer: The Sea Fish Industry Authority proposes to increase its levy with effect from 1 April 1989. It is currently discussing its idea with the sea fish industry before making a firm proposal in the autumn. I shall be informed of the industry's views once a formal proposal is made.

Potato Marketing Board

78. **Mrs. Gillian Shephard:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he last met the chairman of the Potato Marketing Board: and what was discussed.

Mr. Donald Thompson: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply which I gave my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, West (Mr. McLoughlin) on 9 June, at column *667*.

Intervention Stocks

79. **Mr Corbyn:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what has been the cost of storage of all intervention stocks in the United Kingdom in each year since 1983; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. MacGregor: The annual cost of storage (excluding finance charges) of intervention stocks in the United Kingdom since 1983 has been as follows:

Year	*£ million*
1983	48·2
1984	46·4
1985	106·1
1986	141·0
1987	105·6

Diversification

84. **Mr. Charles Wardle:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will take steps to ensure that as the need of farmers to diversify grows the Agricultural Development and Advisory Service will advise farmers on how to present plans to the local authority free of charge.

Mr. Gummer: General advice on diversification is provided free of charge by the Agricultural Development and Advisory Service. Although detailed advice on individual enterprises is chargeable, grants of 25 per cent. are available under the farm diversification grant scheme towards the cost of professional services, including chargeable ADAS advice, which has been incurred in securing necessary planning consent.

Environmental Protection

86. **Mr. Alan W. Williams:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the recently published European Commission report on safeguarding the environment under modern farming practices.

Mr. Gummer: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by my hon. Friend the Minister to the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) on 4 July 1988.

Sheepmeat

88. **Mr. Wigley:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations he has received concerning the review of the sheepmeat regime.

Mr. Donald Thompson: We have received representations from a wide range of interests on the various aspects of the Commission's proposals for reform of the sheepmeat regime.

Export Refunds

90. **Mr. Shersby:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps he is taking to ensure that companies in the food and drink industry are receiving prompt payment for export refunds from the Intervention Board for Agricultural Produce; and what arrangements he is making for payment on account until the payment difficulties are resolved.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Installation of the Intervention Board's new computerised export refund claims system has been subject to extended delivery delays and technical problems. These have significantly lengthened the payment times for export refunds so far this year. To overcome them, the board has progressively brought additional commodity sectors on to the system, transferred the system to a more powerful computer, strengthened its project management, and improved the speed and volume of processing and payment by hiring extra administrative staff and technical assistance. By these means the board plans to return to more normal payment times by the autumn. The board has also been examining payment on account arrangements, but these also present administrative and financial difficulties.

Research Stations

91. **Mr. Darling:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many persons are currently employed at his Department's research stations.

Mr. Donald Thompson: About 2,150.

National Farmers Union

93. **Mr. Anthony Coombs:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he last met the president of the National Farmers Union; and what matters were discussed.

94. **Mrs. Peacock:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he last met the president of the National Farmers Union; and what was discussed.

Mr. MacGregor: I last met the president of the National Farmers Union on 27 June when we discussed a wide variety of issues.

Milk Marketing Board

95. **Mr. Knox:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when next he is due to meet the chairman of the Milk Marketing Board to discuss the dairy sector.

Mr. Donald Thompson: I have regular contacts with the chairman of the Milk Marketing Board to discuss various issues affecting the dairy industry.

Algae

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what information he has on the outcome of the scientific symposium convened by the Federal Republic of Germany to consider the growth of algae in the North sea and Baltic sea on 23 and 24 June.

Mr. Moynihan: I have been asked to reply.

The international symposium held at Bonn on 23 and 24 June and organised by the Federal Republic of Germany considered a wide range of scientific papers relating to the recent growth of algal bloom off the Scandinavian coasts. It also considered the large number of seal deaths recently experienced in the Kattegat and Wadden sea. An official of my Department attended as an observer.

With regard to blooms, it was observed that while these are a regular and natural phenomenon in Scandinavian and other coastal waters, including those of the United Kingdom, the species involved in this case, Chrysochromulina, had not previously formed blooms. The area covered by bloom was also exceptional. The evidence available showed that nutrient levels in the bloom waters were low so that no direct link with nutrients can be made although there has been a long-term build-up of nutrient levels in these waters. The general view of the symposium was that physical and climatic conditions were more important influences.

With regard to seal deaths, the most favoured explanation for the deaths, since 12 April, of 1,300 animals out of a population of 16,000, was that of a viral infection. It was acknowledged that pollution was not a cause and there was no evidence to support a link with the algal bloom.

At the end of the symposium the Government of the Federal Republic of Germany drew up a number of recommendations, related to subjects discussed at the symposium such as nutrients, agricultural practices and research in the marine environment.

Public Expenditure Survey

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will provide a detailed breakdown for the years 1982-83 to 1990-91, by nature of item and functional area of charge, of the receipts to his programme classified as charges for the purposes of the public expenditure survey.

Mr. MacGregor: The following figures, which are consistent with those given by my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary to the Treasury on 27 May 1988, at columns *375-76*, relate to receipts in respect of programme expenditure for which the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food has responsibility in the public expenditure survey. Receipts in respect of running costs expenditure are not included.

Public Expenditure: Charges 1982-83 to 1990-91

	1982-83 outturn	*1983-84 outturn*	*1984-85 outturn*	*1985-86 outturn*	*1986-87 outturn*	*1987-88 estimated outturn*	*1988-89 plans*	*1989-90 plans*	*1990-91 plans*
Central Government									
Charges for seed certification, testing and plant breeders' rights	3	3	3	3	3	5	5	5	5
Reimbursement from the industry in respect of Aujeszky's disease	—	23	3	1	—	—	—	—	—
Local Authorities									
Receipts in respect of:									
Smallholdings	18	13	13	15	16	17	17	18	19
Land drainage and coast protection	1	2	2	1	1	1	1	1	1
TOTAL	22	41	21	20	20	23	23	24	24

Note: Figures for the Intervention Board for Agricultural Produce and the Foresty Commission are de minimus.

Home Grown Cereals Authority

Mr. Marland: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he last met the chairman of the Home Grown Cereals Authority; and what was discussed.

Mr. MacGregor: I am in regular contact with various members of the Home Grown Cereals Authority. I will be meeting the chairman again next week when I address the Home Grown Cereals Authority harvest luncheon.

Food (Research and Development)

Mr. Sean Hughes: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what discussions he has had with the food industry about the future funding of research and development in food.

Mr. Donald Thompson: My right hon. Friend the Minister met representatives of the food industry to discuss future funding of the R and D on food on 24 and 25 February and my noble Friend the Parliamentary Secretary is shortly to hold further discussions with the food sector.

Forestry Commission

Mr. Key: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he last met the chairman of the Forestry Commission; and what was discussed.

Mr. MacGregor: I last met the chairman of the Forestry Commission on Wednesday 22 June, when we discussed a wide range of forestry matters.

EC Budget

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if the provision in the European Economic Community budget for the depreciation of intervention stocks is included within the agricultural guideline agreed by the Council in February; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. MacGregor: The cost of depreciation of newly formed stocks is included within the guideline. The cost of depreciating older stocks (including butter under the special disposal scheme) is to be covered outside the guideline in the period 1988-92 by a provision of a 1·2 billion ecu in 1988 and 1·4 billion ecu annually thereafter (1988 prices).

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the percentage increase in agricultural spending in the draft European Community budget for 1989 compared with 1988, disregarding the spending in 1988 which related to overspending in 1987; and what are the main reasons for the increase.

Mr. MacGregor: The annual EC budgets for agricultural market support no longer cover a calendar year following decisions of the Council in 1987 and 1988 to delay the timing of payments to member states. The 1988 budget covers agricultural spending in the 11½ months from November 1987, the provision for which is 29·8 billion ecu (£20 billion). This is equivalent to about 31 billion ecu over a full 12-month period. The preliminary draft budget for 1989 provides 30·7 billion ecu (£20·6 billion) for agricultural spending in the 12 months from mid-October 1988.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement setting out the manner in which savings are being made in the 1989 draft budget by using less skimmed milk powder in animal feed; and whether this change will create other expenditure or consequences.

Mr. MacGregor: At the beginning of June the EC Commission, with United Kingdom support, cut the rate of subsidy for the use of skimmed milk powder in animal feed to a level some 7 per cent. below that assumed in the Commission's 1989 preliminary draft budget, and lowered the required minimum amount of powder which must be included in subsidised feed. The Commission estimates that these reductions in subsidy and uptake, together with adjustments to other skimmed milk subsidies, should result in a saving of 285 million by comparison with the preliminary draft budget. No additional EC expenditure is anticipated in other areas as a result of these changes.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement setting out the manner in which £16 million is to be saved by the Commission in cutting sales to developing countries.

Mr. MacGregor: The Commission intends to propose to the Council a new provision for granting credit to developing countries to facilitate the export of agricultural produce. It had intended to set aside 100 million ecu (£67 million) for this in 1989 but has now reduced this by 24 mecu (£16 million) in order to respect the guideline.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement explaining the overspending in the agricultural budget in 1987, in the light of the assurances given in the 1984 own resources decision.

Mr. MacGregor: The 1984 agreement on budget discipline obliged the Council to keep expenditure on agricultural market support within the financial guideline. This was only achieved in 1987 by deferring repayment to member states for expenditure incurred in November and December. As a consequence much stricter rules on budget discipline were agreed by the European Council in February 1988.

Agricultural Guidelines

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement setting out the procedures which require to be followed to adjust agricultural guidelines to take account of changes in the dollar/European currency unit exchange rate; whether such adjustments are subject to Council agreement; and what has been the impact of recent changes in this exchange rate.

Mr. MacGregor: The guideline is not adjusted to take account of currency fluctuations. A monetary reserve of 1 billion ecu (£670 million) is now included in the annual EC budget. If the ecu/dollar exchange rate is significantly different from that assumed in drawing up the budget the Council and European Parliament shall decide on transfers to or from the monetary reserve depending on whether the dollar has risen or fallen. The first 400 mecu of additional savings or expenditure are deducted before calculating the amount to be transferred. The Commission's report on the effect of ecu/dollar fluctuations in 1988 is not due until October but it seems unlikely that there will be a need for transfers into or out of the reserve this year.

Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he is taking any action to prevent butchers selling for human consumption uncooked brains from cattle infected with bovine spongiform encephalopathy.

Mr. Donald Thompson *[pursuant to his reply, 21 June 1988, c. 515]:* Sir Richard Southwood's working party has made an interim report to Ministers recommending that as a precautionary measure the carcases of cattle affected with bovine spongiform encephalopathy should be destroyed. The Government have accepted this recommendation. Pending the final conclusion of the working party, arrangements will be made for compulsory slaughter and destruction of carcases. Compensation will be payable at 50 per cent. of market value subject to a ceiling.

Sir Richard Southwood has also made recommendations about research and development. In particular, he has proposed that activity in this area should be co-ordinated by an expert working group. The Government are urgently considering how best to implement this recommendation.

The detailed implementation of both these elements, including the scope for an industry financial contribution, will be discussed with the farming industry as a matter of urgency.

Land Drainage

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he intends to revise the conservation guidelines for drainage authorities to assist water authorities and other bodies in implementing the Land Drainage Improvement Works (Assessment of Environmental Effects) Regulations 1988.

Mr. Gummer: We propose to issue guidance on drainage authorities' responsibilities under these regulations which may be inserted in the revised conservation guidelines.

ENVIRONMENT

Water Authorities (Privatisation)

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy that, following the privatisation of the water authorities, privatised water companies will be permitted to contract with local authorities in signing agreements for the carrying out of any works required by the water companies; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moynihan: Although local authorities do not have general powers to carry out contract work for private companies, my right hon. Friend's proposals for privatisation of the water industry envisage that local authorities will be enabled to continue to act as sewerage agents of the privatised undertakers. Existing arrangements between water authorities and local authorities will continue in force unless and until notice to withdraw from the arrangement is given by either party.

County Hall, Westminster

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to call in the development proposal to turn County hall into a luxury hotel if it is approved; if he will arrange for an exhibition in the House of Commons of the successful proposal; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: There is no application for such a development and therefore no decision for my right hon. Friend to take.

Elstree Studios

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to call in any proposals for redevelopment of the Elstree studios unless film-making capability is maintained and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: I have no knowledge of any planning applications for the redevelopment of Elstree studios. The Secretary of State will consider any proposals which do come before him in accordance with his normal practice.

New Towns

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what undertakings were given to the Association of District Councils on the opportunities to be offered to its members of managing new town rented property; and what information he has on the extent to which these have been fulfilled by Warrington and Runcorn development corporation;

(2) what guidance he gives on the selection of housing associations to manage new town rented property;

(3) to whom he sent copies of letters relating to decisions on the transfer of management of rented property belonging to Warrington and Runcorn development corporation;

(4) what guidance was given to new towns on the role of local authorities in managing rented property transferred from new town ownership.

Mrs. Roe: No undertakings have been given by my Department to the Association of District Councils on the possibility of any of its members managing on a temporary basis new town rented houses. Decisions about management are a matter for the relevant development corporations. My Department has not issued them with guidance on local authorities managing the housing either before or after the ultimate transfer of ownership. On ultimate transfer, we require prospective purchasers of new town housing, including housing associations, to be approved for the purpose by the Housing Corporation.

Interim management agreements do not affect the Government's commitment to let new town tenants choose for themselves the owners of their homes. Attempts to confuse management and ownership only cause unnecessary anxiety for the tenants.

Maidstone Borough Council

Mr. Rowe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many applications he has received from Maidstone borough council following his statement of 9 March relating to changes in the provisions about capital expenditure by local authorities; and what those applications concerned.

Mr. Chope: None. The council's treasurer has, however, sought clarification in relation to four schemes as to the criteria on which my right hon. Friend would issue additional capital allocations.

Local Government Finance Bill

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he proposes to take to publicise the provisions of the Local Government Finance Bill when it is enacted; and what discussions he has had with *(a)* the Central Office of Information, *(b)* advertising agencies and *(c)* local authorities and local authority associations about such publicity.

Mr. Ridley: I have decided that once the Local Government Finance Bill is enacted my Department will publish an updated version of the existing booklet, "Paying for Local Government", in order to reflect accurately the position at that time. My Department has discussed this with COI. I have taken no decisions yet on any further information which may be needed subsequently to ensure that the public are aware of their new rights and duties. I have held no discussions with advertising agencies, local authorities or their associations on these matters.

National Rivers Authority Advisory Committee

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the members and their backgrounds of the National Rivers Authority advisory committee, and outline its powers.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the names of all the members of the National Rivers Authority advisory committee other than the chairman, including their relevant backgrounds and qualifications.

Mr. Ridley: Together with my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales, I am pleased to announce that Peter Brandt, Professor Ronald Edwards, Hugh Fish CBE, Lord Mason of Barnsley, Dennis Mitchell and John Norris CBE have agreed to serve as members of the National Rivers Authority Advisory committee.

Under my right hon. and noble Friend, Lord Crickhowell, this committee will advise us on the implications for the water authorities of the reorganisation needed to provide a separate organisational structure for their water supply and sewerage functions, and the functions that will be performed by the new National Rivers Authority.

These appointments will provide the committee with the services of people with considerable experience of the water industry, knowledge and interest in NRA functions, and financial and organisational experience. If necessary, further appointments will be made in due course. I am confident that they will ensure that the NRA will become an effective regulatory body once the utility functions of the water authorities are transferred to the private sector.

Written Answers to Questions

Friday 8 July 1988

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Wales and Chester Circuit

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Attorney-General what plans there are to alter the status of the Wales and Chester circuit; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: There are no plans to alter the status of the Wales and Chester circuit.

Football Violence (Trials)

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Attorney-General if he now has information relating to fees claimed by prosecuting counsel and defence costs payable out of the legal aid fund for each of the trials associated with alleged football violence which have been abandoned in the current year.

The Attorney-General: The fees payable to prosecuting counsel in these cases have not yet been finally assessed. Defence costs are determined by an officer of the Crown Court upon receipt of the lawyers' claims for fees. A number of claims have been received, but not all, so these fees also have not yet been finally assessed.

PRIME MINISTER

Single Market

Mr. Wray: To ask the Prime Minister if she will make a statement on Her Majesty's Government's assessment of the specific *(a)* advantages and *(b)* disadvantages to the United Kingdom of the establishment of the European single market.

The Prime Minister: The establishment of the single market will bring great advantages for United Kingdom business through increased trading opportunities elsewhere in the Community. Greater competition in the United Kingdom market from firms in other member states will mean new challenges for our companies, but will also stimulate efficiency and bring benefits to consumers.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Departmental Telephone Numbers

Sir Trevor Skeet: To ask the Lord President of the Council if he will expedite the revision of the Palace of Westminster directory to take account of the new telephone numbers of Government Departments, particularly the Departments of Environment and Transport.

Mr. Wakeham: The Palace of Westminster telephone directory is being reprinted at present and revised telephone numbers supplied by Government Departments will be included in the reprint. The next issue will be available in August.

As my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport informed my hon. Friend in his written answer on 4 July at column *487*, arrangements have been made to direct incoming telephone calls on old numbers to appropriate new numbers. The Palace of Westminster operators also have a list of the new telephone numbers and hon. Members may obtain this information by dialing 100.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Illegal Immigrants

Mr. Holt: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many illegal immigrants were deported in each of the past 10 years.

Mr. Renton: The numbers removed as illegal immigrants are published in table 23 of "Control of Immigration: Statistics, United Kingdom 1987" (Cm. 415), copies of which are in the Library.

AIDS (Brixton Prison)

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how the 27 HIV positive cases in Her Majesty's prison Brixton in 1985-86 came to be identified as such.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: HIV antibody positive prisoners are identified at Brixton prison as at other prison service establishments, by medical inquiry and examination. Brixton reported no such cases in 1985-86.

Election Expenses

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if, pursuant to his answer of 14 June, *Official Report*, column *95*, he will give the details and outcome of the four prosecutions in 1979 referred to therein.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The information requested is as follows:

Candidate	*Description*	*Constituency*	*Result of Proceedings*
Sidney Albert Chaney	National Front	Islington Central	Fined £100 and £25 costs
Thomas Leslie Keen	Campaign More Prosperous Britian	Huddersfield West/Colne Valley	Fined £60
Patrick Flint	National Front	Leeds South East	Fined £35
Samuel Frederick Wright	National Front	Wellingborough	Fined £20 and £20 costs

Special Constables

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the total cost of the special constabulary in the last financial year for which figures are available; and what percentage of total police costs for that year were attributable to the special constabulary in respect of each police force in England and Wales.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The information is as follows:

1986-87 Expenditure

(1) *Force*	*(2)* *Cost of Special Constabulary* *£000*	*(3)* *Net revenue expenditure* *£000*	*(4)* *(2) as a percentage of (3)* *per cent.*
Avon and Somerset	17	72,288	0·024
Bedfordshire	21	24,395	0·086
Cambridgeshire	15	28,014	0·054
Cheshire	[1]20	43,985	0·045
Cleveland	25	35,602	0·070
Cumbria	10	27,420	0·036
Derbyshire	26	[2]44,187	0·059
Devon and Cornwall	82	74,164	0·111
Dorset	33	33,526	0·098
Durham	15	31,565	0·048
Essex	55	65,990	0·083
Gloucestershire	17	25,558	0·067
Hampshire	24	76,539	0·031
Hertfordshire	5	38,678	0·013
Humberside	30	48,798	0·061
Kent	22	72,345	0·030
Lancashire	47	74,053	0·063
Leicestershire	12	42,381	0·028
Lincolnshire	41	28,344	0·145
Norfolk	15	31,544	0·048
Northamptonshire	15	26,845	0·056
North Yorkshire	31	33,062	0·094
Nottinghamshire	10	54,172	0·018
Staffordshire	98	49,843	0·197
Suffolk	6	28,995	0·021
Surrey	5	38,333	0·013
Sussex	29	65,774	0·044
Thames Valley	60	[2]86,393	0·069
Warwickshire	67	23,154	0·289
West Mercia	40	47,824	0·084
Wiltshire	21	26,327	0·080
Greater Manchester	92	163,170	0·056
Merseyside	110	114,892	0·096
Northumbria	48	86,405	0·056
South Yorkshire	35	67,191	0·052
West Midlands	81	154,491	0·052
West Yorkshire	41	116,800	0·035
City of London	54	26,791	0·202
Metropolitan	745	813,268	0·092
Dyfed Powys	3	20,988	0·014
Gwent	2	22,535	0·009
North Wales	2	30,556	0·007
South Wales	28	73,687	0·038
TOTAL	2,155	3,090,872	0·070

[1] Estimated figure provided by Cheshire County Council.

[2] Provisional.

Note: The information is as submitted by individual police authorities on their police grant claim forms.

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he last conducted a review of the recruitment, deployment, pay and conditions of special constables; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: In December 1987 my right hon. Friend convened a national conference on the special constabulary. The conference was attended by senior police officers from every force in England and Wales and members of the special constabulary and other observers. All aspects of the special constabulary were discussed, with particular emphasis on how to increase its strength and improve its deployment. A report of the conference has been circulated to all forces and we are considering further action on a number of the issues raised.

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what was the establishment of special constables in each police force in England and Wales in the latest year for which statistics are available; and if he will make a statement.

(2) what was the establishment of special constables in each police force in England and Wales in each of the years 1979 to 1985; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: There is no centrally approved establishment figure for special constables. Their appointment is at the discretion of individual chief officers, who are encouraged to enrol as many specials as they can usefully train and deploy. The number of special constables in each force, as at 31 December, in the years 1979 to 1987, is shown in the table:

Special Constabulary membership as at 31 December

	1979	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*
Avon and Somerset	534	530	529	515	499	474	480	503	555
Bedfordshire	177	180	179	178	163	167	215	174	154
Cambridgeshire	381	261	245	214	212	227	216	234	189
Cheshire	203	197	172	236	231	160	252	265	277
Cleveland	165	169	158	149	97	96	131	128	129
Cumbria	256	255	270	237	200	185	182	203	219
Derbyshire	362	348	335	359	378	345	275	269	250
Devon and Cornwall	1,028	904	856	806	772	781	791	744	820
Dorset	274	275	249	211	202	353	297	268	237
Durham	112	105	105	118	128	133	172	175	164
Dyfed Powys	164	137	111	101	156	154	143	159	160
Essex	344	359	372	372	351	393	367	401	379
Gloucestershire	255	233	208	201	197	198	185	211	210
Greater Manchester	389	393	376	396	361	354	392	427	461
Gwent	224	165	177	178	147	131	112	104	128
Hampshire	378	384	400	423	416	461	480	479	458
Hertfordshire	227	240	217	224	240	249	249	249	229

	1979	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*
Humberside	280	237	226	257	262	305	277	280	261
Kent	495	511	530	534	525	499	510	580	561
Lancashire	384	378	382	383	376	425	408	488	522
Leicestershire	239	227	223	247	254	238	220	232	235
Lincolnshire	378	388	394	359	339	337	345	344	361
Merseyside	336	385	370	423	459	476	373	319	330
Norfolk	277	251	231	210	180	190	178	224	225
Northamptonshire	199	196	179	171	182	185	203	205	201
Northumbria	520	491	502	538	603	597	606	606	615
North Wales	421	256	193	164	201	200	215	195	186
North Yorkshire	312	336	314	291	282	230	311	325	316
Nottinghamshire	431	400	398	376	446	527	516	480	507
South Wales	201	220	196	216	229	243	289	230	213
South Yorkshire	247	226	236	258	265	271	261	242	273
Staffordshire	452	404	423	466	456	459	513	506	528
Suffolk	367	332	332	336	322	316	323	310	321
Surrey	219	227	229	210	208	289	252	230	235
Sussex	416	476	468	478	493	661	653	604	562
Thames Valley	517	472	496	483	544	657	715	658	676
Warwickshire	287	268	286	265	341	353	344	338	354
West Mercia	435	393	414	417	471	471	633	563	560
West Midlands	700	644	721	901	832	840	724	673	674
West Yorkshire	368	386	430	455	477	468	486	664	668
Wiltshire	238	163	165	170	159	156	232	246	269
City of London	94	73	71	59	61	73	75	65	59
Metropolitan	1,673	1,632	1,610	1,575	1,614	1,685	1,560	1,470	1,478
Total	15,960	15,108	14,978	15,160	145,331	16,012	16,161	16,070	16,209

Medomsley Prison

Mr. Leigh: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when Her Majesty's prison Medomsley, Consett, County Durham *(a)* was refurbished and *(b)* is expected to be reoccupied; and what are the reasons for the delay.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Her Majesty's prison Medomsley has not been subject to general refurbishment, but a new kitchen has recently been constructed and some additional office accommodation provided. The establishment was temporarily closed in October last year so that the staff could be deployed to areas of pressing need in other prisons. No date has yet been fixed for reoccupation of the establishment.

Category C Prisoners

Mr. Leigh: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) pursuant to the answer of 27 June, *Official Report,* column *34,* what information his Department collects regarding the downgrading of category B prisoners to category C;

(2) pursuant to the answer of 27 June, *Official Report,* column *34,* if he will ensure that his Department in future obtains information and statistics on the numbers of prisoners downgraded from category B to category C.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: From information supplied by prison department establishments holding sentenced adult male prisoners, a central computer system, the prison index, maintains information on prisoners' current security categories. This infomation is used to compile statistics showing the distribution of prisoners by their current security categories. The prison index is not capable of analysing information relating to previous security categories which would be required to monitor the numbers of prisoners downgraded from category B to category C. Work is in hand to replace the prison index by a more modern and more powerful system which will enable this information to be extracted.

Joint Security Operations

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department on how many occasions in each of the past five years his Department has authorised joint security operations between the police and military personnel.

Mr. Hurd: The military are under a common law duty to assist the police when called upon to do so. This assistance does not necessarily require the approval of my Department, and no central records are kept of the number of occasions when military assistance is provided.

IRA and INLA

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people have been *(a)* killed and *(b)* injured on the mainland as a result of Irish Republican Army and Irish National Libertion Army terrorist attacks since 1969.

Mr. John Patten *[holding answer 1 July 1988]:* Information is not available in the form requested. The number of homicides in England and Wales attributed to acts of terrorism connected with Northern Ireland since 1974 is published annually in "Criminal Statistics, England and Wales", copies of which are in the Library (Table 4.5 of Cm. 233 gives figures for 1976-86). There were 90 such deaths in 26 incidents during the period 1972 to 1987. Information on the number of terrorist incidents causing injury is only complete since 1980. During the period 1980 to 1987 there were 10 such incidents in which some 220 people were recorded as having been injured.

Lotteries

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what impact the completion of the internal market in the European Community will have upon the ability of member countries to offer for sale tickets in a national lottery in other member states.

Mr. John Patten *[holding answer 28 April 1988]:* There are no measures in the single market programme at present specifically relating to lotteries and, in their absence, the controls which United Kingdom law places on lotteries would not appear to be affected.

President Reagan (Visit)

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what were the total police costs arising from the visit to London by President Reagan on 2 June.

Mr. Douglas Hogg *[holding answer 10 June 1988]:* I understand from the Metropolitan police and the City of London police that the additional costs of the visit amounted to about £7,800.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Assessment of Performance Unit

Mr. Ashdown: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the future of the assessment of performance unit and its proposed role within the development of a national curriculum.

Mrs. Rumbold: The assessment of performance unit will continue its programme of surveys of pupils' performance in language, science, maths, design and technology and foreign languages. In addition to offering insight into pupils' performance to help teachers and teacher training, data from the surveys will form part of a baseline against which to evaluate the introduction of the national curriculum in future years. On completion of the survey programme, the work of the APU will be subsumed by that of the School Examinations and Assessment Council and the National Curriculum Council.

Student Unions

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list in the *Official Report* the names of those organisations and individuals who have made representations to him concerning automatic membership of student unions; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: I refer my hon. Friend to my reply of 10 June at column *691*. Most of the representations received have been from members of the public including constituents' letters forwarded by hon. Members. It would not be appropriate to list the names in the *Official Report*.

NATIONAL FINANCE

House Prices (Inflation)

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the current rate of inflation in house prices.

Mr. Lilley: Department of the Environment estimates show that the prices of dwellings purchased in the United Kingdom with building society loans rose on average by 21 per cent. between the first quarter of 1987 and the first quarter of 1988.

Civil Servants

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the trend in the number of civil servants over the past five years.

Mr. Brooke: The number of civil servants at 1 April 1988 was 579,627, reflecting a reduction of 7·1 per cent. on the total for five years ago of 623,972. The detailed trend is shown in the table.

Year	*Numbers at 1 April*	*Percentage change on previous year*
1984	623,972	−3·8
1985	599,026	−0·4
1986	594,365	−0·8
1987	597,801	+0·6
1988	579,627	−3·0

CIVIL SERVICE

Departmental Staff

Mr. John Garrett: To ask the Minister for the Civil Service what proportion of executive officer and clerical officer entrants to the Civil Service in 1987 were graduates.

Mr. Luce: The Civil Service Commission recommended for appointment to executive officer and equivalent grades 4,052 candidates in 1987 of whom 2,281 (56 per cent.) were graduates.

Figures for the number of graduates appointed as administrative officers (formerly clerical officers) are not available as recruitment is carried out locally by individual Government Departments and not by the Civil Service Commission.

THE ARTS

Expenditure

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Minister for the Arts what has been the level of expenditure, per capita, on arts in *(a)* Great Britain and *(b)* England in each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Luce: The annual grant from the Office of Arts and Libraries to the Arts Council, the British Film Institute, the Crafts Council and the National Film and Television School, per head of the whole population, amounted to the following sums in each of the last three years:

	Great Britain £	*England* £
1985-86	2·12	2·04
1986-87	2·76	2·76
1987-88	2·80	2·79

The information for earlier years is not readily available.

Museums and Galleries

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Minister for the Arts what has been the level of expenditure, per capita, on museums in each of the past 10 years.

Mr. Luce: The expenditure on museums and galleries borne on the votes of the Office of Arts and Libraries and its predecessors in each of the last 10 years per head of United Kingdom population in each of those years has been as follows:

Year	*Expenditure per capita £'s*
1978-79	0·80
1979-80	0·96
1980-81	1·07
1981-82	1·14
1982-83	1·34
1983-84	1·40
1984-85	1·53
1985-86	1·62
1986-87	1·85
1987-88	2·21

Arts (Housing)

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Minister for the Arts what has been the level of expenditure on housing the arts in each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Luce: The information that is readily available relates to Arts Council expenditure in Great Britain over the last three years. It is as follows:

Year	*£ million*
1985-86	1·21
1986-87	0·91
1987-88	1·47

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Inner-cities Initiative

Mr. Peter Pike: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what response he has received from private sector industry in the north-west to his inner-cities initiative.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The private sector has responded very well to our inner-cities policies in the north-west. The Action for Cities working breakfasts held in Manchester and Liverpool attracted over 400 business men, almost one third of whom have already offered to help. Examples of the offers of help from the private sector include secondments, use of a redundant sports centre to help handicapped and able-bodied unemployed people, free consultancies and land use for investment and managed work space purposes We are also making encouraging progress in the three inner city task forces based in the north-west that are working with 23 businesses which have committed funds of almost half a million pounds.

Post Office

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when he last met the chairman of the Post Office; and what matters were discussed.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I last met the chairman of the Post Office on 4 July and our discussion covered a broad range of topics on the activities and performance of the Post Office group.

Society of British Aerospace Manufacturers

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when he last met representatives of the Society of British Aerospace Manufacturers; and what matters were discussed.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I last formally met representatives of the Society of British Aerospace Companies on 18 November 1987. A wide range of topics covering the aerospace industry was discussed.

Electric Plugs

Mr. Sumberg: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what estimates exist as to the number of household accidents involving personal injury that may be avoided by the fitting of electric plugs as standard by manufacturers of household electrical equipment.

Mr. Butcher: It is estimated that fitting plugs to electrical appliances as a standard requirement would have little effect on the number of household accidents.

Coral

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what information he has about the importation of marine coral and associated products into the United Kingdom by weight and value in each year from 1979.

Mr. Alan Clark: The information is given in the table:

United Kingdom imports of coral and associated products
1979-1987 Weight = Metric tonnes
Value = £000

		Coral (natural or agglomerated), worked:	
	Unworked[1]	*Combined*[2]	*Other*
1979			
Weight	4,581·2	3·0	8·9
Value	927	16	95
1980			
Weight	3,577·2	10·3	84·8
Value	878	22	124
1981			
Weight	3,800·1	12·7	54·4
Value	621	21	139
1982			
Weight	3,277·8	35·2	10·3
Value	692	107	96
1983			
Weight	2,938·5	5·4	32·7
Value	630	43	176
1984			
Weight	2,969·2	2·3	21·6
Value	641	17	167
1985			
Weight	3,008·3	0·8	10·0
Value	741	19	125
1986			
Weight	3,566·3	2·2	29·3
Value	[illegible]60	6	127
1987 January-December			
Weight	4,091·4	3·5	27·3
Value	1,043	79	133

[1] Coral, shells and similar substances unworked or simply prepared; powder and waste of shells.

[2] Combined with other materials.

Source: Overseas Trade Statistics.

Note: 1987 figures provisional.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Consular Fees

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if, in the light of the imminent coming into force of section 1 of the Immigration Act, he will withdraw the Consular Fees (Amendment) Order 1988 (S.I. 1988, No. 925).

Mr. Eggar: No.

British Embassy (Islamabad)

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will establish an inquiry into the administration of the British embassy in Islamabad; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: No special inquiry is planned.

In September 1988 the embassy will be visited by a team of diplomatic service inspectors as part of the normal inspection cycle of posts overseas. The inspectors will review all aspects of the mission's work, including procedures and staffing levels.

Visas

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what action he is taking to publicise *(a)* the increase in visa fees which took effect on 1 June and *(b)* the change whereby fees for visa settlement are now paid by all applicants.

Mr. Eggar: Details of the fee increases and notice of the change to charging on a per capita basis were given in my reply to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Suffolk, Central (Mr. Lord) on 7 June at column *467*, copies of which were widely distributed to the press. No other publicity in this country is contemplated. However, a table of fees is exhibited by all diplomatic service posts overseas at which fee-bearing services are provided.

Colombia

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what action Her Majesty's Government has taken, and proposes further to take, in the light of the evidence submitted to him by Amnesty International of human rights abuses in Colombia; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: The Amnesty International allegations concerning the human rights situation in Colombia are of considerable concern. We continue to make our desire to see an improvement clear to the Colombian Government. I understand that the Colombian Government have responded formally to the Amnesty International report. It should be remembered that the Colombians face very serious levels of terrorist violence, and have already prosecuted members of the security forces for human rights offences.

SCOTLAND

Rating Reform

Mr. Doran: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what proposals he has to reimburse local authorities in Scotland in respect of the shortfall in income from the community charge as a result of the exemptions for full-time students.

Mr. Lang: The distribution of revenue support grant will take into account the reduced level of community charge payable by full-time students.

Mr. Doran: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the number of full-time students in each of *(a)* the regions and *(b)* districts of Scotland who will be eligible for exemption from 80 per cent. of the community charge.

Mr. Lang: The information will not be available until the community charge registration process is complete. The latest estimates by region, rounded to the nearest 1,000 are given below:

Region	*Students*
Borders	1,000
Central	5,000
Dumfries and Galloway	1,000
Fife	6,000
Grampian	11,000
Highland	1,000
Lothian	22,000
Strathclyde	40,000
Tayside	9,000
Islands Areas	[1]96,000

[1] Less than 500.

Mobile Infrastructure Funding

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the total number of inquiries received by his Department over the past five years on the eligibility of private companies for European regional development fund mobile infrastructure funding; what is the total number of occasions in those five years on which his Department have responded that private companies are not eligible for such funding; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: My Department receives numerous inquiries and meets frequently various organisations on matters relating to the European regional development fund. The number of inquiries relating specifically to the eligibility of private companies for mobile infrastructure funding is not available but there have been several such inquiries since Scotland first secured funding for the Hebridean Isles ferry in 1984—the first country to do so. The regulation governing the operation of the fund provides for assistance only to public authorities or other authorities responsible in the same way as a public authority for carrying out infrastructure investments. Inquirers are informed accordingly.

Recently, and in the light of various privatisation measures, the European commission has indicated a willingness to consider applications from privatised industries. However, the criteria applied, which include a requirement for statutory or other similar control over the company, are such that it is unlikely that most privately owned companies and their investments can qualify for assistance.

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether privately owned transport companies are eligible for European regional development fund mobile infrastructure funding.

Mr. Lang: The regulation governing the operation of the European regional development fund allows aid for infrastructure projects to go to public authorities or to any other organisation responsible in the same way as a public authority for carrying out infrastructure projects. It is unlikely, therefore, that most privately owned transport companies would be eligible.

Private Medical Organisations (Trainees)

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many trainees on *(a)* YTS or *(b)* Manpower Services Commission schemes are currently employed in private hospitals or other private medical businesses in Scotland.

Mr. Lang: This information is not collected centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

EMPLOYMENT

Labour Statistics

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what has been the size of the fall in unemployment since June 1987, based on his Department's estimates of the labour force and of employment for this period.

Mr. Lee: Unemployment change cannot be meaningfully estimated in this way as any such comparison would be affected by a range of definitional and technical factors.

Women (Wage Rates)

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the average hourly rate of pay of *(a)* part-time and *(b)* full-time employed women.

Mr. Lee: The available information is published in table 178 of part F of the report on the new earnings survey 1987 for part-time female employees, and in table 1 of part A for full-time female employees. A copy of the report is in the Library.

Summary analyses *New earnings survey 1987*

Summary of results for full-time adults

Table 1

Full time employees on adult rates, whose pay for the survey pay-period was not affected by absence *April 1987*

	Males			*Females*			*Males and Females*		
	Manual	*Non-manual*	*All*	*Manual*	*Non-manual*	*All*	*Manual*	*Non-manual*	*All*
Average gross weekly earnings (£)	185·5	265·9	224·0	115·3	157·2	148·1	173·5	217·4	198·9
of which									
overtime payments (£)	27·0	9·2	18·5	6·2	3·1	3·8	23·4	6·5	13·6
PBR etc payments (£)	13·9	9·5	11·8	9·6	1·9	3·6	13·2	6·1	9·1
shift etc premium payments (£)	6·3	2·0	4·2	2·6	1·9	2·1	5·6	2·0	3·5
As percentage of average gross earnings									
overtime payments	14·6	3·5	8·2	5·4	2·0	2·5	13·5	3·0	6·8
PBR etc payments	7·5	3·6	5·3	8·4	1·2	2·4	7·6	2·8	4·6
shift etc premium payments	3·4	0·7	1·9	2·3	1·2	1·4	3·3	0·9	1·8
Distribution of gross weekly earnings									
10 per cent. earned less than (£)	110·6	132·5	117·9	74·0	90·4	85·3	96·4	101·9	99·1
25 per cent. earned less than (£)	137·8	176·8	150·1	88·1	110·4	103·8	123·6	133·2	128·6
50 per cent. earned less than (£)	173·9	235·7	198·4	108·2	142·2	132·9	161·9	189·1	175·1
25 per cent. earned more than (£)	218·8	312·1	262·8	133·7	188·9	177·5	208·7	261·2	236·9
10 per cent. earned more than (£)	272·2	416·4	349·5	165·5	237·9	228·3	261·2	355·5	316·6
percentage earning less than									
£60	0·2	0·2	0·2	2·2	0·6	1·0	0·5	0·4	0·5
£70	0·5	0·5	0·5	6·6	1·6	2·7	1·5	1·0	1·2
£80	1·3	0·9	1·1	15·7	3·9	6·5	3·8	2·2	2·9
£90	2·9	1·8	2·4	27·4	9·4	13·3	7·1	5·2	6·0
£100	5·7	3·0	4·4	39·9	16·7	21·7	11·6	9·1	10·1
£110	9·5	4·7	7·2	51·9	24·6	30·5	16·8	13·6	14·9
£120	14·3	6·8	10·7	63·1	32·8	39·4	22·7	18·4	20·2
£130	20·0	9·2	14·8	71·7	40·7	47·4	28·9	23·3	25·6
£150	33·4	15·2	24·7	84·7	55·3	61·7	42·2	33·1	36·9
£170	47·1	22·1	35·1	91·2	66·4	71·8	54·7	41·9	47·3
£200	65·8	34·2	50·6	96·0	78·7	82·5	71·0	54·1	61·2
£250	85·5	56·0	71·3	99·2	92·3	93·8	87·8	72·2	78·8
£300	93·6	71·9	83·2	99·8	96·8	97·4	97·4	83·0	87·9
£350	97·1	82·4	90·0	100·0	98·4	98·8	97·6	89·5	92·9
Average gross hourly earnings									
including overtime pay and overtime hours (p)	416·5	679·9	527·3	292·0	418·0	388·4	397·5	563·0	484·7
excluding overtime pay and overtime hours (p)	404·3	679·3	526·2	287·4	415·9	386·2	385·1	560·3	481·1
Distribution of gross hourly earnings including overtime pay and overtime hours									

	Males			Females			Males and Females		
	Manual	Non-manual	All	Manual	Non-manual	All	Manual	Non-manual	All
10 per cent. earned less than (p)	268·5	339·7	286·1	200·0	241·7	226·7	244·4	268·6	255·2
25 per cent. earned less than (p)	322·4	450·4	354·4	231·1	294·0	272·8	299·1	347·6	320·3
50 per cent. earned less than (p)	395·1	608·0	462·1	276·7	374·4	347·7	373·8	486·3	420·6
25 per cent. earned more than (p)	486·0	820·9	627·7	334·1	498·7	459·4	466·7	689·0	577·5
10 per cent. earned more than (p)	595·4	1,101·3	875·6	397·5	676·2	625·8	567·2	943·9	800·2
percentage earning less than									
160p	0·3	0·2	0·3	1·6	0·5	0·7	0·5	0·3	0·4
180p	0·6	0·4	0·5	4·1	1·0	1·7	1·2	0·7	0·9
200p	1·1	0·7	0·9	9·8	2·1	3·8	2·6	1·3	1·9
220p	2·5	1·2	1·9	19·0	4·8	7·9	5·2	2·8	3·9
240p	4·9	2·1	3·6	29·9	9·5	14·0	9·1	5·5	7·0
260p	8·3	3·3	6·0	41·3	14·8	20·7	13·8	8·6	10·9
280p	12·5	4·6	8·9	51·7	20·5	27·4	19·1	11·9	15·1
300p	17·9	6·3	12·6	61·4	26·8	34·5	25·2	15·7	19·9
340p	31·1	10·0	21·5	77·1	39·4	47·8	38·8	23·5	30·2
400p	51·5	17·7	36·1	90·3	56·6	64·1	58·0	35·5	45·4
500p	77·9	32·6	57·2	97·4	75·1	80·1	81·1	52·1	64·8
600p	91·3	48·7	71·9	99·4	85·1	88·3	92·6	65·4	77·3
700p	96·4	63·0	81·2	99·9	91·4	93·3	97·0	76·0	85·2
800p	98·4	73·3	86·9	99·9	95·1	96·2	98·6	83·3	90·0
Average total weekly hours	44·6	38·7	41·9	39·7	36·8	37·5	43·8	37·8	40·4
of which overtime hours	5·5	1·5	3·7	1·6	0·6	0·8	4·8	1·1	2·7
Distribution of total hours—percentage of employees									
36 hours or less	2·2	23·4	11·8	15·8	33·2	29·3	4·5	27·9	17·6
36 to 40 hours	42·6	57·3	49·3	61·5	59·4	59·8	45·8	58·2	52·8
40 to 48 hours	30·9	14·1	23·3	17·3	6·4	8·8	28·7	10·8	18·5
more than 48 hours	24·3	5·2	15·6	5·3	1·1	2·0	21·1	3·3	11·1
Employees who received overtime payments									
percentage of employees	54·8	21·1	38·6	25·4	16·2	18·2	49·7	18·9	31·9
average payment per week (£)	49·3	43·5	47·8	24·5	19·0	20·7	47·1	34·1	42·7
average overtime hours per week	9·9	6·2	8·9	6·2	3·5	4·3	9·5	5·2	8·0
Employees who received PBR etc. payments percercentage of employees	40·7	16·3	29·0	31·4	11·6	16·0	39·1	14·2	24·7
average payment per week (£)	34·3	57·9	40·6	30·7	16·7	22·7	33·8	42·9	36·8
of which:									
(a) those receiving such payments in each pay period									
percentage of employees	36·1	8·2	22·7	28·4	4·2	9·5	34·7	6·5	18·4
average payment per week (£)	35·7	81·0	43·6	32·5	24·9	29·9	35·3	64·6	41·3
(b) those receiving such payments less often than pay period									
percentage of employees	6·5	8·9	7·6	3·7	7·7	6·8	6·0	8·3	7·4
average payment per week (£)	16·4	31·2	24·7	10·9	11·6	11·5	15·8	23·2	20·7
Employees who received shift etc. premium payments									
percentage of employees	23·0	6·5	15·1	12·9	11·4	11·7	21·3	8·7	14·0
average payment per week (£)	27·2	30·3	27·9	20·2	16·9	17·7	26·5	22·5	25·1
Employees whose pay was not affected by absence					Complete 1986 and 1987 Samples				
Increase in average gross weekly earnings, 1986 to 1987 (£)	11·1	20·8	16·5	7·8	11·3	10·7	10·3	16·3	14·1
Increase as percentage	6·4	8·5	7·9	7·3	7·8	7·8	6·3	8·1	7·7
Increase in average gross weekly earnings, excluding overtime pay, 1986 to 1987 (£)	9·2	20·6	15·5	6·7	10·9	10·2	8·6	16·0	13·4
Increase as percentage	6·2	9·7	8·2	6·5	7·6	7·6	6·1	8·2	7·8
Increase in average gross hourly earnings, including overtime pay and overtime hours, 1986 to 1987 (p)	24·0	52·1	38·3	19·1	26·8	25·5	22·9	40·4	33·6
Increase as percentage	6·1	8·3	7·8	7·0	6·9	7·0	6·1	7·7	7·5
Increase in average gross hourly earnings, excluding overtime pay and overtime hours, 1986 to 1987 (p)	23·6	52·9	39·4	18·3	26·5	25·2	22·4	40·7	34·2
Increase as percentage	6·2	8·5	8·1	6·8	6·8	7·0	6·2	7·8	7·6
					Matched 1986-87 samples				
Employees whose pay was not affected by absence in either survey pay-period									
Percentage of employees in 1987 sample	72·1	76·4	75·1	59·2	70·4	68·6	69·9	73·7	73·0

	Males			Females			Males and Females		
	Manual	*Non-manual*	*All*	*Manual*	*Non-manual*	*All*	*Manual*	*Non-manual*	*All*
Increase in average gross weekly earnings, 1986 to 1987 (£)	13·7	24·0	18·8	9·4	15·6	14·4	13·1	20·4	17·4
Increase as percentage	7·8	9·6	8·8	8·4	10·5	10·2	7·8	9·9	9·2
Increase in average gross weekly earnings, excluding overtime pay, 1986 to 1987 (£)	11·7	23·8	17·6	8·5	15·1	13·8	11·2	20·1	16·5
Increase as percentage	7·8	9·9	9·0	8·1	10·5	10·1	7·8	10·1	9·3
Increase in average gross hourly earnings, including overtime pay and overtime hours, 1986 to 1987 (p)	30·5	61·9	43·7	23·1	51·4	37·5	29·5	52·9	41·9
Increase as percentage	7·7	9·7	8·7	8·3	10·5	10·1	7·7	9·9	9·1
Increase in average gross hourly earnings, excluding overtime pay and overtime hours, 1986 to 1987 (p)	30·3	62·9	45·0	22·4	40·9	37·2	29·2	53·3	42·6
Increase as percentage	7·9	9·9	9·0	8·1	10·4	10·1	7·9	10·1	9·3
				Sectoral results (see note)					
Employees whose pay was not affected by absence									
Average gross weekly earnings									
Public sector (£)	184·2	253·1	221·7	116·3	168·3	161·6	173·2	208·8	197·3
Public services (£)	157·7	249·8	220·4	112·7	168·4	161·5	145·6	205·2	191·8
Central government (£) 163·5	247·5	221·3	110·4	153·5	149·4	147·2	186·1	178·9	
Local government (£)	154·8	251·0	219·9	114·2	185·7	174·6	144·8	220·9	201·5
Public corporations (£)	208·5	272·9	224·4	151·5	167·2	164·1	206·6	242·1	217·6
Private sector (£)	185·9	272·3	225·0	115·0	148·0	138·8	173·5	222·8	199·7
All industries and services (£)	185·5	265·9	224·0	115·3	157·2	148·1	173·5	217·4	198·9
Percentage increase in average gross weekly earnings, complete 1986 and 1987 samples									
Public sector	5·8	7·3	7·2	7·6	6·8	7·1	5·9	6·9	6·9
Public services	6·2	7·4	7·2	7·6	6·8	7·0	6·6	7·0	7·0
Central government	4·7	7·4	7·1	6·7	7·8	7·9	5·1	7·2	7·1
Local government	7·2	7·4	7·3	8·2	6·5	6·7	7·5	7·2	7·2
Public corporations	6·7	7·3	7·2	9·2	7·8	8·2	6·8	7·2	7·2
Private sector	6·5	8·9	8·2	7·2	9·0	8·7	6·5	8·7	8·1
All industries and services	6·4	8·5	7·9	7·3	7·8	7·8	6·3	8·1	7·7
Dispersion of gross weekly earnings									
Public sector									
Lowest decile (£)	117·1	139·7	125·8	76·5	101·4	94·9	100·9	111·0	107·7
Lower quartile (£)	139·4	185·3	156·0	90·2	122·9	115·9	127·9	139·6	135·2
Median (£)	173·2	237·0	204·1	109·7	156·5	148·7	162·3	194·3	181·5
Upper quartile (£)	215·2	298·3	263·7	132·6	207·8	200·7	206·4	250·2	237·2
Highest decile (£)	266·1	374·4	333·3	164·0	243·2	240·4	256·4	318·7	303·3
As a percentage of the median									
Lowest decile	67·6	59·0	61·7	69·7	64·8	63·8	62·2	57·1	59·4
Lower quartile	80·5	78·2	76·4	82·3	78·5	77·9	78·8	71·9	74·5
Upper quartile	124·3	125·9	129·2	120·9	132·7	135·0	127·2	128·8	130·7
Highest decile	153·7	158·0	163·3	149·5	155·4	161·7	158·0	164·0	167·1
Private sector									
Lowest decile (£)	108·8	128·0	114·7	73·3	85·5	81·1	94·6	97·0	95·9
Lower quartile (£)	137·0	173·3	148·1	87·3	102·4	97·1	121·9	127·9	124·6
Median (£)	174·1	234·4	195·6	107·7	131·2	123·2	161·8	184·9	172·2
Upper quartile (£)	219·9	323·8	262·4	134·0	172·6	161·1	209·6	269·9	236·6
Highest decile (£)	274·2	441·2	357·5	165·7	227·8	210·0	262·8	382·2	326·6
As a percentage of the median									
Lowest decile	62·5	54·6	58·7	68·1	65·2	65·8	58·4	52·5	55·7
Lower quartile	78·7	73·9	75·7	81·0	78·0	78·8	75·3	69·2	72·3
Upper quartile	126·3	138·2	134·2	124·4	131·6	130·8	129·5	146·0	137·4
Highest decile	157·5	188·3	182·8	153·9	173·7	170·5	162·4	206·8	189·6
All industries and services									
Lowest decile (£)	110·6	132·5	117·9	74·0	90·4	85·3	96·4	101·9	99·1
Lower quartile (£)	137·8	176·8	150·1	88·1	110·4	103·8	123·6	133·2	128·6
Median (£)	173·9	235·7	198·4	108·2	142·2	132·9	161·9	189·1	175·1
Upper quartile (£)	218·8	312·1	262·8	133·7	188·9	177·5	208·7	261·2	236·9
Highest decile (£)	272·2	416·4	349·5	165·5	237·9	228·3	261·2	355·5	316·6
As a percentage of the median									
Lowest decile	63·6	56·2	59·4	68·3	63·6	64·2	59·5	53·9	56·6
Lower quartile	79·2	75·0	75·7	81·4	77·6	78·1	76·3	70·4	73·5
Upper quartile	125·8	132·4	132·5	123·5	132·8	133·5	128·9	138·1	135·3
Highest decile	156·5	176·6	176·2	152·9	167·3	171·7	161·3	188·0	180·8

Note:

The level of earnings in the 1987 survey and changes in average earnings between the 1986 and 1987 surveys are affected by the timing of pay settlements. See introduction.

Women working part-time *New earnings survey 1987*

Table 178

Median, quartiles, deciles and average of gross hourly earnings and averages of gross weekly earnings and weekly hours, by occupation

Part-time females on adult rates, whose pay for the survey pay-period was not affected by absence *April 1987*

Occupation (see notes)	*Average gross weekly earnings (£)*	*Average weekly hours*	*Average gross hourly earnings (pence)*	*Gross hourly earnings (pence per hour)*					*Standard error of the average*	
				Lowest decile	*Lower quartile*	*Median*	*Upper quartile*	*Highest decile*	*Weekly earnings (£)*	*Hourly earnings (pence)*
Non-Manual[1]										
III Professional and related in education, welfare and health										
Registered and enrolled nurses, midwives	95·2	21·9	459·4	339·1	396·5	458·2	519·4	578·6	1·3	3·9
Nursing auxiliaries and assistants	74·5	22·9	329·6	238·4	282·9	318·7	383·5	417·7	1·0	3·3
VII Clerical and related	61·9	20·6	306·5	218·4	249·0	291·0	341·5	412·4	0·4	1·4
Costing and accounting clerks	(63·4)	20·9	313·6	208·5	248·4	291·9	349·5	428·0	1·5	5·0
Cash handling clerks	59·9	20·3	300·0	214·5	241·5	290·6	350·0	407·4	1·2	4·1
Records and library clerks	(57·7)	19·0	310·4	230·5	270·6	304·1	338·1	394·1	1·2	4·3
General clerks and clerks not identified elsewhere	61·5	20·4	307·0	225·0	252·6	290·0	338·5	407·1	0·7	2·5
Retail shop check-out etc. operators	(46·0)	18·7	245·8	211·7	222·2	241·0	253·2	285·6	1·1	3·2
Receptionists	54·7	20·8	270·7	191·2	234·8	270·9	304·4	347·9	1·1	3·8
Secretaries, Shorthand typists	(71·7)	21·9	340·0	243·3	278·5	316·4	372·9	469·5	1·5	5·6
Other typists	64·4	20·9	314·0	221·8	250·4	298·7	350·8	434·6	1·3	4·9
Telephonists	(60·4)	19·6	(310·7)	215·9	250·7	311·5	358·8	402·5	1·9	7·1
VIII Selling	47·2	19·1	247·9	204·4	217·8	229·9	267·9	311·9	0·4	1·3
Saleswomen, shop assistants, shelf fillers	46·4	19·0	244·7	204·9	218·3	229·2	264·2	305·4	0·4	1·1
Manual										
X Catering, cleaning, hairdressing and other personal service	44·8	18·1	251·6	193·2	215·2	235·7	269·8	319·3	0·3	0·8
Chefs/cooks	(62·7)	23·5	(267·0)	208·1	231·5	251·7	285·0	353·6	1·6	5·7
Barmaids	(31·4)	14·7	215·3	187·5	202·4	206·5	220·0	263·9	0·8	3·2
Counter hands	(44·8)	19·2	241·6	191·6	214·9	228·9	260·6	298·3	1·0	2·8
Kitchen hands	46·7	19·4	245·9	195·4	217·7	228·1	261·0	313·8	0·9	2·6
Home and domestic helpers, maids	53·6	21·0	255·1	194·8	229·3	250·4	267·9	315·5	0·6	1·5
School helpers and school supervisory assistants	(27·1)	10·7	254·3	200·5	215·2	226·9	252·7	319·8	0·8	2·6
Hospital ward orderlies	(67·1)	22·7	295·9	199·9	232·8	273·7	340·0	417·7	1·6	5·2
Other cleaners	41·5	17·0	247·4	191·7	217·2	234·7	269·4	305·7	0·4	1·1
XII Materials processing (excluding metals)	(64·3)	24·3	266·5	196·4	226·0	251·3	292·0	342·9	1·9	4·9
XIII Making and repairing (excluding metal and electrical)	(61·4)	23·9	(269·0)	190·7	215·6	251·7	300·7	352·5	1·6	5·9
XV Painting, repetitive assembling, product inspecting, packaging and related	59·4	22·9	268·7	192·2	225·5	258·5	302·9	356·2	1·0	3·1
Packers, bottlers, canners, fillers	(59·8)	23·2	266·4	192·0	226·9	256·3	299·1	343·2	1·4	4·2
All non-manual occupations	65·9	20·0	330·4	212·8	237·8	290·5	378·8	517·6	0·4	1·7
All manual occupations	47·0	18·8	255·2	193·4	216·4	238·6	276·5	327·5	0·3	0·7
All occupations	57·2	19·4	296·5	203·3	225·3	257·6	323·7	432·1	0·2	1·0

[1] Except for parts of groups VII to IX.

Notes:

1. The numbers in the sample to which the estimates of weekly hours and hourly earnings in this table relate are given in table 173. The numbers in the sample to which the estimates of weekly earnings relate are, generally similar.

2. and 3. See notes 2 and 3 to table 176.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if, for both the north-west region and Great Britain as a whole, he will list in the *Official Report* each change to the system measuring unemployment, by date; and what effect these changes had in numerical and percentage terms on the recorded number of unemployed.

Mr. Lee: A full description of all the changes which have affected the coverage of monthly unemployment figures since 1979 was given on page 422 of the October 1986 edition of *Employment Gazette*. Following are the estimated average monthly effects of each change at the time it occurred expressed as a number and as a percentage of the number of unemployed people for the north-west region and Great Britain. The figures do not provide an estimate of the number of people currently affected by the changes. These effects will have varied over time depending on economic and demographic factors. The regional and national seasonally adjusted series provide a back series consistent with the current coverage of the count.

Changes affecting the unemployment count

	North West		*Great Britain*	
	Number	*Per cent.*	*Number*	*Per cent.*
Fortnightly attendance and payment October 1979	+2,600	+1·3	+20,000	+1·7
Long-term rate of supplementary benefit for older men December 1981-82	−4,300	−1·1	−37,000	−1·3
Switch from registrant to claimant count October 1982	−32,000	−6·9	−182,000	−6·2
Budget provision for older men April to July 1983	−18,300	−4·2	−160,300	−5·5
Reduction of over-recording March 1986	−5,380	−1·2	−48,460	−1·5

Small Businesses

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for the Employment if he will list the measures he has taken to encourage Government Departments to use small businesses.

Mr. Cope: This Department has taken a number of steps to encourage Government Departments to buy from small businesses, through meetings at ministerial level and with senior purchasing officials. In addition, the Department has decided to fund the recruitment of a private sector secondee to work in the central unit on purchasing to promote the opportunities available.

The Department has also taken action to assist and encourage small businesses to obtain Government contracts, primarily by improving the quality of information made available to them. We publish a booklet, "Tendering for Government Contracts", which gives guidance on what Government Departments seek to buy and the names and addresses of the relevant contacts. Departments, including the Ministry of Defence and this Department, also publish booklets providing more specific information on the purchasing opportunities within their Departments.

ENERGY

Lead-free Petrol

Mr. Holt: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what percentage of the total United Kingdom petrol sales in each of the past five years has been of unleaded petrol.

Mr. Peter Morrison: Information on the sales of unleaded petrol prior to April 1987 is not available. From that date, sales of unleaded petrol represented 0·1 per cent. of the total United Kingdom petrol sales in 1987 and 0·3 per cent. in the first five months of 1988. Detailed figures are given in the table.

United Kingdom

	Sales of unleaded petrol	*Total petrol sales*	*Unleaded as percentage of total sales*
	000 tonnes	*000 tonnes*	*Per cent.*
1987			
2nd quarter	4·5	5,648·0	0·08
3rd quarter	6·6	5,764·6	0·11
4th quarter	7·1	5,733·8	0·12
1988			
1st quarter	10·6	5,514·3	0·19
April and May	18·1	3,817·4	0·47

Power Stations (Sulphurisation Control)

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will take steps to ensure that currently defunct electricity power stations purchased by entrepreneurs for new power generation will be made through planning controls to fit sulphurisation control equipment; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Parkinson: It is already Government policy that all new power stations and all power stations coming on stream after a period of a year without generating will have to fit emission control equipment. Her Majesty's pollution inspectorate already has the necessary powers to ensure that this is done.

Electricity Privatisation

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy how Her Majesty's Government will ensure that the future generation of electricity, when privatised, will be strictly controlled in order to avoid environmental pollution.

Mr. Parkinson: This task will be carried out by Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution or, in Scotland, Her Majesty's industrial pollution inspectorate, which has the necessary statutory powers to control air pollution. Similarly, the control authorities for solid and liquid wastes also have the necessary powers to enable them to carry out their responsibilities.

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy, further to his reply to the supplementary question by the hon. Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy), *Official Report*, 4 July, column 712, which steps he took that led to his conclusion that reports that South African mining interests are preparing to take a substantial interest in, and influence over, a privatised electricity generating industry are pure fiction.

Mr. Parkinson: As I told the hon. Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy) on 4 July, there is no evidence that South African mining interests wish to have a major investment in the electricity supply industry.

ENVIRONMENT

GREA (London)

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will set out the 1988-89 grant-related expenditure assessments for each of the inner London boroughs in respect of housing, recreational and personal social services.

Mr. Chope: Details of grant-related expenditure assessments for every local authority are published in "The Technical Handbook of Grant Related Expenditure 1988-89", copies of which are in the Library.

Local Authority Expenditure

Mr. Heddle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to announce his conclusions following his consultation on capital controls on local authority expenditure.

Mr. Ridley: My proposals for a new legislative framework to regulate local authority capital expenditure and finance were published yesterday in a consultation paper, which has been sent to the local authority associations, to county, district, and borough councils in England and Wales, and to other interested bodies. I am sending a copy to my hon. Friend. Those wishing to comment on the proposals have been asked to do so by 7 October 1988.

Pharaoh's Ants

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will provide additional resources to the London borough of Newham to deal with outbreaks of pharaoh's ant infestation in high-rise blocks of flats.

Mrs. Roe: A hormone treatment is now available. It has been used effectively on the Ferrier estate in Greenwich without the need for additional resources from Government.

Coral

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what measures are currently adopted by his Department to advise traders of the requirements in appendix II of the conference on international trade in endangered species 1985, relating to hard corals.

Mr. Moynihan: The Department issues a notice to importers and exporters to advise traders of conservation controls. A revised edition issued in 1987 lists all corals subject to control following the 1985 CITES conference.

Sport and Leisure

Mr. Bernie Grant: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether, under his plans to privatise the management of local authority sport and leisure facilities, local authorities will be permitted to claw back any of the profits made by the companies which are awarded contracts to manage such services; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moynihan *[holding answer 5 July 1988]*: If Parliament approves the order to apply the competition provisions of the Local Government Act 1988 to the management of local authority sport and leisure facilities, any question of profit sharing will be a matter for negotiation between individual authorities and potential contractors. Authorities will not, however, be able to insist on profit sharing arrangements which would restrict, distort or prevent competition.

Ordnance Survey

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish in the *Official Report* tables, in the same format as table 2, table 3 of HC 177 of 1987-88, showing the core activities and performance against target of the Ordnance Survey for the period 1974-75 to 1987-88.

Mr. Moynihan *[holding answer Thursday 7 July 1988]*: Information about Ordnance Survey finances are given in its annual reports and trading accounts, which are published.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when it is expected that the trading fund accounts for the Ordnance Survey for 1986-87 will be published.

Mr. Moynihan *[holding answer Thursday 7 July 1988]*: The trading accounts for the Ordnance Survey for 1986-87 were ordered by the House of Commons to be printed on 16 March 1988 and are now available.

DEFENCE

Service Personnel (Radiation)

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the implications for his Department's policy towards compensating service men for the alleged effects of radioactivity suffered during nuclear tests in the 1950s of the telegram, dated 31 July 1956, sent by Mr. Lloyd, a member of the Medical Research Council, to an official in his Department, Mr. Wheeler, stipulating that the Medical Research Council's findings on genetic effects, radioactivity and strontium levels should be interpreted as not showing any increase, rather than as showing an increase, as originally proposed.

Mr. Sainsbury: Shortly after the Medical Research Council report "Hazards to Man of Nuclear and Allied Radiations" (Cmnd. 9780) was published in June 1956, briefing material was prepared for Sir William Penney to use in Australia during press conferences etc. prior to the Buffalo tests later that year. The briefing material, which is in the Public Records Office (AVIA 65/814 enclosure 180), dealt with the effects of atomic explosions and with radioactivity in general. It also included reference to the Medical Research Council report and commented as follows:

> "Regarding the genetic effects of radiation the evidence from the bombed cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and from those such as uranium mine workers and radiologists, whose work brings them into contact with more than the normal amounts of radioactivity, shows no increase in hereditary diseases".

The telegram of 31 July 1956, to which the hon. Member refers was from Captain Lloyd, an official in Ministry of Supply to the MofS representative Mr. Wheeler in Canberra (same Public Records Office reference enclosure 187). Its purpose was to make a number of drafting changes to the briefing document and in particular, it suggests a change of emphasis in the above quotation to better reflect the Medical Research Council report conclusions from "show no increase" to

> "has not shown an increase".

Unfortunately, the telegram appears to have contained a typographical error when quoting the original Medical Research Council document and the copy found shows an amendment in manuscript deleting "an" and substituting "no". The copy held in another Public Records Office file (AVIA 65 152 enclosure 49) does not appear to have been similarly amended. Therefore it was concluded that, although the telegram contained an error, it enabled the recipient to identify where a change was needed and he was in no danger of being misled.

In the circumstances, it is not thought that this telegram has any implications for the Department's policy on compensation of test participants which was reached after consideration of a wide range of evidence, including the Medical Research Council report as well as a considerable volume of material published since.

Royal Military Academy, Sandhurst

Mr. Holt: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what percentage of officers qualifying at the royal military academy, Sandhurst in eash of the past five years were drawn from *(a)* the North of England, and *(b)* the South of England.

Mr. Freeman: The infomation is not readily available and can be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Holt: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he next expects to consider the relocation of the royal military academy, Sandhurst to a new site.

Mr. Freeman: I have nothing further to add to the reply I gave on 28 June at column *227.*

Joint Security Operations

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence on how many occasions in each of the past five years military personnel have been involved in joint security operations with the civil forces.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The information requested is not held centrally and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

WALES

Sheep (Monitoring)

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give a county by county breakdown of where the 1,380 marked sheep were remonitored between 28 September 1987 and 1 June 1988.

Mr. Grist: Of the 1,380 sheep remonitored in this period, 1,208 were in Gwynedd, 90 in Powys, 72 in Clwyd and 10 in Dyfed.

Primary Schools

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many primary schools in each Welsh county at the latest available date had *(a)* fewer than 10 pupils, *(b)* 10 to 19 pupils, *(c)* 20 to 29 pupils, *(d)* 30 to 39 pupils, *(e)* 40 to 49 pupils, *(f)* 50 to 59 pupils, *(g)* 60 to 99 pupils, *(h)* 100 to 150 pupils, *(i)* 151 to 199 pupils and *(j)* 200 or more pupils.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The information in respect of January 1988 is as follows:—

Local education authorities in Wales

Size of primary school	*Clwyd*	*Dyfed*	*Gwent*	*Gwynedd*	*Mid Glamorgan*	*Powys*	*South Glamorgan*	*West Glamorgan*
Less than 10	0	1	0	1	1	0	0	0
10–19	6	8	1	2	1	7	0	0
20–29	12	36	7	17	1	12	2	0
30–39	13	43	3	20	5	14	1	4
40–49	10	24	5	17	5	8	0	1
50–59	19	27	6	17	5	12	1	0
60–99	36	60	25	52	32	27	12	15
100–150	46	64	42	28	79	14	15	23
151–199	37	28	54	22	92	7	32	35
200 or more	73	32	89	20	91	13	93	90
Total	252	323	232	196	312	114	156	168

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many primary schools in each Welsh county with *(a)* fewer than 10 pupils, *(b)* 10 to 19 pupils, *(c)* 20 to 29 pupils, *(d)* 30 to 39 pupils, *(e)* 40 to 49 pupils, *(f)* 50 to 59 pupils, *(g)* 60 to 99 pupils, *(h)* 100 to 150 pupils, *(i)* 151 to 199 pupils and *(j)* 200 or more pupils have closed or are due to close in each year from 1974 to 1988.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Information in the form requested which distinguishes between the size of schools is not available. A comparison between the number of primary schools closed in Wales during the period 1974 to 1988 could be misleading as many closures occur as part of wider schemes of reorganisation or amalgamation which can incorporate the establishment of new schools.

The table shows the net change in the number of primary schools by local education authority for the period January 1974 to January 1988.

				Local education authority				
Net change per year	*Clwyd*	*Dyfed*	*Gwent*	*Gwynedd*	*Mid-Glamorgan*	*Powys*	*South Glamorgan*	*West Glamorgan*
1974-75	−1	−2	−1	−2	—	+1	—	+1
1975-76	+6	−1	+3	−1	−1	−3	+2	—
1976-77								
−2	−2	−5	−6	−1	—	−1	+2	—
1977-78	+4	−3	−3	−3	+1	−1	−1	−2
1978-79	—	−1	−5	−2	—	−4	+2	−2

Net change per year	*Clwyd*	*Dyfed*	*Gwent*	*Local education authority* *Gwynedd*	*Mid-Glamorgan*	*Powys*	*South Glamorgan*	*West Glamorgan*
1979-80	−2	+1	−7	—	+2	—	+4	−3
1980-81	−1	−2	−3	—	−4	−2	−3	−2
1981-82	−3	−6	−10	−1	−2	−4	−4	−5
1982-83	−2	−5	−1	−1	+2	−3	−7	−12
1983-84	−5	−4	−3	—	−3	−1	−3	−4
1984-85	−1	−3	−8	—	−5	−2	−3	−3
1985-86	−1	−6	−14	—	+3	−2	−2	—
1986-87	—	−6	−1	—	—	−2	—	−3
1987-88	+1	—	−6	−2	—	−1	—	−1

Non-domestic Rate

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what estimate he is able to give as to the Welsh non-domestic rate in 1990-91 on the basis of present local government expenditure plans; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist *[holding answer 7 July 1988]:* On the basis of current rateable values, a national non-domestic rate of 257·6p would give the same yield as that estimated to be raised from non-domestic rates in Wales in 1988-89.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Social Security Reform

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will tabulate figures for each of a single and a married pensioner, where the wife receives category B pension, assuming rents and rates as in his Department's November tax benefit model tables, and that benefit entitlement is maximised, comparing net weekly spending power under the existing system in December with spending power, assuming that his proposed 1988-89 benefit changes, with benefit rates deflated to April 1987 prices, had already taken effect, in each of the following circumstances *(a)* full national insurance basic pension plus additional/earnings related/occupational pension of £0, £5, £10, £20, £30, £40, and £50 a week and *(b)* full national basic pension plus investment income of £0, £5, £10, £20, £30, £40, and £50 a week.

Mr. Portillo: This question could be answered only at disproportionate cost.

Spending Power

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) pursuant to the answers given to the hon. Member for Birkenhead of 19 May, *Official Report,*columns *550-52,* if he will place in the Library details of the assumptions used for each of the hypothetical supplementary benefit calculations both in the original tables, *Official Report,* 11 March, columns *406-8,* and in the revised tables, *Official Report,* 19 May, columns *550-52;* and why revisions in these hypothetical supplementary benefit calculations were made;

(2) when he expects to be able to answer the question from the hon. Member for Birkenhead on comparisons between supplementary benefit and income support entitlements tabled for answer on 8 June.

Mr. Portillo: A note has been placed in the Library.

Maternity Services

Mr. Evennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) which outer London health districts are self-sufficient in terms of maternity bed provision;

(2) how many maternity beds are available in each of the outer London health districts; and if he will express these figures in per capita terms.

Mrs. Currie: The information requested is given in the table. Women do not necessarily have their babies in the home district but with medical advice choose the maternity unit which offers the type of care desired. Neonatal obstetric and medical factors also have bearing on the choice of maternity unit.

Average daily number of available beds in the maternity sector, NHS hospitals, outer London district health authorities, 1986

District Health Authority	*Average daily available beds*	[1] *Resident female population (thousands) 15-44 year olds*	*Available beds per 1,000 female population aged 15-44*
Barnet	110	70·0	1·6
Harrow	100	44·6	2·2
Hillingdon	77	51·2	1·5
Hounslow and Spelthorne	110	62·4	1·8
Ealing	55	70·0	0·8
Brent	58	61·3	0·9
Barking, Havering and Brentwood	101	96·3	1·1
Enfield	89	58·5	1·5
Haringey	69	47·1	1·5
Redbridge	103	49·3	2·1
Waltham Forest	89	49·1	1·8
Bexley	83	49·2	1·7
Greenwich	90	49·3	1·8
Bromley	77	62·7	1·2
Croydon	64	72·5	0·9
Kingston and Esher	59	38·1	1·6
Richmond, Twickenham and Roehampton	35	51·7	0·7
Merton and Sutton	55	72·7	0·8

[1] Mid year population estimate source, OPCS.

Alzheimer's Disease

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list in the *Official Report,* for each regional health authority in England, the number of reported cases of Alzheimer's disease in each of the last six years.

Mrs. Currie: The only information available centrally relates to admissions to National Health Service mental illness hospitals and units in England with a main diagnosis of presenile or senile dementia (ICD 290.0, 290.2, 290.3) and is shown in the table. Dementia in alzheimer's disease is included under these diagnoses.

(Data on arteriosclerotic dementia and dementia from 'other' and 'unspecified' causes (ICD 290.4, 290.8 and 290.9) are recorded separately).

The figures do not relate to individual patients as a patient can be discharged and readmitted more than once during the year.

All admissions to mental illness hospitals and units with a diagnosis of presenile or senile dementia[1]*, by Regional Health Authority of treatment, 1981-86*

Regional Health Authority	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*
England	14,855	15,908	16,707	19,183	19,931	19,727
Northern	1,163	1,050	1,215	1,499	1,496	1,270
Yorkshire	1,086	1,230	1,557	1,587	1,732	1,744
Trent	1,190	1,225	1,397	1,721	1,935	2,045
East Anglian	834	1,000	1,100	1,409	1,299	1,237
N W Thames	799	773	989	1,001	1,088	1,118
N E Thames	1,039	1,173	1,205	1,395	1,279	1,237
S W Thames	899	1,172	959	920	1,085	917
S E Thames	1,084	893	979	1,061	1,124	1,217
Wessex	1,580	1,563	1,638	1,836	1,646	1,551
Oxford	1,022	1,208	982	1,286	1,640	1,759
South Western	1,106	1,477	1,370	1,382	1,491	1,342
West Midlands	1,011	947	1,052	1,154	1,317	1,385
Mersey	935	970	889	1,280	1,352	1342
North Western	1,085	1,214	1,349	1,628	1,431	1,542
Special Health Authority	22	13	26	23	18	21

[1] ICD codes 290.0, 290.1, 290·2, 290.3.

Source: Mental Health Enquiry.

Elderly Persons

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the total expenditure by the Department on research into care for the elderly.

Mrs. Currie: In 1987-88 about £1·1 million was spent on research on the care of the elderly in the community, in hospitals and nursing homes.

Operating Theatres

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what action is being taken to remedy the under-use of operating theatres; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: New data on the proportion of operations cancelled are being produced which will assist health authorities in their task of monitoring performance in this area. The management consultancy branch of the Department is carrying out a study into the management and organisation of operating theatre departments under the guidance of an independent steering group chaired by Professor Peter Gilroy Bevan. Good practice guidance will be considered in the light of its report which is expected early in 1989.

Social Fund

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services when a decision on the level of the social fund for the financial year 1989-90 will be taken.

Mr. Portillo: In the autumn.

Day Care

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services, pursuant to his reply of 15 March, *Official Report*, column *553*, what steps he is taking to ensure that the provision of day care places is sufficient and that the provision of adult training places is sufficient, in the absence of central information on the numbers of mentally handicapped people either leaving full-time education or being discharged from hospitals and needing such care.

Mrs. Currie: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to him on 12 April at column *99*.

Curzon Marketing

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what system his Department normally uses to distribute literature, including leaflets, application forms etc.; on what basis he decided to retain the services of Curzon Marketing to distribute housing benefit application forms; whether he has retained private firms in the past five years to perform similar services; and which other services he plans to contract out to private companies.

Mr. Portillo: The Department uses a variety of outlets in distributing its leaflets. These include social security offices, citizen's advice bureaux, the Post Office, local authorities, hospitals and doctors and dental surgeries as well as the Department's leaflet unit at Stanmore, Middlesex and commercial mailing contractors.

The Department may use an outside mailing contractor where large amounts of material need to be sent out quickly. The Department was satisfied that Curzon had the facilities to do the work at very short notice within the time required.

Seventeen different mailing contractors have been employed to undertake this type of work since 1986.

The Department is committed to a policy of securing value for money. It keeps the costs of all its services under regular review.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many contracts have been awarded by his Department, in each of the last five years, to Curzon Marketing; how many firms tendered for the contract for distributing application forms for help with housing benefit; whether the tenders submitted by Curzon

Marketing was the lowest submitted; and if he will place a copy of the contract awarded to Curzon Marketing in the Library.

Mr. Portillo: Contracts with Curzon Marketing have been awarded through the COI and through the Department. The number of contracts awarded to Curzon Marketing in each of the last five years is:

Year	*Number*
1988-89	2 contracts
1987-88	7 contracts
1986-87	5 contracts
1985-86	1 contract
1984-85	0 contracts

For the housing benefit campaign Curzon Marketing were approached to see if it could handle the distribution at very short notice as an addition to work it was already doing for the Department. The extra work was not separately tendered because it was urgent. It is not departmental practice to give information which is commercially confidential, and the contract cannot therefore be placed in the Library.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many application forms necessary for those claiming help over housing benefit loss have been issued to date by Curzon Marketing.

Mr. Portillo: Up to 1 July, 800,000 copies of leaflet RR4 "Housing Benefit—New Rules" containing application forms have been sent out by Curzon Marketing.

Housing Benefit

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations he has received about the impact of housing benefit changes on widows; and what has been his response.

Mr. Portillo: We have received a considerable number of representations on behalf of widows and other groups. The Government responded on 27 April by announcing that the housing benefit capital limit would be raised from £6,000 to £8,000 and that transitional help would be available to those in certain vulnerable groups, including widows in receipt of a widow's pension, who had lost more than £2·50 a week in their housing benefit as a result of the changes.

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what will be the housing benefit paid to *(a)* a single pensioner under 79 years, *(b)* a single pensioner over 80 years, *(c)* a pensioner couple under 79 years, *(d)* a pensioner couple over 80 years, *(e)* a single person aged under 25 years, *(f)* a single person aged 25 to 59 years, *(g)* a single parent, working with one child under 11 years, *(h)* a single parent, working with two children over 11 years, *(i)* a couple, one working, without children, *(j)* a couple, one working, with one child under 11 years and *(k)* a couple, one working, with two children under 11 years where rent and rates are (i) 25 per cent. below average, (ii) average and (iii) 25 per cent. above average and gross weekly income is *(x)* at the level of unemployment benefit and *(y)* equivalent of earnings of £45, £55, £65, £75, £85, £95, £110 and £125 a week, under the current scheme and under the April 1988 changes to it; and, in each case, at what level of income entitlement to housing benefit would disappear, taking account where necessary of potential entitlement to family income supplement and family credit.

Mr. Portillo *[holding answer 3 December 1987]:* This question could be answered only at disproportionate cost.

Attendance Allowance

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what changes have been made in criteria for the attendance allowance or in their interpretation; when these changes were made; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: Statutory changes in the qualifying criteria for attendance allowance are listed in the table. Changes in judicial interpretation of the criteria which are of general application are published in "Reported Decisions of the Social Security Commissioner", copies of which are in the Library.

Date of change	*Enactment of Statutory Instrument*	*The change*
9 August 1972	National Insurance Act 1972	Introduced the lower rate of allowance for attendance needs by day *or* night (implemented in stages depending upon the disabled person's date of birth)
22 March 1979	Social Security Act 1979	Enabled people undergoing renal dialysis treatment at home to satisfy the criteria for the lower rate allowance
31 August 1987	Social Security (Attendance Allowance) Amendment Regulations 1987	Extended the lower rate allowance to people dialysing in hospital self-care units
15 March 1988	Social Security Act 1988	Amended the criterion for people in need of watching over at night because their disabilities pose a risk of substantial danger to themselves or others (in order to return the law to the position before the Court of Appeal decision in the Moran case)

AIDS

Mr. Rost: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services in relation to the possible involvement of immunisation procedures in the aetiology of AIDS, whether there have been any trials in the United Kingdom involving adenovirus vaccines.

Mr. Newton: There have been no clinical trials of adenovirus vaccine in the United Kingdom.

Income Support

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the value of income support for *(a)* a single person aged under 25 years, *(b)* a single person aged over 25 years, *(c)* a married couple, *(d)* a one-parent family with one child aged four years, *(e)* a married couple with two children aged four and six years, *(f)* a pensioner couple aged 65 years and *(g)* a disabled person with entitlement to disability premium, as a proportion of average net earnings for all males and manual male workers.

Mr. Portillo: The information requested is given in the table:

Income support benefit rates—as a percentage of average earnings

	As percentage of average net earnings: All males	*As percentage of average net earnings. All manual male workers*
Single Person		
age 16-17	11·1	13·3
age 18-24	15·0	17·8
age 25 and over	19·2	22·8
Married couple	28·4	33·5
Married couple with two children aged 4 and 6	37·3	43·4
One parent family with one child aged 4		
aged 16-17	21·2	24·9
aged 18 and over	28·7	33·6
Pensioner couple aged 65	37·4	44·1
Pensioner couple aged 65 in receipt of Higher Pensioner Premium	38·7	45·7
Disabled person entitled to disability premium	26·7	31·7

Notes:

1. Net average earnings are taken to be provisional gross average earnings less tax and National Insurance contributions at the non-contracted out rate, plus child benefit where appropriate.
2. The calculations for one parent families incorporate the additional personal tax allowance in respect of a one parent family.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Advisory and Development Services

Mr. John: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether any officials conducting the review into the statutory charges for advisory and development services are *(a)* a non-executive director of food companies and *(b)* otherwise formally connected with the private sector food industry.

Mr. Donald Thompson *[holding answer 1 July 1988]*: The answer to both questions is no.

Research

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the research work his Ministry has funded at the River laboratory, Forest Stoke, Wareham, and the amount of money paid by his Ministry for each project over the last five years.

Mr. Donald Thompson *[holding answer 7 July 1988.]*: My Department has funded only one project at the River laboratory, Wareham over the last five years. This was concerned with salmonid—coarse fish interacations in chalk streams with funding in 1983-84, 1984-85 and 1985-86 at £45,400, £47,900 and £48,000 respectively. This project ceased in 1985-86 and there has been no subsequent expenditure with the River laboratory.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Poultry Processing Premises (Millisle)

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether the former poultry processing premises at Abbey road, Millisle, County Down has been given change of use planning approval to be used as a prawn shelling plant.

Mr. Needham: No.

Social Fund

Mr. Hume: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the total number of claims for maternity payments, funeral expenses, community care grants, budgeting loans and crisis loans made to the social fund in each social security office since 11 April.

Mr. Needham: The information for the period 11 April 1988 to 31 May 1988 (the latest date for which information is available) is given below:

Social Fund
Total number of applications: 11 April 1988 to 31 May 1988

Social Security Office	*Funeral payments*	*Maternity payments*	*Crisis loans*	*Budgeting loans*	*Community grants*	*Total*
Andersontown	9	53	69	144	37	312
Antrim	16	52	108	337	19	532
Armagh	7	28	21	33	22	111
Ballymena	21	40	76	262	14	413
Ballymoney	15	24	21	71	4	135
Ballynahinch	3	3	4	13	9	32
Banbridge	8	10	9	29	12	68
Bangor	5	14	40	122	35	216
Carrickfergus	7	12	50	98	34	201
Coleraine	19	43	70	178	23	333
Cookstown	12	24	22	53	25	136
Corporation Street	23	79	151	247	43	543
Downpatrick	6	20	35	57	33	151
Dungannon	26	33	22	41	12	134
Enniskillen	27	39	28	58	24	176
Falls	20	79	143	325	27	594
Holywood Road	10	25	71	219	32	357
Kilkeel	3	6	3	12	16	40
Knockbreda	5	20	31	187	29	272
Larne	16	21	40	170	14	261

Social Security Office	*Funeral payments*	*Maternity payments*	*Crisis loans*	*Budgeting loans*	*Community grants*	*Total*
Limavady	17	40	24	94	32	207
Lisburn	14	25	40	360	24	463
Londonderry	26	92	77	112	85	392
Lurgan	13	42	83	75	40	253
Magherafelt	20	24	15	24	33	116
Newcastle	6	5	14	23	12	60
Newry	40	71	30	95	76	312
Newtownabbey	9	24	154	200	30	417
Newtownards	4	17	24	73	3	121
Omagh	26	41	20	74	24	185
Portadown	9	13	39	76	13	150
Shaftesbury Square	6	30	96	227	35	394
Shankill	9	26	114	289	41	479
Strabane	16	19	31	81	18	165
TOTAL	473	1,094	1,775	4,459	930	8,731

Mr. Hume: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the number and total value of social fund payments made by each social security office in Northern Ireland since 11th April.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 7 July 1988]:* Information for the period 11 April 1988 to 31 May 1988 (the latest date for which information is available) is given below:

Social Security Office	*Number*	*Payments (£)*
Andersonstown	57	7,978·22
Antrim	36	6,056·74
Armagh	27	4,574·71
Ballymena	37	5,169·50
Ballymoney	40	8,453·64
Ballynahinch	5	328·24
Banbridge	11	2,026·50
Bangor	15	3,342·70
Carrickfergus	14	2,040·95
Coleraine	73	13,221·93
Cookstown	26	4,965·90
Corporation Street	81	13,404·00
Downpatrick	24	3,426·40
Dungannon	50	13,612·45
Enniskillen	45	10,508·55
Falls	79	15,169·22
Holywood Road	29	5,692·12
Kilkeel	12	1,549·75
Knockbreda	19	2,717·17
Larne	11	1,435·50
Limavady	32	5,059·34
Lisburn	38	10,103·10
Londonderry	118	23,985·67
Lurgan	30	3,978·00
Magherafelt	41	10,041·00
Newcastle	11	3,100·35
Newry	76	15,216·59
Newtownabbey	23	2,361·76
Newtownards	16	2,539·85
Omagh	44	9,715·15
Portadown	19	3,903·19
Shaftesbury Square	11	1,238·38
Shankhill	25	3,207·09
Strabane	29	6,339·00
TOTAL	1,204	226,462·66

Crisis Loans

Mr. Hume: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the number and total value of crisis loans given by each social security office since 11 April.

Mr. Needham: The information for the period 11 April 1988 to 31 May 1988 (the latest date for which information is available) is given below:

Crisis loans awarded: 11 April 1988-31 May 1988

Social Security Office	*Number*	*Amounts (£)*
Andersonstown	61	5,010·31
Antrim	97	5,148·46
Armagh	18	571·31
Ballymena	70	3,200·00
Ballymoney	16	760·00
Ballynahinch	3	158·24
Banbridge	8	663·40
Bangor	37	1,260·55
Carrickfergus	42	1,999·92
Coleraine	54	2.348·91
Cookstown	19	540·33
Corporation Street	142	6,397·21
Downpatrick	29	1,058·66
Dungannon	21	1,457·17
Enniskillen	21	684·79
Falls	137	5,710·63
Holywood Road	60	2,579·00
Kilkeel	0	0·00
Knockbreda	20	1,432·85
Larne	36	1,721·91
Limavady	3	125·11
Lisburn	40	1,726·32
Londonderry	68	5,351·00
Lurgan	72	3,896·97
Magherafelt	13	426·89
Newcastle	12	517·37
Newry	23	1,041·61
Newtownabbey	137	6,729·83
Newtownards	21	749·16
Omagh	19	1,371·38
Portadown	34	1,767·00
Shaftesbury Square	80	3,424·95
Shankhill	105	6,215·73
Strabane	26	2,381·79
Total	1,544	78,428·76

Supplementary Benefit

Mr. Hume: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the number of people in receipt of supplementary benefit in each social security office in Northern Ireland in a given week in each of April, May and June 1987.

Mr. Needham: The information is available only for May 1987 and is as follows:

Number of people receiving supplementary benefit on 6 May 1987

SSO	*Number*
Andersonstown	7,600
Antrim	5,448
Armagh	4,814
Ballymena	5,971
Ballymoney	4,552
Ballynahinch	1,463
Banbridge	3,268
Bangor	4,519
Carrickfergus	3,021
Coleraine	5,973
Cookstown	3,444
Corporation Street	12,159
Downpatrick	2,458
Dungannon	5,873
Enniskillen	8,290
Falls Road	9,034
Holywood Road	8,783
Kilkeel	1,440
Knockbreda	6,223
Larne	2,799
Limavady	3,136
Lisburn	6,628
Londonderry	14,818
Lurgan	5,688
Magherafelt	5,175
Newcastle	1,861
Newry	9,457
Newtownabbey	5,415
Newtownards	3,986
Omagh	5,530
Portadown	3,728
Shaftesbury Square	6,896
Shankill	5,209
Strabane	5,121
Total	190,780

Mr. Hume: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what were the total amounts of weekly payments under supplementary benefit, including additional requirements paid through each social security office in Northern Ireland in a given week in April, May and June 1987.

Mr. Needham: The information is available only for May 1987 and is as follows:

Weekly payments of supplementary benefit including additional requirements 6 May 1987

Social security office	*Amount £*
Antrim	171,092
Armagh	147,370
Ballymena	175,409
Ballymoney	140,375
Ballynahinch	43,663
Banbridge	79,899
Bangor	106,107
Carrickfergus	76,337
coleraine	154,042
Cookstown	120,303
Downpatrick	63,287
Dungannon	201,348
Enniskillen	258,203
Larne	83,707
Limavady	107,661
Lisburn	178,153
Londonderry	514,357
Lurgan	177,937
Magherafelt	161,332
Newcastle	60,124
Newry	334,186
Newtownards	100,194
Omagh	179,653
Portadown	107,332
Strabane	212,344
Kilkeel	48,344
Shaftesbury Square	191,367
Corporation Street	371,311
Shankill	122,352
Knockbreda	158,176
Falls Road	282,080
Holywood Road	232,995
Newtownabbey	154,442
Andersonstown	286,664
Total	5,802,146

Source: Annual Statistical Inquiry (5 per cent. sample).

Plastic Bullets

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the total compensation paid in each year since 1972 under the criminal injuries compensation legislation to victims or the families of victims of death or injury by plastic bullets in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Stanley: The information requested is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Housing Executive

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if, further to his answers to the hon. Member for Londonderry, East regarding Housing Executive contracts on 23 March, *Official Report*, column *169*, and 29 April, *Official Report*, columns *304-6*, he will indicate the reasons why the sums due to the contractors for contract D were not paid on a monthly basis as per normal contract conditions and why payment of £18,084 was delayed for 14 months after the end of the contract period; if he will show for that contract how much of the sums due at the end of each month were paid and how much not paid, or as much of such information as is available to him; and if he will show for that contract the contract price, the total actually paid to complete the contract including sums awarded at arbitration, the date of final payment and the date of practical completion.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 21 June 1988]:* This is a matter for the Northern Ireland Housing Executive but I have been advised by the chief executive that payments were generally made in accordance with the terms of contract. In most cases payments were made monthly and in all cases payments were made within 14 days of amounts due being agreed with the contractor. No sums due were deliberately withheld and no amount of £18,084 was withheld for 14 months after the end of the contract period. Payments were made to the contractor during this period as the final account was progressively agreed. The other details requested are:

1. contract price: £125,531·85
2. total sums paid to complete the contract, including sums awarded at arbitration: £164,384
3. date of final payment: 12 May 1987
4. date of practical completion: 20 September 1983

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if, further to his answers to the hon. Member for Londonderry, East regarding Housing Executive contracts on 23 March, *Official Report*, column

169, and 29 April, *Official Report*, columns *304-6*, he will indicate the reasons why the sums due to the contractors for contract C were not paid on a monthly basis as per normal contract conditions and why payment of £47,585 was not paid for 16 months after the end of the contract period; if he will show for that contract how much of the sums due at the end of each month were paid, and how much not paid, or as much of such information as is available to him; and if he will show for that contract the contract price, the total sums actually paid to complete the contract, including sums awarded at arbitration, the date of final payment and the date of practical completion.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 21 June 1988]:* This is a matter for the Northern Ireland Housing Executive but I have been advised by the Chief Executive that payments were generally made in accordance with the terms of contract. In most cases payments were made monthly and in all cases payments were made within 14 days of amounts due being agreed with the contractor. No sums due were deliberately withheld and no amount of £47,585 was withheld for 16 months after the end of the contract period. Payments were made to the contractor during this period as the final account was progressively agreed. The other details requested are:

1. contract price: £202,056
2. total sums paid to complete the contract, including sums awarded at arbitration: £209,585.35
3. date of final payment: 20 January 1987
4. date of practical completion: 26 April 1982

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, further to his answers to the hon. Member for Londonderry, East of 29 April, *Official Report*, columns *304-6*, if he will indicate who is responsible for the technical audit in the Housing Executive and to whom they report; whether the technical audit forms part of the general audit, published for public inspection; and when and where members of the public may inspect it.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 21 June 1988]:* This is a matter for the Northern Ireland Housing Executive but I have been advised by the chief executive that technical audit is the responsibility of the director of technical services who reports directly to the chief executive. Technical audit does not form part of the general audit and is not available for public inspection.

Homelessness

Mr. Hume: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will identify submissions in response to the draft Housing (NI) Order which expressed concern about the indication that no more than £300,000 additional public expenditure is to be provided in respect of the new responsibilities for the homeless.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 5 July 1988]:* Submissions on the draft Housing (Northern Ireland) Order received from the following 13 groups expressed concern about the indication that no more than £300,000 additional public expenditure is to be provided in respect of the new responsibilities for the homeless.

Alliance Party
Coleraine Borough Council
Council for the Homeless (Northern Ireland)
Limavady District Council
Lower Lenadoon Housing Action Committee
Magherafelt District Council
Newry and Mourne District Council
Northern Ireland Association of Citizens Advice Bureau
Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action/Tenants Participation Advisory Service
Northern Ireland Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders
Omagh District Council
Simon (Northern Ireland)
The Workers Party

Mr. Hume: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many of the submissions, identifying them if possible, in response to the draft Housing (NI) Order 1988 proposed the abolition or extension of priority need categories affecting single homeless people.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 5 June 1988]:* Submissions on the Draft Housing (Northern Ireland) Order received from the following 41 groups and individuals proposed the abolition or extension of priority need categories:

Age Concern
Alliance Party
Association of District Committees for the Health and Personal Social Services for Northern Ireland
Ballymena Central YMCA
Belfast Housing Aid
Belfast Law Centre
Coleraine Borough Council
Community Technical Aid
Contact (Youth Counselling)
Council for the Homeless
Down District Council
Gingerbread
International Year of Shelter for the Homeless
Labour Party
Limavady District Council
Lower Lenadoon Housing Action Committee
Magherafelt District Council
Rev. W. McCrea MP
National Union Students-Union of Students in Ireland
Newry and Mourne District Council
Northern Ireland Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders
Northern Ireland Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux
Northern Ireland Committee Irish Congress of Trade Unions
Northern Ireland Committee Irish Congress of Trade Unions Youth Committee
Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action and Tenants Participation Advisory Service
Northern Ireland Youth Forum
Omagh District Council
The Presbyterian Church in Ireland
Probation Board for Northern Ireland
Salvation Army Social Services
Shelter (Northern Ireland)
Simon Community (National Office)
Simon Community Northern Ireland
Sinn Fein
Social Democratic and Labour Party
R. Storey, Esq.
Strabane District Council
SHAC (Students Housing Association Co-op Ltd.)
Western Health and Social Services Board
The Workers' Party
Youth Homelessness Group Northern Ireland

Mr. Hume: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will identify, and indicate how many, submissions there were in response to the draft Housing (NI) Order 1988 which proposed the removal or tightening up of the intentionality clause.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 5 July 1988]:* Submissions on the draft Housing (NI) Order received from the following 40 groups or individuals proposed the removal or tightening up of the intentionality clause:

Alliance Party
Association of District Committees for the Health and Personal Social Services Northern Ireland
Belfast Housing Aid
Belfast Law Centre
Coleraine Borough Council
Community Technical Aid
Council for the Homeless
Down District Council
Dungannon and District Housing Association Ltd.
Gingerbread
Institution of Environmental Health Officers
International Year of Shelter for the Homeless
Labour Party
Limavady District Council
Lower Lenadoon Housing Action Committee
Magherafelt District Council
Rev. W. McCrea MP
National Union of Students/Union of Students in Ireland
Newry and Mourne District Council
Northern Ireland Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders
Northern Ireland Association of Citizen Advice Bureaux
Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action and Tenants Participation Advisory Service
Northern Ireland Housing Council
Northern Ireland Youth Forum
Omagh District Council
Open Door Housing Association
The Presbyterian Church in Ireland
Probation Board for Northern Ireland
Queen's University Social Work Department
Salvation Army Social Services
Shelter (NI)
Simon Community (National Office)
Simon Community (Northern Ireland)
Sinn Fein
Social Democratic and Labour Party
R. Storey, Esq.
SHAC (Students Housing Association Co-op Ltd.)
Western Health and Social Services Board
The Workers' Party
Youth Homelessness Group Northern Ireland.

Mr. Hume: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will identify submissions in response to the draft Housing (NI) Order 1988 which proposed the introduction of an independent appeal mechanism for homeless persons.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 5 July 1988]:* Submissions on the draft Housing (NI) Order received from the following 39 groups or individuals recommend the introduction of an independent appeal mechanism for homeless persons:

Age Concern
Alliance Party
Association of District Committees for the Health and Personal Social Services (NI)
Belfast Law Centre
Coleraine Borough Council
Community Technical Aid
Council for the Homeless (NI)
Down District Council
Dungannon and District Housing Association
Gingerbread
Institution of Environmental Health Officers
International Year of Shelter for the Homeless
Labour Party
Limavady District Council
Lower Lenadoon Housing Action Committee
Magherafelt District Council
Rev. W. McCrea MP
National Union of Students/Union of Students in Ireland
Newry and Mourne District Council
Northern Ireland Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders
Northern Ireland Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux
Northern Ireland Committee Irish Congress of Trade Unions
Northern Ireland Committee Irish Congress of Trade Unions (Youth Committee)
Northern Ireland Housing Council
Northern Ireland Youth Forum
Omagh District Council
OPEN DOOR (Housing Association)
The Presbyterian Church in Ireland
Probation Board for Northern Ireland
Queen's University Social Work Department
Salvation Army Social Services
Shelter (Northern Ireland)
Simon Community Northern Ireland
Sinn Fein
Social Democratic and Labour Party
R. Storey Esq.
Strabane District Council
SHAC (Students Housing Association Co-op Ltd)
Youth Homelessness Group Northern Ireland

Single Payments

Mr. Hume: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many single payments claims made under supplementary benefit regulations are still outstanding in each social security office in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 7 July 1988]:* At 24 June 1988 the number of outstanding claims for single payments in each social security office was as shown in the following table.

Social Security Office	*Number outstanding*
Andersontown	689
Antrim	Nil
Armagh	878
Ballymena	5
Ballymoney	59
Ballynahinch	4
Banbridge	11
Bangor	Nil
Carrickfergus	Nil
Coleraine	Nil
Cookstown	102
Corporation Street	544
Downpatrick	20
Dungannon	544
Enniskillen	1,839
Falls	278
Holywood Road	32
Kilkeel	Nil
Knockbreda	20
Larne	Nil
Limavady	Nil
Lisburn	16
Londonderry	7,947
Lurgan	472
Magherafelt	865
Newcastle	4
Newry	783
Newtownabbey	Nil
Newtownards	Nil
Omagh	1,033
Portadown	220
Shaftesbury Square	Nil
Shankill	50
Strabane	2,031
TOTAL	18,446

Mr. Hume: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the number and total value of single payments in each social security office in Northern Ireland in 1987.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 7 July 1988]:* The available information is as follows:

Supplementary Benefit Single Payments for the Period 17 December 1986 to 15 December 1987

Social security office	*Number*	*Amount (£)*
Andersonstown	15,138	1,677,176
Antrim	11,138	769,536
Armagh	7,990	518,146
Ballymena	9,120	567,965
Ballymoney	7,323	389,030
Ballynahinch	1,281	68,237
Banbridge	4,460	258,268
Bangor	4,670	261,924
Carrickfergus	5,251	288,573
Coleraine	9,270	633,426
Cookstown	5,200	391,630
Corporation Street	22,034	1,876,631
Downpatrick	4,637	311,747
Dungannon	8,886	649,913
Enniskillen	8,671	420,607
Falls Road	20,138	1,617,754
Holywood Road	13,085	797,532
Kilkeel	1,777	90,959
Knockbreda	7,302	400,559
Larne	4,533	261,783
Limavady	4,255	262,293
Lisburn	16,094	1,379,345
Londonderry	22,334	1,943,620
Lurgan	13,674	1,642,798
Magherafelt	8,881	758,994
Newcastle	2,486	120,164
Newry	15,268	1,238,069
Newtownabbey	7,900	415,698
Newtownards	4,194	226,982
Omagh	7,882	609,979
Portadown	5,928	361,383
Shaftesbury Square	14,020	1,082,831
Shankill	9,901	685,429
Strabane	9,295	831,542
Total	314,016	23,810,523

Note: Because of industrial action in June 1987 the figures are incomplete, 6 offices having failed to provide information.

TRANSPORT

Working Hours

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list in the *Official Report* all statutory and/or voluntary restrictions on working hours, including the permitted hours of work, for *(a)* aircraft pilots, *(b)* heavy goods vehicle drivers, *(c)* train drivers and *(d)* shipping crews.

Mr. David Mitchell: The restrictions on working hours for the occupations listed are:

(a) Aircraft Pilots

The Civil Aviation Authority is responsible for the regulation of aircraft pilots' working hours in accordance with the Air Navigation Order 1985.

The order requires that no member of the flight crew may fly for more than 100 hours in any consecutive 28-day period or more than 900 hours during the period of 12 months expiring at the end of the previous month.

Furthermore the order requires operators to establish a scheme for the regulation of flight times and that scheme must be approved by the Civil Aviation Authority. The authority provides guidelines to enable operators to develop acceptable schemes. The guidelines cover such matters as single or multiple crew, aeroplane or helicopter, rest periods, standby duty, days off, extended range operations by two pilots, delayed reporting times, acclimatisation to local time, and the records that must be kept.

The order also states that a person shall not act as a member of the crew of an aircraft if he knows or suspects that he is suffering from or is likely to suffer from such fatigue as may endanger the safety of the aircraft or its occupants.

(b) Heavy Goods Vehicle Drivers

Most heavy goods vehicle drivers are subject to the European Community rules on driving and rest contained in EC Regulation 3820/85. This requires 45 hours of continuous rest in a week and 11 hours continuous rest in any period of 24 hours. Driving is limited to nine hours a day (with an increase to 10 hours permitted twice in any week) and 90 hours in a fortnight.

Drivers exempt from the above rules, mainly those who carry out short-distance national haulage, are subject to the domestic rules applied by the Transport Act 1968, as modified. This limits driving to 10 hours and total work to 11 hours in any period of 24 hours.

(c) Train Drivers

There are no statutory restrictions for train drivers' hours of duty. Agreements between the railway management and the Trade Unions limit drivers to 39 hours' duty per week. Flexible rostering arrangements mean that drivers are on duty between seven to nine hours per day.

(d) Shipping Crews

The Merchant Shipping (Certification and Waterkeeping) Regulations 1982 impose a requirement that all watchkeepers should be adequately rested and fit for duty when going on watch. The new agreement between P&O European Ferries and the ratings employed on its ships operating out of Dover limits the hours that a rating can be required to work to 14 in any period of 24. At least six hours of the rest period must be consecutive. No other new agreement embodies a restriction on hours of work.

Channel Ferries (Safety)

Sir Nicholas Bonsor: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what steps, folowing the conclusions of Mr. Justice Sheen's inquiry into the sinking of the Herald of Free Enterprise, his Department is taking to ensure the better safety of channel ferries; how often inspections will now be carried out on such vessels; and what steps are being taken to bring those responsible for the accident to account.

Mr. David Mitchell: I refer my hon. Friend to the list of recommendations and actions taken in response to the report of the court of formal investigation which I placed in the Library last month. The Department's surveyors will continue to survey all United Kingdom passenger ships annually and to conduct general inspections on a random basis throughout the year; foreign passenger vessels will be inspected regularly under port state control procedures. The question of prosecutions rests with the Director of Public Prosecutions. Two members of the crew of the Herald of Free Enterprise had their certificates suspended by decision of the court of formal investigation.

Channel Tunnel

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what actions have been taken to deal with the consequences of the increase in rail traffic in the London area with the opening of the Channel tunnel.

Mr. David Mitchell: British Rail will be constructing an international passenger terminal at Waterloo to handle those trains terminating in London. It has engaged independent transport consultants to advise it of the impact on the surrounding highway network, and it is consulting London Regional Transport about the impact on the public transport system. Among the measures proposed are a reorganisation of traffic flows within the station and the construciton of additional direct access routes between the international terminal and the Underground. British Rail also plans, subject to appraisal of the necessary investment, to run through services to other destinations in the United Kingdom via the west London line, which will be improved accordingly.

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what discussions he has had with the chairman of British Rail about very fast through train services from the United Kingdom to the European continent via the Channel tunnel.

Mr. David Mitchell: It is the responsibility of British Rail, in conjunction with its continental partners, to plan the pattern of rail services via the Channel tunnel, and to put forward investment proposals. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and I have discussed the pattern of services in general terms with the chairman from time to time. I expect to receive soon the board's report on the need for additional rail capacity in the longer term between London and the tunnel, and hope that it will be published shortly thereafter.

Rail Services (North Kent)

Mr. Evennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received concerning British Rail commuter services to north-west Kent; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State received 16 letters about the reorganisation of services from north-west Kent to London following the announcement of British Rail's May 1988 timetable. Timetabling is a matter for the board, but I understand that the changes were made to reduce delays on these services by simplifying the structure of the services offered.

Mr. Evennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received concerning British Rail services between London and Gillingham; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: None, since British Rail introduced its new timetable on 16 May.

Driving Tests

Mr. Evennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the average waiting time for a driving test appointment at *(a)* Belvedere and *(b)* Bexleyheath test centres.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The waiting times for Belvedere and Bexleyheath driving test centres are 16 and 15 weeks respectively. Although this represents an improvement on recent waiting times they are still too long. There is insufficient accommodation to increase the number of examiners at these centres. We are trying other ways to reduce the backlog.

Motor Accidents

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the percentage and numerical distribution of motor vehicle accidents according to major causes of accident in the last three years.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The stats 19 accident report form used by the police does not record the causes of accidents.

Driver Rehabilitation Scheme, Nottinghamshire

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what conclusions his Department has drawn from the Nottinghamshire driver rehabilitation scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The Nottinghamshire police have completed their own report on the experimental rehabilitation scheme and conclude that such schemes could make a worthwhile contribution to road safety. They have passed their report to the transport and road research laboratory for further analysis. That analysis is not yet complete. We expect to receive a report from TRRL shortly.

Speed Limits

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he has any plans to enable local authorities to reduce speed limits in residential areas under their control.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Local authorities may apply to the Department for authorisation of speed limits below 30 mph. These are viewed sympathetically when linked to speed—reducing engineering measures. Very few applications have been received. There are engineering techniques which effectively reduce speeds.

Traffic Calming

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what information his Department possesses on legislation in other European countries which gives local or regional governments statutory powers to enforce traffic-calming regulations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: We are aware of the broad legal framework under which traffic—calming measures are implemented in the Netherlands, West Germany, and Denmark. Officials from the Department have had discussions in those countries about legal and other aspects.

M27-M3 Link

Mr. Ward: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to receive the inspector's report of the latest public inquiry about the final motorway link between the M27 and M3 motorways.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The re-opened public inquiry into the Bar End to Compton section of the M3 motorway extension finished in March. We hope to receive the independent inspector's report in the autumn.

DVLC

Mr. Wheeler: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many persons are employed at the driver and vehicle licensing centre and at what annual cost; how many requests are received per annum as to details of the registered number of a vehicle; and in what period of time the average response for this information is made.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The driver and vehicle licensing directorate employs 5,413 staff. A total of 3,906 work at the centre. The remainder are employed in the network of vehicle registration offices located throughout Great Britain. This year's pay bill is expected to be £45·7 million.

In 1987 DVLC received 4·7 million inquiries of the vehicle record. Urgent telephone inquiries from the police and most other telephone inquiries were dealt with immediately; the average response time for written inquiries was about six days, and three to four days for inquiries received by magnetic tape.

Driving Instructors

Mrs. Peacock: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will in future inform all approved driving instructors of their grading after a check test.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Yes. The Department has already agreed to tell ADIs their check test grading at the end of the test.

Mrs. Peacock: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will ensure that information relating to the grading of approved driving instructors is available to each individual driving instructor free of charge.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: In future an instructor will be told the check test grading at the end of each test. When the register of approved driving instructors' records are transferred to a computer, any ADI will have the right of access, under the Data Protection Act, to details of the information held, including check test grading, on payment of the requisite fee. The provision of information on request free of charge, even of check test grading only, would take considerable resources, the cost of which would have to be passed on to all ADIs in increased fees.

Balham Underground Station (Fire)

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement about the fire at Balham underground station on Monday 4 July.

Mr. David Mitchell: At 18.12 on Monday 4 July 1988 smoke was reported in the northbound tunnel of the Northern line between Balham and Clapham. The tunnel was inspected by the station manager and the fire brigade, but the cause of the smoke could not be determined. Services were delayed for a maximum of 23 minutes.

London Transport (Fares)

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has about the likely increase of London Transport fare levels in the next two years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: The level and structure of fares is a matter for the board of London Regional Transport. It is for it to make its own announcements about future fares.

Traffic Congestion (London)

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has about the total annual cost arising from traffic congestion in London in each of the past five years.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: There is no generally agreed basis for calculating total annual congestion costs in London. The available information about traffic volumes and speeds is published annually in a statistics bulletin entitled "London Traffic Monitoring". Copies have been placed in the Library.

Travelcard and Capitalcard

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has concerning the future of Travelcard and Capitalcard in London; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: Fares and ticketing are matters for the public transport operators. LRT has set out its strategy covering this and other matters in its statement of strategy for 1988-91, published on 23 June.

Demonstration Flights

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what regulations govern aircraft demonstration flights at aerodromes whose dimensions would not permit commercial operation of those flights under a one-engine-out limitation.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Such flights are governed by the appropriate provisions of the Air Navigation Order 1985 —in particular articles 47 and 48.

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PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

OFFICIAL REPORT

SIXTH SERIES **VOLUME 136**

SESSION 1987–88

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SCOPE OF THE INDEX, ARRANGEMENT AND ABBREVIATIONS

This index is derived from the House of Commons Library's Parliamentary On-Line Information System (POLIS), and the subject terms used are based on those used in POLIS. There are often changes in column numbering, etc, between the daily part or weekly Hansard (which simply collects together the daily parts without revision) and the bound volume. The index for the bound volume is revised to take account of these changes.

Scope and arrangement of the Index

Oral and Written Parliamentary Questions are indexed under subject headings and the names of Members asking and Ministers replying to them. Questions are not listed under the names of Departments replying. Departmental listings can be arrived at indirectly by looking under the names of the Minister(s) of that Department. There are, however, the headings 'Northern Ireland', 'Scotland', and 'Wales' under which one can find not only most Questions answered by the Northern Ireland Office, Scottish Office, Welsh Office but also Questions about these areas of the United Kingdom which are answered by other Departments. Ministerial statements are indexed under subject headings, under 'Ministerial statements' and the names of Ministers making them and Members speaking on them. General debates are indexed under broad subject headings and under the names of all Members and Ministers taking part. Debates on legislation (Bills, Orders, Regulations etc.) are indexed under the name of the Bill, Statutory Instrument etc, under subject headings and under the names of those taking part.

Rulings and Statements by Mr. Speaker and his deputies are brought together under the heading Speaker's rulings and statements.

Other contributions by Mr. Speaker and his deputies appear under the heading Speaker.

Opposition Day Debates, Estimates Day Debates and Standing Order No. 10 applications are listed under those respective headings and under subject headings too.

The date of each item except Parliamentary Questions is inserted immediately before the reference.

Members' names are given in the form by which they prefer to be known and are printed in bold italics. Under their names, entries are arranged under one of the two headings *Debates etc* (to include interventions on statements, points of order and so on) or *Questions*.

Abbreviations

Bills 1R = first reading, 2R = second reading, Money res = money resolution, Com = Committee stage, Rep = Report stage, 3R = third reading, amendt/amendts = amendment/amendments, * = matter taken formally, without debate.

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